



Think Before You Salt!

As the weather gets colder, we pull out the winter coats and brace ourselves for the first big snow. That snow brings more than slower commutes and snow days; it brings chlorides. The Barrington Area Council of Governments (BACOG) has identified chlorides as a concern to groundwater quality in the BACOG area. For some time, government agencies have found chloride concentrations in water that exceed federal standards.

Regular road and driveway salt (NaCl) contains chlorides that are harmful to the environment. Here are some quick facts:

- Chlorides do not go away or break down. Just one teaspoon of salt can contaminate five gallons of water....forever!
- Groundwater data shows that chloride levels in the BACOG area have risen 260% since 1965!
- For every \$50 spent on road salt, it is estimated \$750 will need to be spent repairing infrastructure such as bridges and roads, and vehicles.
- Up to 10% of aquatic life is negatively impacted by chloride concentrations currently in our lakes and streams.

What can **you** do to help?

- ✓ Support your local government's efforts to reduce salt. New techniques and products are enabling winter maintenance crews to use less salt while still providing safe roads.
- ✓ **Shovel first!** Physically remove as much snow and ice first, and avoid using salt whenever safely possible.
- ✓ **Salt is not intended to melt all the snow;** it is intended to loosen snow and ice for easier physical removal.
- ✓ Regular salt becomes ineffective at temperatures below 15°F; at colder temperatures, use calcium chloride or magnesium chloride.
- ✓ Choose a de-icing product that does not contain chloride.
- ✓ **Do not over-salt!** For most salt applications the recommended rate is ¼ - 1 cup per square yard (read the label). **Over salting can actually slow down melting or lead to refreezing!**
- ✓ If you have pets or small children, you may consider a salt-alternative such as SafePaw™. Exposure to or digesting salt compounds can cause health problems for pets and small children.

The Barrington Area Council of Governments provides additional information on groundwater quality on their website. Visit www.bacog.org/waterquality.html to learn more about chlorides and other groundwater issues.

Sources: Lake County Health Department, Barrington Area Council of Governments

Optional picture to include

