

# National Emergency Salt Reserve

Salt Protocol - Note for Local  
Highway Authorities in England

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1** Following the recommendations of David Quarmby's independent review into the response of England's transport system to severe winter<sup>1</sup>, in 2010 the Secretary of State for Transport instructed the then Highways Agency to build up an emergency salt reserve to ensure national resilience.
- 1.2** For this winter season, the Department has retained an emergency salt stockpile of approximately 271,906 tonnes with a further 95,526 tonnes being held by Highways England.
- 1.3** This note sets out the arrangements for allocation of salt from the emergency salt reserve, if and when required, including the price of salt.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20111014014059/http://transportwinterresilience.independent.gov.uk/>

## 2. The principles of the Emergency Salt Reserve protocol

- 2.1** Local highway authorities have a responsibility to ensure that they are adequately prepared for winter by maintaining sufficient salt stock. In the independent winter resilience report, it was recommended that local highway authorities has a resilience benchmark of 12 days/48 runs, as recommended by David Quarmby, for pre-season stockholding for English local highway authorities.
- 2.2** Authorities should also review their history of usage and mutual aid or other arrangements to consider:
- a. whether there is a case for increasing capacity towards 48 runs if it is currently less than this, in addition to filling the capacity they have; or
  - b. at what level to stock – at or above the 48 runs level – where the capacity exists to do so.
- 2.3** The national emergency salt reserve stockpile is therefore the salt of last resort, in the event of prolonged severe winter weather across the country. Therefore we continue to encourage local highway authorities to procure salt for their own networks in good time to ensure delivery, and do not rely on the strategic salt as the first point of call. Due to the issues arising from winter 2017/18, the Department endorses the recent guidance issued by the Salt Association<sup>2</sup> in respect to supply chain experiences and challenges faced last winter by highways authorities and, consequently, by their salt-producing suppliers.
- 2.4** The Government does not make any profit if there is a need to allocate salt from the emergency salt reserve to highway authorities. The premium price of the salt only covers the cost of the salt itself which has been imported from various locations overseas together with the additional cost of it being stored and managed at various port locations around England.
- 2.5** The December 2010 audit that David Quarmby undertook at the request of the then Secretary of State for Transport also highlights the importance of making the best possible use of salt. David Quarmby

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.saltassociation.co.uk/pre-winter-season-message-salt-association/>

had a specific concern over the variation in spread rates between local highway authorities and the audit contained a recommendation to central Government, asking that we should urgently make available further research evidence from the National Winter Service Research Group to help underpin decisions by highway authorities on salt spread rates.

- 2.6** This work was completed in December 2010 and is available on the UK Roads Liaison Group (UKRLG) website - [www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org](http://www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org). Authorities were also sent a copy of this document.
- 2.7** The Department also draws attention to the wider winter guidance which the UKRLG issued within the Well\_managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice published in October 2016 - <http://www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org/en/utilities/document-summary.cfm?docid=4F93BA10-D3B0-4222-827A8C48401B26AC> .
- 2.8** This links to the Practical Guide for Winter as issued by the National Winter Service Research Group - <http://nwsrg.org/publications/guidance>
- 2.9** We also encourage local authorities that may be running low on salt stock whilst awaiting a delivery from their salt supplier to consider mutual aid between authorities. Over previous winters mutual aid came in many different forms, including in the form of ad-hoc requests direct to the Department or through resilience teams. This year we encourage neighbouring local highway authorities to work together and provide mutual aid wherever possible. If this causes problems then the next step would be to contact the MHCLG Resilience and Emergencies Division (RED). The Division who can assist in mutual aid brokerage can be contacted as follows:
- [REDControl@communities.gov.uk](mailto:REDControl@communities.gov.uk)
  - 24/7 Duty Office Telephone – 0303 444 2718 and 0303 444 2799.
- 2.10** Desk Officers within MHCLG Resilience and Emergencies Division will consider the request and try to facilitate mutual aid. This will entail:
- finding a source of salt, agreeing how much could be provided in mutual aid;
  - how the provider would be recompensed by the organisation requesting the aid (payment in money or salt amount returned after the emergency and once the outstanding salt delivery has arrived); and
  - when and how the salt would be delivered.
- 2.11** This would have to be agreed by both parties, the organisation requesting the salt aid and the organisation supplying the aid.

Experience has shown that the above activity is likely to take at least 3 hours per mutual aid request.

# 3. Regular salt stock monitoring

- 3.1** For this winter (2019/20), we will request, via email, that Local Highway Authority Winter Service Managers provide salt stock data to the Department for Transport as and when requested. The objective of this is to:
- Monitor existing salt stocks across England, Scotland and Wales to ensure sufficient country wide resilience is in place; and
  - Support timely data-collection in the event of any future severe winter weather event.
- 3.2** The frequency of the survey will be risk-based, i.e. dependent on overall resilience levels across the country and weather outlook. However we would expect to request information at least once per month during the winter season from December 2018 to March 2019.
- 3.3** It is not the purpose of the system to benchmark performance of individual highway authorities, or to advise highway authorities of how they should be managing their winter service. It should be noted that the information collected could be published as part of the Government's wider transparency agenda and would in any case be accessible via any relevant Freedom of Information/Environmental Information Regulation requests.

# 4. Winter Road Salt Network Group

- 4.1** If we believe that the supply chain is unable to fulfil their contracts due to the supply of salt not being available, the Department may consider resurrecting the Winter Road Salt Network Group, who may meet if necessary.
- 4.2** The Group will bring together officials from the Department for Transport (Chair), the Devolved Administrations (both Scotland and Wales), Highways England, Transport for London, the Local Government Association (LGA), ADEPT (previously the County Surveyors Society), the Met Office, the Cabinet Office and MHCLG Resilience and Emergencies Division. The purpose of the meetings will be for the Group to consider whether any authorities require access to salt from the national emergency salt reserve.
- 4.3** In addition the Group will also provide information, not advice or direction, to domestic salt suppliers based upon returns provided by Highways England, Devolved Administration and local highway authorities on:
- salt stocks;
  - estimates of future usage derived from Met Office weather forecasts; and
  - an assessment of the available market supply.
- 4.4** Suppliers will then decide on their weekly salt delivery arrangements.
- 4.5** Prioritisation of who should be allocated stock from the emergency salt reserve will primarily be determined by analysis showing which authorities require an amount of salt in order to bolster their resilience to a minimum capability threshold.



## 5. Purchase of salt from the National Emergency Salt Reserve

- 5.1** If an authority is deemed, following the Winter Road Salt meeting, as requiring salt from the national emergency salt reserve, the Department will send the authority an offer of salt for purchase. Whilst we will be happy to accept a lower level of salt for purchase, we will not be able to exceed the quantity offered unless there are exceptional circumstances. Authorities will be given 24 hours to accept the offer.
- 5.2** If an offer of purchase is accepted, the Department will send a confirmation sheet with the tonnage to be collected by the highway authority.
- 5.3** The Department is unable to accept 'returns' once the authority has entered into a contract for purchase of salt from the national emergency salt reserve.

## 6. Cost per tonne for winter 2019/20

- 6.1** The price per tonne of salt from the emergency salt reserve is £65 per tonne excluding VAT for 6mm Salt to BS3247 and haulage. Haulage has to be arranged by the local highway authority and to be collected from the nearest available location to that authority.

# 7. Future Contact

7.1 The Department can be contacted at the following email address throughout the winter season for any salt related inquiries:

- [Road.Salt@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Road.Salt@dft.gsi.gov.uk)

**Department for Transport**

**November 2018**