

Don't be Salty!

New Jersey American Water and The Watershed Institute Warn of Environmental Impacts of Winter Road Salt

CAMDEN, N.J. – JAN. 4, 2024 – New Jersey's first winter snowstorm of the season is expected this weekend, bringing with it the need to de-ice roads, driveways, and sidewalks for safety. However, [New Jersey American Water](#) and [The Watershed Institute](#) warn that the road salt typically used to melt ice and snow can negatively impact drinking water supplies, aquatic life, infrastructure, and the environment.

"Road salt's journey doesn't end when you sprinkle it on your driveway or sidewalk – it's only just begun," said Laura Norkute, Director of Water Quality and Environmental Compliance at New Jersey American Water. "Eventually, that salty, melted snow runs off pavements and makes its way to our local waterways. We can often see levels of sodium chloride content increase in source water following a winter weather event due to excessive salt use, and it can make source water more difficult and expensive to treat. It's also highly corrosive, which is an added strain on infrastructure and treatment equipment."

Additionally, road salt can have a lasting impact on the environment with direct impacts to aquatic and other wildlife. "Long after winter has ended, the effects of road salts linger," said Erin Stretz, Assistant Director of Science at The Watershed Institute and coordinator of the NJ Watershed Watch Network. "Increased salt levels can negatively impact the growth and reproduction of aquatic life in our local watersheds while allowing salt-tolerant species, such as mosquitoes and algae, to thrive. It can also kill dormant grass or other plants along roadways, driveways, and sidewalks."

New Jersey American Water provides the following tips to help reduce the drinking water and environmental impacts when using winter salt:

- Only use as much salt as needed to treat a given area. A 12-oz coffee mug is about a pound of salt and enough to treat one 20-foot driveway.
- Spread salt over the area leaving about three inches of space between the granules.
- Sweep up any extra salt left over on dry pavement so that it does not wash away.
- Shovel snow from driveways and sidewalks before it turns to ice. This reduces the need for de-icing.
- Consider using a different kind of salt. Calcium magnesium acetate and magnesium chloride are generally better alternatives to sodium chloride. To find a [list of deicers](#) that meet the United States Environmental Protection Agency's Safer Choice Standard, visit [epa.gov](#).
- For businesses that contract snow-clearing services, discuss agreements to pay by the area cleared instead of the amount of salt used.

"It doesn't seem like something that would have such a significant environmental impact, but when you multiply it by the millions of roadways, households and businesses across our state, winter salt usage really adds up," said Norkute. "By incorporating these tips into your de-icing routines, we can all work together to protect our water sources and the environment."

For more information about [winter salt](#), visit [www.thewatershed.org](#), and watch The Watershed Institute's *Impacts of Road Salts on Waterways in NJ* webinar on [YouTube](#). The Watershed Institute also provides opportunities to get involved by monitoring chloride in NJ lakes and streams through its [Salt Watch Monitoring Program](#).

About The Watershed Institute

The Watershed Institute is dedicated to keeping New Jersey's water clean, safe and healthy. Founded in 1949, The Watershed Institute protects and restores water and the environment through conservation, advocacy, science and education. For more information about the Watershed, [www.thewatershed.org](#) or call (609) 737-3735.

About New Jersey American Water

New Jersey American Water, a subsidiary of American Water (NYSE: AWK), is the largest investor-owned water utility in the state, providing high-quality and reliable water and wastewater services to approximately 2.8 million people. For more information, visit www.newjerseyamwater.com and follow New Jersey American Water on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

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