New Jersey American Water Urges Customers to Use Road Salt Responsibly to Help Protect Water Sources

CAMDEN, N.J. (FEB. 10, 2025) – With winter weather approaching, New Jersey American Water is reminding customers that the widespread use of road salt to melt snow and ice can impact local water sources. While the company continues to provide drinking water that is safe and meets all health-based primary drinking water standards, some customers may notice temporary changes in taste due to increased salt runoff entering rivers and streams.

Each winter, road crews, businesses, and homeowners apply salt to improve traction on roads, driveways, and sidewalks. As snow and ice melt, this salt can wash into nearby waterways, some of which serve as drinking water sources. Higher concentrations of sodium and chloride in the water can result in a slightly salty taste, though these levels do not pose a health risk for most people. Those on sodium-restricted diets should consult their physicians with any concerns.

Taking Action to Protect Water Sources

New Jersey American Water is committed to working with municipalities, businesses, and residents to promote responsible de-icing practices that help minimize environmental impact. Simple adjustments can reduce the amount of salt entering waterways while still ensuring safety during winter storms:

- Use only what's needed. A 12-ounce coffee mug holds about one pound of salt—enough to treat a 20-foot driveway.
- Apply salt efficiently. Scatter granules with a few inches of space between them for effective coverage.
- Clean up excess salt. Sweep up leftover salt from dry pavement to prevent it from washing into storm drains.
- Shovel first. Clearing snow before it turns to ice reduces the need for de-icing.
- Consider alternative de-icers. Calcium magnesium acetate and magnesium chloride are often better choices than traditional rock salt. A list of de-icers that meet the EPA's Safer Choice Standard is available at epa.gov.
- Reevaluate snow removal contracts. Businesses hiring snow-clearing services can opt to pay based on area cleared rather than the amount of salt used.

"It doesn't seem like something that would have such a big environmental impact, but when you multiply it across millions of roads, homes, and businesses, winter salt usage really adds up," said Shealynn O'Toole, program manager of Source Water Protection at New Jersey American Water. "By making small changes to how we use de-icers, we can all play a role in protecting our water sources and the environment."

For more information about New Jersey American Water's efforts to protect water quality, visit newjerseyamwater.com.

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