

De-icing salt supplies

Submitted by: Salt Manufacturers' Association

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The unprecedented weather conditions over the early part of February have increased the demand for de-icing salt and many local authorities are urgently seeking to replenish their stocks. Salt manufacturers have responded to this increased demand by implementing round-the-clock working in an effort to keep customers supplied.

In addition, the industry is working with the Cabinet Office, the Department of Transport and others to prioritise the distribution of salt to the most needy areas of the country. Peter Sherratt, the General Secretary of the Salt Association said, "Demand for salt is very heavy at present and it is vital to ensure that it reaches the most critical areas first".

He went on to explain the use of the word 'grit' in some press articles. There has been some confusion over the use of the word 'grit' as opposed to 'salt'. These words are often used synonymously due to the fact that de-icing salt is usually of a brownish colour. This is because it contains small quantities of brown marl which were laid down at the same time as the ancient seas dried out 200 million years ago.

However, some authorities are contemplating the use of gravel and sand as an alternative to salt. This is sometimes used to improve traction in countries where hard-packed snow remains on the road throughout the winter. The constantly changing weather patterns in the UK can mean that stones could endanger windscreens and the sand tends to clog drains and gulleys.

The severity of the current winter will result in higher than normal usage of salt in the UK. De-icing salt has a low environmental impact when used responsibly and the economic value of keeping roads open and relatively safe is widely acknowledged. Members of the Salt Association are keen to ensure that the increased environmental burden is minimised. The Association promotes the use of 'Sensible Salting' Their guidance advises 'As much as necessary – as little as possible'.

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