

Wise up to Winter Stormwater Pollution Prevention!



Our waterways in winter

Cold weather is settling in for the next few months and with falling temperatures we can expect falling snow. Just like rain, snow melt can carry pollutants such as chemical deicers, petroleum products, and other debris into storm drains and streams. Large volumes of runoff can cause erosion in stream channels, which adds excess sediment. Once in our waterways,

sediment and pollutants can harm wildlife and drinking water resources.

To help reduce stormwater pollution during the winter, learn how to treat ice and snow and take preventative measures to minimize erosion.

Deicers...are they worth one's salt?

While all deicers melt ice when applied, some get the job done with less impact on the environment. The following suggestions will help you to select deicers and determine when and how much product to apply:

- *Shovel early and often* – Remove ice and snow as it accumulates. This will reduce the amount of deicer needed and make it more effective.
- *Avoid sodium chloride* – Chloride levels in streams in the Baltimore/Washington DC area can reach five grams per liter, which is one-fourth as salty as seawater. Commonly used road salts like sodium chloride (also known as halite) can kill plants, break down concrete.
- *Go eco-friendly* – More environmentally friendly alternatives to sodium or calcium chloride are available, such as potassium chloride or magnesium chloride. Safe-Paw™ is an amide/glycol mixture that is safe for pets, the environment, and is biodegradable.
- *Rule of 15°* - Fifteen degrees Fahrenheit is too cold for most salts



to be effective. A traction agent would be a better choice of product instead.

- *Try for traction* – Sand and kitty litter can be used instead of salt to gain traction on icy surfaces. Cracked corn and bird seed are other alternatives that can be used for traction; they are biodegradable and can feed birds and other wildlife during the winter months.
- *Less is more* – Sweep up any excess deicer or material used for traction. Materials left on dry pavement no longer serve their purpose and have the potential to be washed away and clog nearby storm drains or waterways.

Plan where you pile!

Where you decide to pile snow accumulation can influence how much runoff from snow melt makes it into streams and water ways. Consider these tips the next time you need to break out your shovel or snow blower:

- *Vegetated areas for shoveled snow* – The more water that can be absorbed by plants or infiltrate into the ground, the less water will run off into streams and waterways.
- *Avoid your rain garden* – vegetated areas are ideal for helping to absorb snow melt, however, piling snow atop your rain gardens could saturate your garden for long periods of time and potentially harm your plants. Pile your snow on the uphill side of the rain garden instead so when it melts your rain garden can do its job!



Visit the websites below for more information on winter stormwater pollution prevention:

- <http://digital.vpr.net/post/winter-stormwater-tips-franklin-county#stream/0>
- <http://www.stormwater.allianceforthebay.org/take-action/habits-to-help/winter-deicing>
- <https://www.bluewaterbaltimore.org/blog/reduce-winter-stormwater-pollution/>
- <http://www.windsorheights.org/planning-building/stormwater-management/stormwater-tips-information.aspx>