How to Choose a De-icer

Salt pollutes the environment. Choose the most effective de-icing product for the conditions.

Understand melting temperature:

Each de-icing product has a temperature where it melts most effectively. Use the chart below to choose the right product for the temperature conditions:

De-icing product (chemical name)	Melts effectively at or above:
Urea (carbonyl diamide)	20°F
Calcium Magnesium Acetate (CMA)	20°F
Sodium Chloride (NaCl)	15°F
Magnesium Chloride ($MgCl_2$)	-10°F
Potassium Acetate (KAc)	-15°F
Calcium Chloride ($CaCl_2$)	-20°F
Sand	Never melts, provides traction only

Misleading labels:

There are no labeling laws for de-icers, companies can write anything on the label. All de-icers have an impact, even if they are labeled “environmentally safe” or “pet friendly”.

Not sure which de-icer you should use?

- Magnesium chloride and calcium chloride work better in colder temperatures.
- Inexpensive blends may contain a high amount of sodium chloride, and will not work as well at colder temperatures.
- Do not mix sand and salt; it is not effective.

Learn more about smart salting practices at:
ninemilecreek.org

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Did you know?

Salt is a permanent pollutant. One teaspoon permanently pollutes five gallons of water. There is no cost-effective way of removing it from our lakes, creeks, or groundwater.

Scatter matters:

Aim for space between the salt granules.

- More salt does not mean faster melting.
- Only use enough salt to break the bond of the ice with the pavement, rather than melting it all away.
- Always shovel (or snow blow) before applying de-icer.
- Sweep up excess salt that remains after ice is gone.

Good salt application: space between granules

Poor salt application: no space between granules

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