

# Winter Solutions – Alternatives to Road Salt

## Salt handling practices for protecting drinking water

### Road Salt: The Basics

Road salt works by dissolving in water, creating a brine that has a lower freezing point than water. Road salt is frequently used to keep our roadways safe to navigate.

Road salt is our friendly helper, keeping us safe on icy roads; however it can be harmful if it reaches our drinking water sources. Road salt can contaminate drinking water with sodium and chloride which is difficult to remove. Not only does road salt impact surface water and groundwater supplies, but also vegetation, aquatic life, wildlife and soils.

Protecting our drinking water sources is the first step to ensuring there is clean, safe drinking water for our future.

### When is it a threat?

The application, handling and storage of road salt in certain areas are considered drinking water threats under **Ontario's Clean Water Act, 2006**.

Road salting activities do not commonly occur near municipal drinking water sources in the City of Ottawa. However, where future or existing application of road salt could be a significant drinking water threat, the City and the Ministry of Transport are required to implement Source Protection Plan policies designed to protect the water source.

### What can I do?

- Choose other de-icing products or a traction aid such as sand or kitty litter;
- Use de-icing materials in the amount directed on the package;
- Do not apply road salt when the temperature falls below -10°C because melting will not occur;
- Proactively shovel the snow and save the salt for the ice;
- Redirect downspouts away from walkways and driveways to prevent ice buildup;
- Store snow so that melt water does not go on walkways and driveways;
- Wear footwear designed for snow and ice to protect from slips and falls;
- Remember your snow tires for your vehicles; and
- Give yourself extra time in the winter to help prevent slips, falls and accidents.



Information in this factsheet was provided by the Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Region.