

Ice/Snow Removal

Winter brings with it lots of fun outdoor activities, like sledding, ice skating and skiing. But winter also means mounds of snow to shovel and layers of slippery ice to remove from our sidewalks and driveways. We often attempt to make the job easier by using various products to melt the snow and ice. Even if the surface you are applying a deicer to is relatively far from a street or stream, much of the product will not soak into the soil because the ground is frozen. However when the ice melts, the salt and chemicals dissolve and flow into street drains that lead directly into the Clinton River and Lake St. Clair.

Here are some tips that can help protect the Clinton River and Lake St. Clair:

- Shovel early and often. When it comes to snow removal, there is no substitute for muscle and elbow grease! Deicers work best when only a thin layer of snow or ice must be melted. So head out and shovel and move as much snow as you can during the storm if possible. You can also use a hoe or ice chopper to break up ice and scrape it off the surface before putting down a deicer.
- Reduce your use of deicing products. The most important step in deicing is to physically remove as much snow and ice as possible before applying a deicer.
- Reduce deicer use by limiting access to your home to one entrance. For every doorway that isn't used, there will be less deicer washing into your street's catch basin.
- Avoid fertilizers. Fertilizers, including those with urea (carbamide, ammonium, carbonyl diamide, etc.) don't contain chlorides but they contain nutrients. Potassium chloride (Potash) is another fertilizer used to combat snow and ice. Potassium chloride typically costs 3-5 times as much as sodium chloride and doesn't work as well at low temperatures.
- Limit your use of sand. **Sand doesn't melt ice!** Sand provides traction. When sand is washed off of our driveways and sidewalks into storm drains, it ends up in our lakes, rivers and streams, increasing the amount of sediment there. Leave sand usage to municipalities that apply sand on roads to help maintain traction.

Here are some alternative deicers to try:

- Calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) has fewer adverse environmental impacts than salt and doesn't cause corrosion. CMA is recommended for environmentally sensitive areas but is a little more expensive.
- Bare Ground is a deicer that is available at your local hardware store. This product is a bit more expensive up front but it's a natural and biodegradable product.
- Another alternative is Safe Step this is safe for children, pets and your lawn. It melts until -10°F and helps to keep ice from refreezing 2 ½ times longer than other deicers. This is available at most hardware stores.