

Keep Deicers Light

By Jacquelyn Buck

While enjoying the beauty of our snow-covered landscape and warmth of family and friends, Allen County Partnership for Water Quality (ACPWQ) would like to challenge residents to make sure that they are keeping local waterways in mind! This might seem like an odd request as waterways throughout the county are out of season and out of mind, however, deicing driveways, sidewalks, and parking lots can indirectly add chloride to our waterways. This can be very impactful in a negative way, and leaves homeowners with a lot of power and responsibility.

One teaspoon of deicers from impervious surfaces, or surfaces that do not permit water to move through them, can permanently contaminate 5 gallons of water. Polluted stormwater impacts water quality and affects local wildlife and plants. ACPWQ has five suggestions for how you can treat sidewalks, driveways, and parking lots without harming our waterways.

1. Only put deicers where you need it by treating the paths that are used every day! By decreasing the area treated, one saves money and salt.
2. Save money and improve water quality is to remove snow from the area before adding deicers. By removing extra snow, homeowners will decrease the amount of salt needed to treat an area.
3. Be mindful of when you put deicers out. Did you know that salt has a temperature threshold for when it works? If it is colder than 15°F, do not use salt! Instead, consider waiting to treat the area or look into alternatives such as calcium chloride or magnesium chloride.
4. Remember adding more deicers to the ground will not increase the melting potential. A common misunderstanding is the more salt you put down, the faster the ice will melt. By adding more deicers than necessary, one is only ensuring that more salt will pollute our stormwater. Be sure to read the directions before treating an area to ensure correct application.
5. Sweep up any extra salt once the area is ice-free. The salt that remains on the ground has no purpose and will pollute stormwater if allowed to remain there.

If you are interested in challenging yourself, use chloride-free products! Some people swear by adding coffee grounds, while others full-heartedly believe in using sand. Most of these home remedies found online will not melt the ice, but they will help provide traction for those extra slick spots! Just remember, when the ice is gone, sweep up whatever you used. Our rivers do not need extra sand and organic material either!

If you are interested in learning more or have questions, visit us at acwater.org.