



# Looking for a Smart Salt Winter Weather Professional?

## Things to look for in a Winter Maintenance Contract

As the winter season approaches, as a property manager or business owner, you may need to hire a winter maintenance professional. Here are some things to consider when looking for a smart salting winter maintenance professional.

### Design of Winter Maintenance Contracts

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A contract is a document signed by both parties that outlines an agreed-upon level of service. For the contractor, services are provided for a reasonable profit. In return, the client receives a safe property for tenants and visitors. Winter maintenance work is often performed on an hourly and material basis due to the unpredictable nature of winter weather.

Rather than charging for time and the amount of deicing material applied, winter maintenance contracts should encourage the use of best smart salting practices while maintaining an agreed-on level of service. Winter maintenance contracts should be carefully designed to support multiple objectives, including:

- maintaining public safety
- optimizing costs
- minimizing environmental impacts

Your winter maintenance contract should include a description of services that recognizes the impacts of winter maintenance material on the environment, infrastructure, and public health. Additionally, you should include the smart salting best practices you will be using in your services, such as:

- the application of material at the proper amount and rate
- calibration of equipment
- record-keeping
- safe ice melter storage practices
- anti-icing with a brine solution
- manually removing snow before applying deicing material

In your winter maintenance contract, it is also important to address expectations and levels of service. Further, you should include a 'Duty of Care' Statement to clarify that smart salting practices will ensure safety. However, it may not always guarantee bare pavement at all times. This type of language in your winter maintenance contract helps to protect your liability.

When developing pricing and estimating costs for your winter maintenance contract, one of the most important resources will be your own records. It is imperative to document the time, equipment, and materials used on sites with each weather event you provide service to. You will need to rethink how you charge for applications by including the cost of the materials as well as the costs for labor and equipment to apply the material. Additionally, you will need to consider the overhead involved with staging materials, storing materials, site planning, equipment maintenance, and employee training.



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When discussing smart salting practices with your client, you will need to be prepared to address these factors from a business, customer service, and sales perspective.

It will take some time and effort to implement smart salting practices and pricing into your contracts. Winter maintenance contracts designed with smart salting practices recognize the significant investment in equipment, training, planning, materials, and labor incurred by the contractor, and the benefits of smart salting practices should be communicated to the client. Ultimately, the smart salting business model aims to transition profitability away from material-driven applications to a performance-based model where profitability is achieved and justified through more than just material costs to protect the environment, infrastructure, and public health.

### Example Contracts

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Below are several examples of winter maintenance contracts that can be referenced as proactive, sustainable contracts. The policies in these winter maintenance contracts limit potential liability risks while balancing public safety, material cost, and environmental impacts.

- [Model Snow and Ice Policies \(Wisconsin SaltWise\)](#)
- [Model Chloride Ordinances, Policies, and Contracts \(Minnesota Pollution Control Agency\)](#)

### Communicating with Clients

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The smart salting process is a collaborative effort between the contractor and property owner or site managers. It is essential to communicate the importance of smart salting work with property owners and site managers to increase their buy-in to the economically and environmentally friendly practices of smart salting. The proper application rates, material costs, equipment costs, and labor costs will need to be accurately determined and conveyed to clients through transparent and honest discussions.

To promote the adoption of smart salting practices as a contractor, you should:

- Become a certified Maryland Smart Salt Professional
- Communicate concerns about oversalting, including reaching out to proper entities when oversalting is observed
- Advertise the use of smart salting practices on properties with proper signage
- Use proactive, sustainable contracts that focus on an agreed-on level of service utilizing smart salting practices rather than the amount of material applied
- Use plain speak whenever possible – imagine you are explaining the topic to someone with little knowledge on the subject