

SALT OR SAND: WHICH WORKS BEST AGAINST SLIP AND FALLS

Weighing Exposure and Environment

Both salt and sand work well to counteract the exposure of Slip and Falls due to ice or snow build up around premises. As with many things in life, timing is everything in applying salt or sand and, in today's new environmentally conscious society, there are benefits and detriments to both.

'SALT' OF THE EARTH

Salt in water lowers the freezing point by over 15 degrees Celsius. Salt, when distributed on already-formed ice, requires some modest amount of water to start melting the ice. The necessary water can be generated by the sun melting the surface of the ice, or people walking on the ice/salt creating friction and generating heat. Salt has its detractors since it causes corrosion and salty run-off contributes to pollution in local bodies of water and in ground water.

SHIFTING SANDS

Sprinkling gravel or sand on icy or snowy surfaces provides traction but does not eliminate ice. Gravel and sand are often perceived to be more environmentally friendly than salt largely because they are, well, just *more* sand and gravel on top of what is already present.

APPLICATION IS CRITICAL

Salt's unique chemical properties actually are only effective when used to prevent the formation of ice from the outset, rather than as a remedy after the ice has formed – which is when it is normally applied. Salt, when dissolved in water, makes the water harder to freeze.

Sand is only effective when it is on top of the slippery surface. A thaw-refreeze, fresh layer of snow, shoveling or plowing can all eliminate the benefits of applying sand, requiring reapplication.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Although both sand and salt are 'natural', both can also be environmental hazards of a sort when they wind up in our environment in large 'unnatural' concentrations. Water run-off is a key concern, but both also end up in the dust of drier spring conditions and, when made airborne by passing traffic, may be inhaled by passersby.

HKMB HUB'S CLIENT EXPERIENCE

Many companies are considering 'Environmental Impact Best Practices statements. Your *Total Cost of Risk* should now extend to include not just weighing the financial expense of which control method is best in order to provide a safe **footing**, but also the environmental **footprint** you leave behind.

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