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Madison Launches State's First Winter Salt Certification Program

Increasing road salt use is adding up to a growing environmental problem in our area. Just one teaspoon of salt pollutes five gallons of water, and once salt is in our waterways, it does not break down. Chloride, one of the two chemicals that make up salt, is toxic to small aquatic life. It has infiltrated our lakes, streams, marshes, and even a handful of municipal drinking water wells.

Road salt is a valuable tool to combat icy conditions, but it must be used responsibly. That's why the City of Madison is launching the state's first [Winter Salt Certification Program](#), aimed at teaching winter maintenance professionals how to use the least amount of de-icing material necessary to keep our parking lots, roads, sidewalks and driveways safe. The program is open to all of Dane County.

About half of all the road salt used in Madison is spread on parking lots, driveways & sidewalks. Many parking lots and sidewalks receive 10 to 20 times the amount of salt needed to fully melt the ice. That means up to 90% of the salt put down is simply wasted and washes away.

The new Winter Salt Certification Program is a voluntary education and recognition program that will empower consumers to request well-trained snow removal companies. The program will begin as a pilot this fall with four 5-hour training and exam sessions. The sessions will cover recommended salt application rates, how to calculate the amount of salt needed based on weather conditions, and technological advancements like brining.

The Winter Salt Certification Program will initially offer only individual certifications for winter maintenance professionals. In 2018, it will also begin offering three tiers of company certification:

- Bronze 30% of field staff certified – No salt reporting
- Silver 60% of field staff certified + Reporting
- Gold 90% of field staff certified + Reporting

The City of Madison has been actively working to reduce salt for many years. Only 30% of our streets are salted (major roads and bus routes), and equipment is calibrated to apply salt at the DOT recommended rate. The City will focus on further reducing its own salt use by having all city staff who apply salt become certified by next winter and by only hiring certified contractors.

For more information on the impact of road salt and upcoming training dates, visit the [Winter Salt Certification Program](#) page.

