

ROAD SALT ALTERNATIVES

According to the National Research Council (NRC), road-salt use in the United States ranges from 8 million to 12 million tons of NaCl per year. Road Salt is a very effective method to help keep our roadways clear of ice during these winter months; however, recent studies have shown that 55 % of chlorine in road salt is being washed from the roads, driveways and sidewalks through storm water runoff and into the river where it can be toxic to fish and other aquatic life. It is also toxic to many plants as well. Try these tips for keeping your driveway and sidewalk clear and dry this winter:

- **Shovel or plow first.** Removing snow buildup means using less salt and makes it more effective.
- **Use salt, deicers and abrasives only where needed,** such as on slopes or in high traffic areas.
- **Consider using only abrasives** (sand, sawdust or cat litter) to create traction. Sweep them up in the spring to keep them from washing away and becoming a pollutant.
- **Apply deicers evenly** using a broadcast spreader instead of by the handful (see photo).
- **Choose round pellets.** They reach the icy surface faster.
- **Try and alternative product.** Calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) was developed as a deicing alternative because it has fewer adverse environmental impacts than salt and does not cause corrosion. Although CMA is more expensive than rock salt, it is recommended for environmentally sensitive areas (information from semcog.org).
- **Read labels.** Know what you are applying and the effects of exposure. Some deicing chemicals corrode metal, damage concrete, kill lawns and harm pets (by burning their feet and making them sick when they lick their feet).

