

Winter 2020/21 Salt Bag Partnership Volunteer Briefing Sheet – Snow Clearing Guidance

Essex County Council (ECC) has provided parish, town councils and urban (non parished) areas who have signed up to the salt bag scheme, with 1 tonne of (25kg) bagged palletted salt to help local communities support themselves during periods of heavy snow. The salt is for use on the public highway only. If you require more salt, or wish to clear your private driveway then salt can be purchased from builder's merchants, DIY stores and some larger retail stores/supermarkets.

The following information outlines some of the key things to consider if you choose to undertake snow clearance and salt spreading.

Snow Clearance - Basic Principles

- The only effective way of removing snow is by hard graft and elbow grease.
- Undisturbed snow is easiest to remove - once walked on it becomes compacted and turns to ice.
- The cleared snow should be moved to the side of pavements or onto grassed areas. Avoid blocking accesses to properties and driveways or concealing a hazard, such as a low wall etc.
- Pre-salting an area prior to snow is useful in stopping the snow from sticking to the pavement surface (but it will not remove the snow or prevent it from settling).
- Once the area has been cleared of snow a very thin layer of salt can be spread to prevent any melt water from refreezing on the pavement which creates a risk of black ice.
- Do not be discouraged by lack of salt if you run out. Just clearing the snow exposes the pavement and the heat from any sunshine will warm the surface and evaporate any remaining snow or ice.

Avoiding negligent behaviour - See Gov.uk - <https://www.gov.uk/clear-snow-road-path-cycleway>

Under common law a volunteer can only be considered negligent if they deliberately went out to create a hazard. Actions which could give rise to liability for negligence would be (a) the careless discharge of snow from the shovel, (b) the careless placing of snow so as to conceal or create a hazard and (c) the use of water which actually increases the risk of slipping or skidding.

- Do not use water as this can refreeze and create black ice.
- Do not discharge snow from the shovel into the actual or potential path of vehicles or pedestrians
- Do not dump snow so as to create or conceal a hazard



Suitable Tools

- ❖ Plastic light weight snow shovels or wide bladed shovels are best.
- ❖ A regular metal shovel is the next best alternative but not as efficient as the snow may stick to it.
- ❖ If the salt is fine enough, you could use a domestic grass spreader/lawn feeder to spread the salt (make sure you wash out any salt before using on grass unless you want to kill the grass!) or a small scoop/garden trowel to distribute the salt if doing it by hand (wear gloves to avoid directly handling salt).
- ❖ A wheel barrow to move tools, carry salt or move snow.

Looking after yourself

- ❖ The most important thing is to look after yourself. If at any point you don't feel confident to complete the task stop.

- ❖ Suitable clothing goes without saying, boots/wellies with a good grip and plenty of warm, waterproof clothing. 25% of your body heat is lost through your head and hands so wear gloves and a hat. If you are working near the road you must be as visible as possible and wear a reflective vest/jacket.
- ❖ Clearing snow is hard physical work so if you volunteer make sure you can do it. Ensure you take plenty of breaks and know when to stop.
- ❖ If you are working alone make sure you have informed someone of where you are and how long you intend to be. Have a charged mobile phone with you and remain in contact every 1-2hrs and inform friends/family of any changes to location or estimated return time.
- ❖ Care should be taken when lifting the salt bags. They weigh 25kg (the industry standard size which you purchase from supermarkets/builders merchants etc) so if you are moving them you must ensure that you handle them correctly. You should consider a using two people to jointly lift the bags. **The Manual Handling leaflet** will provide more details.

Salt – what does it actually do?

- Salt dissolves into moisture on the surface of the highway and reduces its freezing point
- Salt has no impact on removing snow or ice as they are solid matter and there is no moisture for the salt to dissolve into.
- Salt dissolved in water will not prevent freezing once temperatures drop to minus 6°C or below.
- The amount of salt required to treat an area is much less than you think. As a guide 20g/m² (about a handful) should be sufficient to clear and protect a 1m² (3ft) length of cleared surface.
- Spreading salt prevents any melted water that may run off the cleared snow, from re-freezing on the cleared pavement which creates a risk of black ice.
- Salt is a corrosive material. If your bags were to split after being stored for some time, it could compromise the surface condition it is stored on or other adjacent equipment, so carefully consider where you are going to storing it.

Compacted snow and ice – what can be done?

- Once snow has been walked over it becomes compact and forms ice. This is hard to clear.
- Salt has no effect on snow or ice.
- If you cannot manually remove the ice, your main option is to purchase grit or sand to spread over the ice which can become embedded into it to provide some traction.
- The only drawback with grit and sand is the pavement will need sweeping once the thaw has taken place. Once swept up this sand can be saved and used again next year.

For more information over Winter:

You can visit the Essex Highways Winter pages –

<https://www.essexhighways.org/Roads-and-Pavements/winter-travel.aspx>

You can find information on;

- ❖ Clearing snow and ice yourself
- ❖ Salt bins + location map (which you can zoom into)
- ❖ Map of the salting route and what is included
- ❖ How to track the gritting lorries

❖ Q&A's and other Winter guidance that you may find useful over the season.

For Government guidance – www.Gov.uk

For weather information - www.metoffice.gov.uk