



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SUBJECT: Businesses encouraged to apply for chloride reduction rebates through groundbreaking Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District program

MADISON, WIS. – To improve the region’s surface water quality and avoid costly treatment plant upgrades, Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District is encouraging area businesses to reduce salt use and apply for rebates through the district’s chloride reduction program.

The rebate program helps businesses large and small and operates on a first-come, first-served basis. Rebates are tied to salt reductions to the sewer system in pounds per month; for example, facilities that reduce salt to the sewer system by an average of 500 to 1,499 pounds per month qualify for a \$1,000 rebate.

Emily Jones, a pollution prevention specialist with the district, said businesses participating in the program can save money on salt purchases and labor when they upgrade their water softeners or processes to use less salt. Businesses with large softeners can potentially save hundreds or thousands of dollars per year on salt alone.

“Every bag of salt that goes into a water softener passes down the drain and through the treatment plant into local fresh water streams,” Jones said. “Salt pollutes fresh water and levels have been on the rise in local lakes, rivers and streams. The district is facing decreasing limits for chloride in its permit and to meet these requirements, the district can either upgrade the treatment plant or encourage reductions in the amount of chloride that reaches the plant.”

Most sewerage plants aren’t designed to remove dissolved solids such as salt and treatment plant upgrades would result in much higher sewer bills for businesses and residents served by the district. Wastewater that now reaches the plant contains an estimated 220,000 pounds of salt per day and reducing the amount that enters the sewer system represents the most cost-effective path forward. Efforts by customers to reduce salt use can help avoid the need for a much larger investment in treatment facilities later.

To be eligible for the program, projects need to take place in the district’s service area and projects must be completed within six months of applying for a rebate. Applicants need to apply for the rebate before implementing the project.

This is the second year the rebates are being offered; during 2016, 16 organizations qualified for rebates. The rebates average \$1,600 and the district has budgeted \$200,000 for the initiative for 2017.

Brad Bennett, maintenance supervisor of Madison United Healthcare Linen, said his organization is saving money on supplies, maintenance and labor as a result of its efforts to reduce salt use. The nonprofit organization, which serves as a central laundry facility for several nonprofit healthcare systems, is reducing its salt use by 25 tons per year for a savings of \$4,000. With the rebates and the salt savings, the project has paid for itself.

“Reducing salt use makes good business sense and it’s good for the environment,” Bennett said. “As with any other maintenance or system change, our initiatives required upfront planning but the investment will continue to yield benefits over time.”

Steve Brown Apartments also has completed a salt reduction project, trimming more than 4,000 pounds of salt per month from operations at the Lucky apartment building alone. In addition, Steve Brown Apartments is reducing use of road and sidewalk salt, said Mitch Colstad, community manager.

“It’s a savings to our operations that we’ve achieved without any noticeable change for the residents and neighbors of Lucky,” Colstad said. “We’re looking at whether we can replicate this success at some of our other properties. These efforts really add up to keep costs down while creating benefits for all of our community’s waterways.”

For more information about the district’s salt reduction rebates and how to apply, visit the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District website, www.madsewer.org and search “[chloride reduction](#).”

The rebate program is one of several initiatives underway by the district to reduce the amount of salt flowing into area surface waters. Other efforts include the WI Salt Wise Partnership, which focuses on reducing municipal and residential use of road salt in addition to water softener salt.

Sodium chloride, called table salt or rock salt, is composed of approximately 39 percent sodium and 61 percent chlorine. It is the chloride portion of salt that is covered in the district’s permit and consultants estimate a minimum cost of some \$400 million to remove excess chloride from the wastewater stream. To avoid the potential 40 percent cost increase to ratepayers, the district is working to reduce local salt use on the front end.

Additional resources to aid in chloride reduction can be found here:

<http://www.madsewer.org/Programs-Initiatives/Chloride-Reduction/SaltReductionResources>.

ABOUT MMSD

Established in 1930 to protect the lakes and streams of the upper Yahara watershed, Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District today serves 28 Madison area customer communities covering some 360,000 people. The district owns and operates 95 miles of gravity sewer and 18 regional pumping stations that convey approximately 41 million gallons of wastewater to the Nine Springs Wastewater Treatment Plant each day. Organized as a municipal corporation, the district is a leader in sustainability and resource reclamation; its rates are established by the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District Commission.