

TRANSPORTATION

Reality Check

Myth: MDOT has gotten dangerously stingy with salt, and they need to use more!

Reality: MDOT has made changes to be more efficient with salt, but not at the expense of safety for motorists.

Salt is one of MDOT's main weapons for fighting winter weather, used along with plows to keep Michigan's roads and bridges as clear of ice and snow as possible. And when winter delivers, one of the first things motorists call for is "more salt!" Salt certainly is a valuable tool, but it's not a cure-all for winter roads.

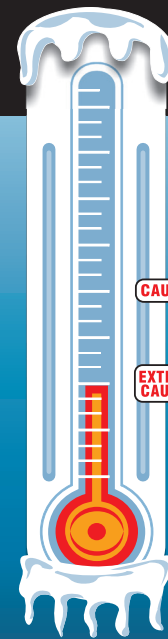
Rising salt prices and decreased funding over the past decade prompted MDOT to implement new "sensible salting" procedures. These include setting application guidelines for winter conditions, using weather stations to better target areas that will benefit most from salt, pre-wetting the salt so it sticks to the road and starts working faster, and slowing plow trucks to 25 mph when applying salt to prevent it from bouncing and scattering off the roadway. These guidelines help conserve overall salt use, saving money, while at the same time making sure more of the salt that's applied gets to where it does the most good.

There are some times when MDOT and its contract county road commissions and municipal public works departments will hold off on the salt. During normal winter conditions, when temperatures are between 20 and 30 degrees, salt works great for melting snow and ice so plows can more easily blade it from the roadway. Below 20 degrees, however, salt takes longer to work, and may increase the speed at which roads refreeze. Below 10 degrees and the roads refreeze even faster, making them icier and slipperier than if salt hadn't been applied in the first place. In those conditions, it's safer not to use salt, but sand instead.

Use of salt is primarily dictated by prevailing winter conditions, and each year we've used hundreds of thousands of tons. Safety is MDOT's top concern for winter maintenance, and we continue to use salt when and where it's the best tool for the job.

MORE SALT

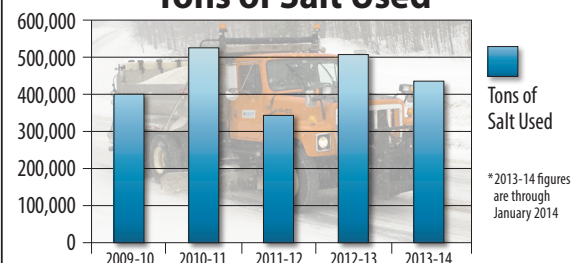
...not always the cure for slippery roads! 



30° Normal winter conditions
20° Salt takes longer to work and ROADS REFREEZE FASTER
10° CAUTION ROADS REFREEZE EVEN FASTER
Ice melts very slow
0° EXTREME CAUTION

When salt is used at these lower temperatures, it may cause wet pavement to refreeze

Tons of Salt Used



For more on this transportation myth, visit www.michigan.gov/realitycheck