

Be a Salt Savvy Neighbor This Winter

Snow and ice removal is everyone's responsibility during the winter months, with salt being a popular tool for clearing hazards from sidewalks, roadways and driveways. However, when it comes to salt, more is not always better.

While the salt seems to simply disappear with the melting snow, it doesn't go away. It dissolves in the snow melt and seeps into the ground making its way to storm drains, local streams and eventually to rivers that provide drinking water.

According to [WSSC Water](#), the utility that provides water to a portion of Howard County, there has been a dramatic increase in salt levels in the Potomac and Patuxent rivers over the past 30 years. The levels peak in the winter months and are higher in years with more winter weather events. Once sodium and chloride, the two components of salt, dissolve into water they are difficult and expensive to remove, and local water filtration plants weren't designed to remove salt. Therefore, the concentrations of sodium and chloride continue to increase.

In addition to adversely impacting the public water supply and private drinking water wells, salt can corrode concrete and masonry, harm pets and damage surrounding plants and lawns. Just one teaspoon of salt will pollute five gallons of water to a level that is toxic to freshwater organisms.

Easy on the Salt: Be Salt Smart!

This winter, residents can be a good neighbor to fellow community members and the local watershed with timely and accurate application of road salt during winter storms. Do your part to help protect Howard County's freshwater resources and make a pledge to follow the "4 S's" this winter: **Shovel, Scatter, Switch, Sweep**:

- **Shovel** (or snowblow) as much snow as possible before spreading salt. Only put salt on ice, not on bare pavement or on top of snow.
- **Scatter** salt so there is one to three inches of space in between the grains (no piles!). Use one 12-ounce cup of salt for 10 sidewalk squares or for a 20-foot driveway.
- **Switch** from salt to sand if the temperature is under 15 degrees Fahrenheit.
- **Sweep** up excess salt after the storm for reuse.

Follow the 4 S's and you will save money, protect roads and bridges, AND keep salt out of local waterways. To learn more about salt pollution and how to reduce your impact on the environment, visit [Winter Salt Reduction | Howard County Stormwater \(cleanwaterhoward.com\)](http://cleanwaterhoward.com).