

DRINKING WATER THREATS: Road Salt



FACT
SHEET

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Drinking Water Source Protection is a provincial program to protect our municipal drinking water sources from contamination and overuse.



Prevention is key

In Northern Ontario road salt or rock salt (sodium chloride) is used to keep our roads, sidewalks and parking lots, safe and passable. However, it is also important to understand that salt, even in small amounts can have a negative effect and impact on the environment.

Not only is salt highly corrosive to paved surfaces, buildings and cars, high concentrations in drinking water can be dangerous to public health. In order to avoid the cost and need for the clean up of contaminated water it is vital to eliminate the risks and protect our sources of drinking water. The protection offered by Source Protection Plans can also reduce the cost of water treatment, ensure a long-term supply of safe clean drinking water and eliminate the need to find new drinking water sources when existing ones become contaminated.



As snow and ice melt and run off of paved surfaces it carries with it anything that it comes in contact with such as road salt, motor oil, gas etc. All of these potential contaminants can move through the soil and affect sources of drinking water (both groundwater and surface water).



Why Protect Sources of Drinking Water?

Drinking Water Source Protection primarily impacts people who live or own property or a business in vulnerable areas including those near municipal sources of drinking water. If you live in a vulnerable area, you have a special responsibility to be aware of your actions and how they can impact our drinking water supplies - a responsibility we hope you take personally. That's because certain activities, when carried out near drinking water sources, can pose a risk of contamination. The responsibility also applies if you are leasing, renting or subletting the land.

Water
is life.
Protect
Yours.



Managing the risk

When the Drinking Water Source Protection program began, a lot of research and study went into identifying the sensitive or vulnerable areas around municipal wells and surface water intakes.

A local Source Water Protection Plan is in place in Sault Ste. Marie and most municipalities across the province. These plans contain policies to manage risks such as the threat posed by the application and handling of road salt and the storage of snow in areas around municipal wells.



Working together to protect water

Drinking Water Source Protection starts with identifying if your property is located in or around a Wellhead Protection Area (WHPA) or an Intake Protection Zone (IPZ). Contact your local Risk Management Official (RMO) or Conservation Authority, who work with landowners to ensure their activities do not pose a threat to our drinking water supplies.

If you are in a vulnerable area or you plan on making changes to your property's use, your local Risk Management Official will help you find solutions intended to keep our municipal drinking water safe. They are available to speak to you on the phone or in person to answer any questions you might have.

Local policies were created to provide conditions on what volumes or what measures need to be in place to safeguard our municipal drinking water sources. In some cases a Risk Management Plan may be required. A Risk Management Plan is a document that outlines measures to reduce or eliminate the risk that a certain activity could pose to municipal drinking water supplies.



What can I do?

Everyone has a role to play in protecting our water. Careless use of products for ice and snow can damage both your property and the environment. If you use salt pay attention to the phrase "a little goes a long way", apply just enough to address unsafe areas. Don't apply salt when the temperature outside falls below -15° celsius because it won't have any melting effect. You could also consider using just sand or a product that is less damaging to the environment.



Private wells are your responsibility

The measures and policies put in place to protect municipal drinking water supplies do not include private drinking water wells. If you are a private well owner, you should test your well water regularly and make sure you are maintaining it properly. If you have any health concerns about your well water, contact your local public health unit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT



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Sault Ste. Marie Region Source Protection Area

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