

City of North Ridgeville
Mayor's Message, Winter 2018-2019

Winter will be here before we know it, so let's talk about salt! Yes, that white stuff we dump on the roads to melt the ice and snow to keep our streets clear. Sounds simple doesn't it? Well, not so fast. Each year we struggle with how much salt to order so we don't fall short or have an overabundance because it is a huge part of our budget. And, we want to ensure we maintain our streets in the manner our residents have become accustomed to! Our Service Department takes great pride in getting our streets as clean as possible after each snow storm and as quickly as possible.

Ironically, we have to order our salt each year in April/May for the next snow season. We participate in the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) salt program which provides for a guaranteed price and supply (although they don't guarantee when). As part of this program we agree to purchase at least 90% of our request with the ability to purchase up to 110% at the guaranteed price.

When I first became Mayor fifteen years ago, the City was using almost 8,000 tons of salt a year and we had fourteen snow plow routes. Our Service Department has instituted controls that although our lane mileage has significantly increased we have cut our salt purchase in half, ordering about 4,000 tons each year. Currently, we have fifteen snow plow routes but need sixteen; however, we do not make as many rounds during a shift as we had previously done.

Other controls that have been established include salting only curves, hills and intersections on secondary streets. It didn't make sense to me to salt a street with a 25 mph speed limit that was straight and flat. We still plow them but spare the salt. In addition, our trucks now have spreaders that allow the driver to dial back the feed rate to conserve salt. Also, in the last few years we have begun using a brine solution that works well, especially when applied before a storm hits. This is a temporary solution and works only for relatively minor amounts of snow.

The City will see an increased cost this year in purchasing salt through the ODOT salt program. Last year's salt price was about \$37/ton at an annual cost of approximately \$150,000. This coming season our costs have nearly doubled, as it will be billed at \$71.64/ton. Each year when we inform ODOT how much salt to reserve, they combine that number with other cities in Lorain County that participate in the program along with their needs and that of the Ohio Turnpike. ODOT then goes out to bid for the best pricing. This year the only bid received by ODOT was from Compass Minerals America at \$71.64/ton. Prior to this year, Cargill Salt in Cleveland has won the bid and provided our salt every year that I've been Mayor except one about four years ago when Morton was our provider for that one season. This year's total tonnage for the county is 68,125 tons. That's 6,000 tons for ODOT, 12,000 tons for the Ohio Turnpike and 50,125 tons for local governments including North Ridgeville's 4,000 tons. Compass Minerals will have approximately 80,000 tons on hand at their storage facilities in Sandusky, OH and West Elizabeth, PA so supply should be sufficient barring an exceptionally bad year.

So there you have it! Our employees in the Service Department do a great job keeping our streets clean and safe. When you see them out there give them a friendly wave, but give them plenty of room. It's not easy maneuvering those big trucks through the snow. No parking on the streets overnight, especially during a snow emergency and stay back from the trucks at least one hundred feet to be safe.

If you have any questions, please contact my office at (440) 353-0811.

Sincerely,
Mayor G. David Gillock