



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Beets aren't just for dinner anymore

MWRD incorporates beet juice mixture as deicer to reduce use of salt

The battle to keep roads and walkways clear of ice and snow has officially begun, but unfortunately, deicers can be harmful to the environment.

Because of this, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD), an agency which strives to improve the environment, has incorporated an organic mixture containing beet juice to help keep MWRD parking lots and walkways clear of snow and ice.

MWRD has used the beet juice solution for three year as it explores methods to increase deicing efficiency and reduce costs. Beet juice solutions contain a minimal concentration of simple salt, sodium chloride, or other chemicals which can create adverse impacts on the environment. The salt used on roads and walkways migrates into water and can affect water quality by increasing chloride concentrations that have adverse effects on aquatic plants and invertebrates. Salt also migrates into soil and creates an environment in which salt-intolerant species cannot thrive.

To minimize the use of salt, MWRD uses deicing pellets which are less harmful to concrete and the environment than plain rock salt. In addition, the agency has increased the efficiency of deicer spreading methods. Before spreading, the MWRD sprays the beet juice solution on the deicing pellets to help the pellets adhere to the pavement. As a result, MWRD staff needs to spread deicing pellets only once during a snow event, and they can plow multiple times without reapplying additional pellets.

When it must use salt, the MWRD stores its supply in salt domes which preserves the salt's integrity and prevents it from dissolving or infiltrating into the soil. The domes also provide ready access to a supply during storms so the staff can act quickly during winter weather without having to wait for any last-minute deicing product deliveries.

The MWRD encourages residents to keep the environment in mind when selecting deicing solutions. Residential property owners and managers can purchase deicing products that are less harmful for the soil, plants, water, and pets. Limit the use of deicing products to high traffic areas, such as stairways, sidewalks and garages, and don't use deicers as a substitute for shoveling areas with a large amount of snow accumulation. Application instructions can be found on deicer labels and should be followed.

"We are always evaluating our methods and procedures to increase our efficiency and minimize costs," said MWRD executive director David St. Pierre. "The organic deicing mixture containing beet juice has proven to be very economical to use and is less harmful to our land and water than traditional deicing salt."

For additional information, visit www.mwrdd.org or follow the MWRD on Facebook and Twitter. It's our water environment, take it personally.

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Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwrdd.org) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.