

Winter Stormwater Best Management Practices

Snow and ice on roads, parking lots, driveways, and sidewalks can create hazardous conditions for people and property. Snow and ice removal is best done non-chemically with plows and shovels but, admittedly, the results are not always adequate to ensure safety. Chemical ice melters (typically chloride salts) and/or sanding is often part of a broad strategy to make winter's passage a safe one.

Snow & Ice Removal: Use mechanical means before applying salt/sand, whenever possible.

Salt Application: Follow manufacturer's instructions and use only enough to break the ice/pavement bond. Do not apply on vegetation or near waterways. Use less harmful deicers such as Calcium Magnesium Acetate or Sodium/Potassium Acetate.

Sand Application: Use only enough to provide traction on slippery areas. Sweep up excess sand after snowmelt.

Snow & Ice Disposal: Do not dispose of snow & ice in wetlands, creeks or other waterways or directly on top of storm drains.



Impacts of Salt and Sand

Salt and sand have traditionally been perceived as the cheapest and most effective materials for de-icing driving and walking surfaces. However, many people do not realize that they have hidden impacts that can detract from their overall effectiveness.

Even in small quantities, salt can:

- Deplete the oxygen supply needed by aquatic animals and plants;
- Leach into the ground and change the soil composition, making it hard for plants to survive;
- Contaminate groundwater and surface waters; and
- Deteriorate paved surfaces, buildings, infrastructures, and the environment.

Similarly, sand can:

- Bury the aquatic floor life, fill in habitats, and cloud the water;
- Cause premature deterioration of floor surfaces as it is tracked into buildings;
- Lose its effectiveness after becoming embedded in snow and ice;
- Enter catch basins, storm drains, and surface waters if it is not swept up each spring; and,
- Contribute to clogged storm drains, which can cause flooding.