

# WI Salt Wise

WISaltWise.com

The [WI Salt Wise Partnership](#) is urging the public, area municipalities, and private contractors to make a commitment to reduce salt use this winter. Every year, more than 650,000 tons of salt is dumped on our state's surfaces, enough to pollute almost **a half-trillion** gallons of Wisconsin's water. But there is a way to cut down on salt use and keep our roads, parking lots and driveways safe: **Use only what you need — and that's less than you might think!**

According to a [recent report](#) from Public Health Madison Dane County, nearly 30,000 tons of salt were spread on Madison and Dane Co. roads during the winter of 2014-15, and that doesn't include what was spread on parking lots, sidewalks and driveways. Experts say it's far too much, adding up to an enormous environmental problem in our area. That's why local municipalities, environmental groups, and experts are all joining forces to spread the word about wise salt use.



## The Impact of Road Salt in Our Area:

- Road salt (sodium chloride) is accumulating in all bodies of water in the Madison metropolitan area, including: Lake Monona, Lake Mendota, Lake Wingra, Starkweather Creek, Dunn's Marsh, Cherokee Marsh, and Willow Creek.
- Sodium chloride is also infiltrating the area's groundwater supply.
- Madison Water Utility's Well 14 on University Ave. has shown [increasing signs of drinking water contamination](#) from road salt.
- It only takes 1 teaspoon of salt to pollute 5 gallons of water
- Salt alters the composition of soil, slows plant growth and weakens the concrete, brick and stone that make up your home and garage.
- [A study from the US Geological Survey](#) found that all streams monitored in south-central and northern Wisconsin during the winter had chloride levels that exceeded the EPA's chronic water quality criteria. Some streams had chloride concentrations higher than 860 milligrams per liter, far above levels toxic to small aquatic life.
- Some road salt makes its way into the sewer system, adding to already-high levels of salt from water softeners. All this salt passes through Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District's treatment plant (where it cannot be filtered out) and into local streams.
- Road salt can accelerate deterioration of roads and bridges by corroding steel supports and rebar used to reinforce concrete.

## What We're Asking People To Do

- **Shovel:** Clear walkways and other areas before the snow turns to ice. The more snow you remove manually, the less salt you will have to use and the more effective it will be.
- **Scatter:** Believe it or not, just a coffee mug of salt is enough to treat an entire 20-foot driveway or 10 sidewalk squares. The scatter pattern should look like this:



- **Switch:** When pavement temps drop below 15, salt won't work. Switch to sand for traction or [a different ice melter](#) that works in lower temperatures.
- **Hire a Salt Wise applicator:** If you hire a contractor to remove snow and ice, let them know you are WI Salt Wise! Some local applicators have been trained in winter maintenance practices that reduce environmental impacts. Ask potential contractors if they've been trained and use practices that reduce salt use such as pre-treating with brine or pre-wetting salt



- **Look** for proper salt use at the stores & businesses you visit. If they're using the right amount of salt, tell them thank you! If not, let them know about WI Salt Wise.

- **Love the lines:** The stripes on a roadway before a storm are anti-icing, they show that your professional maintenance crew is concerned about your safety and is saving money, time and protecting our environment!



- **Be Salt Wise All Year:** The salt you put in your water softener ends up in local fresh-water streams. New, efficient softeners use less than one bag per month. If you're using more, have a professional tune up your softener or invest in a new, salt-efficient model.

### **Natural Salt Alternatives:**

- Cheese brine and beet juice can melt ice, but both also come with environmental impacts. Like salt, cheese brine contains sodium and chloride (and other impurities) that can harm waterways. Beet juice is organic matter that has a high oxygen demand when it runs into our lakes, much like leaves, nitrates and phosphates.

## WI Salt Wise Experts list

*Kathy Lake, Environmental Specialist, Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District*

[KathyL@madsewer.org](mailto:KathyL@madsewer.org), (608) 709-1858 (office), (608) 219-8568 (cell)

Can demonstrate the right amount of salt to spread and give tips on the best way to salt. Talk about the environmental impacts of salt use.

*Ben Yahr, Friends of Lake Wingra*

[bjyahr@gmail.com](mailto:bjyahr@gmail.com) (608) 206-2685

Organizing a grassroots community effort to spread the word about WiSaltWise — volunteers have been knocking on doors, handing out brochures and signs to local businesses that sell salt.

*Rick Wenta, Public Health Madison Dane County*

[rwenta@publichealthmdc.com](mailto:rwenta@publichealthmdc.com), (608) 243-0351

Co-author of the annual Road Salt Report, Rick is an expert on the environmental impact of road salt use in Dane County and trends over the last several decades.

*Cory Horton, Director of Public Works/City Engineer, City of Fitchburg*

[Cory.Horton@fitchburgwi.gov](mailto:Cory.Horton@fitchburgwi.gov), (608) 270-4260

*Bryan Johnson, City of Madison Streets Division*

[byjohnson@cityofmadison.com](mailto:byjohnson@cityofmadison.com), (608) 267-2626

Both can speak about best management practices when it comes to reducing salt use while keeping roads safe.

*Joe Grande, Water Quality Manager Madison Water Utility*

Expert in water quality; Handling sodium & chloride testing at Madison Water Utility Well 14.

[jgrande@madisonwater.org](mailto:jgrande@madisonwater.org), (608) 261-9101

*Pam Mache, Veterinarian and co-owner, Lakeview Veterinary Clinic*

(608) 236-4570

Can discuss the impact of salt on pet paws and digestive systems, and how using less salt helps our furry companions.

## WI Salt Wise Experts List Cont'd...

*Dane Co. Sheriff Dave Mahoney*

Contact Elise Schaffer: [Schaffer@countyofdane.com](mailto:Schaffer@countyofdane.com), (608) 284-6142

Tips on winter driving, slowing down on ice and snow instead of relying on more salt.

*Ray Mayne, Fox Water*

[Ray@foxwater.com](mailto:Ray@foxwater.com), (608) 244-6215

Advice on calibrating water softeners to keep even more salt from going down the drain and winding up in our streams.

**Other Press Inquiries:** Contact Amy Barrilleaux, Madison Water Utility

[abarrilleaux@madisonwater.org](mailto:abarrilleaux@madisonwater.org), (608) 266-9129

## WI SaltWise Partership:

- Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District
- Dane County Office of Lakes & Watersheds
- Madison Water Utility
- Madison Area Municipal Stormwater Partnership
- Capital Area Regional Planning Commission
- City of Madison
- Public Health Madison Dane County
- UW Madison Environment, Health & Safety Department
- Friends of Lake Wingra
- Friends of Starkweather Creek
- Friends of the Yahara River
- Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District

