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Media Puts Spotlight on Economic Impact of Impassable Roads

By Mark O'Keefe, Director of Communications, Salt Institute



Snow removal and deicing efforts have made headlines this winter as snowstorms crippled southern cities, such as Atlanta and Tulsa, closing schools, businesses and some roads for days. But even blizzard-savvy cities such as Chicago have had a hard time coping this winter. The Windy City was virtually paralyzed after it got more than 20 inches in early February, the third snowiest storm in the city's history (the record was 23.0 inches Jan 26-27, 1967).

Much of the media attention this winter has examined the alarming economic impact caused by impassable, snow-covered roads, as measured by a major study.

The study -- conducted last year by [IHS Global Insight](#) and [re-released Jan. 11](#) by the American Highway Users Alliance -- estimates the potential economic impact of snowstorms in 16 states and two Canadian provinces. It finds that hundreds of millions of dollars in economic opportunity are lost each day that a state is shuttered by impassable roads. Further, the study finds that hourly workers are the most harshly impacted by such shutdowns, representing America's most economically vulnerable people.



"The bottom line is that the economic impact of snow-related closures far exceeds the cost of timely deicing and snow removal," said Salt Institute President Lori Roman. "As our public officials focus on economic recovery, we can ill afford preventable road shutdowns that cause such immediate harm to working class families trying to make ends meet."

As snow fell across much of the country during the first week of February, the story made headlines in Ohio, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Kentucky, and Wisconsin – all states included in the study. Outlets included [Reuters](#), the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#), the [Toronto Star](#), the [Toledo Blade](#), [Milwaukee Magazine](#), [CBS Detroit](#), and [Environment News Service](#). One article, distributed nationally by ARAcontent under a headline of "[Nationwide Snowstorms Wreak Havoc for Businesses, Economy](#)," has been used by 714 media outlets, reaching a potential audience of 11.4 million readers.

"We're excited that the 2010 and 2011 media releases of our study on the Economic Costs of Snowstorms have reached millions of Americans through every form of mass media, including the Internet buzz," said Greg Cohen, President & CEO of the Highway Users. "The timing of the research couldn't have been better, considering the strong public reaction to two years of widespread snow and ice accumulation from coast-to-coast and great variability in the quality of snow and ice removal."

Another article – "[Winter Blunderland: Public Holds Officials Accountable for Winter Snowstorm Responses](#)" – cited the study to explain how voters have long memories when snowstorms hit them in the wallet. That article has been used by hundreds of media outlets. It could come in handy for anyone trying to convince public officials to invest properly in snow removal and deicing.

"At all levels of government, budget shortfalls are causing many programs to be slashed," Cohen said, "but we're confident that the high level of media interest in our research will prompt public officials to protect winter maintenance budgets from the chopping block."

CBS News Portrays Road Salt as "Winter Weather Staple"

In "Salt of the Earth: A Winter Weather Staple," CBS News correspondent Seth Doane reports that by this time in winter, the only white stuff on the roads that you might welcome is salt. In a positive portrayal of where road salt comes from, aired on The CBS Evening News, the network takes viewers to a salt mine underneath Cleveland, explaining that it helps keep roads safe from Massachusetts to Minnesota. "Salt is limitless," points out Lori Roman, president of the Salt Institute. "We can mine it for the next 1,000 years and still have plenty of salt."



[View the CBS video](#) (you may have to wait several seconds for the player to load, followed by a CBS ad. Only then will the video report on road salt play).

In an [article on its website](#) titled "Cleveland Rocks, and Provides Tons of Road Salt," the network again explains how salt mines help keep roads safe.

Video: How Syracuse Proactively Treats Roads

Syracuse knows snow. The city gets on average about 114 inches per year, the most of any city

in the United States with a population exceeding 50,000. This Highway Users Alliance [video](#) explains how Syracuse takes winter storms in stride by proactively pre-treating its roads with salt to prevent snow and ice from bonding to the pavement.

Salt Guru Video: Coping with Winter

Morton Satin, the Salt Guru, provides tips on how salt can help you get through winter. [The video](#) also provides simultaneously humorous and frightening images, dependent upon your mood and perspective, on what can happen to vehicles when icy roads are not properly treated.

May 1 Deadline for Excellence in Storage Award Applications

To encourage proper storage practices, the Salt Institute annually confers its Excellence in Storage Award to worthy applicants. If you believe you have an excellent storage facility, download the U.S. application [here](#), the Canadian application in English [here](#), and the Canadian application in French [here](#). Award winners receive a plaque and a baseball cap and are announced at this year's International Public Works Congress and Exposition in Denver, September 18-21, 2011. To be considered, **applications need to be postmarked no later than May 1.**

Salt and Highway Deicing Newsletter is a quarterly publication of Salt Institute, the world's foremost authority on salt.

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