

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. What are the white lines I see on the roadways during the winter?**



The Department pre-treats certain highways and bridge decks with a 23 percent solution of sodium chloride brine (salt brine) throughout the winter season to mitigate the bond of snow and ice to the pavement surface. The pre-treatment is performed at locations that have a tendency for frost formation and prior to winter storm events.

### **2. What is salt brine? Is it more harmful to the environment than standard road salt?**

Road salt is the same as the salt on the dinner table, NaCl, just bigger particles and not as clean. Salt brine is nothing more than salt and water, NaCl and H<sub>2</sub>O. It doesn't matter if you drop dry salt particles in a pile of snow, or mix dry salt particles with water to make salt brine – you end up with the exact same thing, salt and water. In fact, our salt brine is made with the exact same salt – from the exact same stockpiles - that we spread on the highways.

In terms of impact to the environment, the bottom line is that road sand causes more damage to the environment. The CTDOT has determined that reasonably safe roads can be maintained without sand while keeping the amount of salt treatments at a specific level.

### **3. I haven't seen a snowplow on my road for several hours. When can I expect to have my road plowed?**

The typical cycle time for our plow trucks is 2 to 3 hours depending on weather conditions. Cycle times will vary according to snow fall rates, traffic, equipment availability and other factors.

### **4. What can be done about the corrosion effects on my vehicle?**

It is recommended that you wash your vehicle, including the under carriage, after each storm event or several times during the winter season.

**5. My mailbox was damaged by a snow plow during a snow storm. Who is responsible for repairing it?**

Please contact your local [Department of Transportation office](#) for investigation. If it was determined to be a caused by plowing operations the Department will repair or replace the mailbox with a standard one.

**6. Who is responsible for clearing sidewalks of snow?**

By statue, the majority of sidewalk maintenance rests with the local municipality or the property owner were the sidewalk resides. The Department is responsible for maintaining certain sidewalks on state bridges and other locations where agreements have been consummated with the municipality.

**7. How long does it take after a snow storm to clear the highways of snow?**

The time it takes to clear our highways of snow and ice depends on many factors, including, the amount of snow that has fallen, the rate it is falling, the temperature and time of day. In most circumstances it will take at least 3 to 6 hours after the snow stops to have the highways cleared and traffic speeds returned to normal.

**8. Who decides on vehicle traffic bans on the state highways during major storm events?**

The Governor's Office will decide on whether or not a vehicle ban will be established and or lifted. It is recommended that you check the Governor's website for further information relating to vehicle bans.

**9. When travelling the highway during snow and ice events I sometimes encounter multiple plow trucks driving slowly and aligned in the roadway in a manner that prevents motorist from passing. Why?**

The term for this action is "close echelon plowing" Snow plow trucks that are arrayed across the pavement in a way that prevents traffic from passing the operation. This prevents traffic from passing through windrows of plowed snow and may be the safest and most cost-effective procedure for plowing high volume multi-lane highways. It also prevents accidents and long term closures and delays associated with them. During major snow events the safest place for drivers is behind the snow plow trucks.

**10. Am I allowed to pass a snowplow?**

There are no state laws that prohibit you from passing a snowplow. However, **the action of passing can be extremely dangerous** as the pavement conditions vary across the path taken to pass. Snowplows may be equipped with wing plow blades that can extend anywhere between 2 and 10 feet beyond the width of the truck. This wing plow blade is often not seen because of the snow cloud being kicked up by the snowplow. These wing plows can often weigh as much as a compact car.

**11. Why do snowplows block my driveway with snow when they clear the road?**

We are sorry for this inconvenience. While plow crews try to minimize the amount of snow that gets plowed into driveways during the storm, it is the responsibility of the property owner to clear their driveway opening. Also, as long as there is snow in the street, the plow driver will continue to plow the street. Some of this additional snow will end up at the driveway opening. To avoid double work try to shovel snow from your driveway after the plow has been by, and shovel the snow to the right side of your driveway as you face the road instead of to the left.

**12. Why doesn't CTDOT use more sand?**

Our experience, and the body of research on the use of sand, indicates the benefits of abrasives (sand) applied to roadways are very minimal. Abrasives are easily displaced from the roadway by traffic and they have no ice melting properties. There are also negative environmental consequences such as air pollution and siltation of waterways. When you consider the cost of the material from purchase, storage, and dispersal; through removal, clean up, and disposal; it is not a cost effective material for snow and ice operations.

**13. But are salt brine and salt brine blends causing more corrosion to vehicles so savings on the road are being passed on to motorists at the repair shop?**

The answer is no. Salt brine and salt brine blends are not causing more corrosion to vehicles. As discussed above, salt brine is the exact same chemical composition as dry salt mixed with ice, snow or rain – just salt and water. Less salt used translates into less corrosion potential regardless of whether it is dry salt or wet salt (brine). Studies have shown that the additive blends we use actually lower the corrosive properties of salt. The Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center at the University of Maine also tackled this question. They came to the conclusion that the total number of chlorides in the environment has a much stronger influence on metal corrosion than the type of chloride-based deicer or the method of application.