

Tips for Treating Ice and Snow

Tips to keep your driveway and sidewalks ice-free while minimizing the environmental impact:

- **Shovel Early, Shovel Often**
Removing fresh snow before it has a chance to harden into ice is the best method to keep your pavement clear. Deicers work best when there is only a thin layer of snow or ice that needs to be melted, so shovel first, break up any ice patches you can and then add the salt.
- **Apply Salt Sparingly**
Using more salt than what is recommended will not speed up the melting process. The recommended application rate for rock salt (sodium chloride) is one handful per square yard treated. Calcium chloride requires even less salt—one handful for every three square yards treated (about the area of a twin bed).
- **Buy Early and Check Labels**
Buy your de-icing product before the big storm, so you don't end up staring at empty shelves in the stores. Check the label before you buy—although slightly more expensive, calcium chloride (CaCl₂) requires less salt, works at lower temperatures and does not contain cyanide, unlike sodium chloride (NaCl, rock salt) which does. Urea is sometimes promoted as “lawn-friendly,” as excess urea will act as a fertilizer. However, the application rate for urea is far greater than your lawn would require, and most of the excess urea will only end up “fertilizing” the stream.
- **Avoid Kitty Litter and Ashes**
While these products are environmentally friendly, they are only marginally effective at adding traction, and do not melt ice. If you need traction, mixing in a small amount of sand and using even less salt is a better option.

For more information on salt, snow and ice and winter operations in the region:

- [Road Salt and the Chesapeake Bay](#)
- [Maryland State Highway Administration \(SHA\) Strategies for Winter Operations](#)
- [Rockville's Inclement Weather Policy including Snow Removal and the Snow Emergency Plan](#)
- [Montgomery County's Winter Weather Operations](#)