



EARTH CARE @LEWINSVILLE

EARTH FRIENDLY ICE and SNOW MANAGEMENT

We all want to avoid slipping on icy surfaces. Unfortunately, many commonly used de-icing products negatively impact water quality and aquatic life when they find their way into our streams, lakes and ground water. Products containing salt can also harm pet's paws, trees, and plants, and corrode metals, concrete and asphalt. Here are some ways to effectively balance safety concerns with caring for the earth:

- Shovel first. Sometimes that is enough. Don't reflexively turn to a deicer.
- Spread natural substances, such as sand, non-clumping clay-based kitty litter, wood ash or sawdust, on slick areas to provide traction. (Not effective if more snow falls on top.)
- Spread alfalfa meal, a dry and grainy all-natural fertilizer available in most hardware and gardening stores. It provides traction and also melts ice. It contains nitrogen, but at a low enough concentration that moderate use does not pose risk to local water systems.
- Make an environmentally friendly deicer by combining a half gallon of hot water, six drops of dish soap, and ¼ cup of rubbing alcohol in a bucket. Pour it onto icy trouble spots and watch the ice bubble up and melt. Scrape away any remaining bits of ice.
- If natural methods are insufficient, choose an "eco-friendly" commercial deicer, using the smallest effective amount prescribed by the application directions and spread only where necessary. Product names, labels and manufacturer's claims can be misleading -- read the list of ingredients carefully. Avoid deicers that contain sodium chloride (rock salt). Calcium and magnesium chlorides are a bit safer and less corrosive, but all chlorides are corrosive and detrimental to the environment when overused. Urea, magnesium and potassium acetates do less harm, but have high organic content that can damage waterways. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency maintains [***a list of deicers that meet its Safer Choice Standards.***](#)
- Apply deicers to pavement or a thin layer of ice after shoveling. Deicer is best for preventing ice from forming, not for melting inches of snow.



Figure 1 Sandra Grunewald - Unsplash

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