

# Best practices for

# home snow removal & deicing



Every winter it gets cold outside, and every winter we deal with snow and ice. When just shoveling isn't enough, we often resort to using chemical deicers like rock salt to keep our driveways and sidewalks safe for walking.

However, the chemicals we use on our properties are carried by rain and melting snow directly from storm drains into local streams and rivers. While your driveway may not be the largest contributor on its own, the amount you use matters, and it's good to be thinking about the ways you can make a difference.



## Less salt can be better

Most ice melt blends will have recommended use amounts right on the packaging— and most of the time it's less than you'd think. A single coffee mug full of salt, applied carefully, can easily be enough for a full driveway.

## Act before the storm

The golden rule is that it's usually easier to anti-ice than to get rid of the ice once it's already settled in.

When you hear a storm is coming, head out ahead of time and apply a very thin layer of your preferred deicer. After the storm, plow or shovel like normal, then apply a little bit more treatment if needed.



## Think about the temperature

As it gets colder, chlorides start to become less effective.

If you put down salt and it isn't working, don't put any more down. Instead, try a different kind of mixture or try applying sand for traction. If you're unsure about how cold is too cold, make sure to check the label.

## How Salt Works

- Salt (and other chlorides) work by lowering the freezing point of the ice.
- This happens when the salt dissolves into tiny amounts of unfrozen water on the surface of the ice, creating brine (salty water). This brine can't freeze until it gets colder.
- Slowly, the brine helps to melt the rest of the ice until it's one big solution of brine.
- The colder it gets, the less water can be found on the surface of the ice. This means salt is most effective above 15 degrees fahrenheit.

## Which deicer is best for my property?

### ROCK SALT (NaCl)

The most basic salt. Very inexpensive, but slightly corrosive. Stops working around 15 degrees F.

### CALCIUM CHLORIDE (CaCl<sub>2</sub>)

Very effective melting agent but highly corrosive. Use sparingly when it gets very cold.

### MAGNESIUM CHLORIDE (MgCl<sub>2</sub>)

Stronger than rock salt but not as corrosive. A good general use mixture.

### CALCIUM MAGNESIUM ACETATE (CMA)

Not a chloride. Non-corrosive and safer for pets and plants, but expensive.

Want to learn more about how you can protect our streams and rivers?

Learn more at

[BASWG.org/chlorides](https://www.baswg.org/chlorides)