



Emergency Stockpile Capability

According to the Salt Institute's Salt Storage Handbook (available in the Resource section of our web site), an agency should have at least 100% of a normal year's supply stored for its winter operations.

A few states and some local agencies have in place emergency stockpiles of salt to supplement their annual seasonal supplies. These emergency stockpiles are for situations during severe winter events and when salt supplies become extremely low and resupply has become difficult or impossible.

Some of these emergency supplies are uniquely stored underground. The remaining emergency supplies are stored traditionally but generally in remote locations and are only used when the normal operating supplies run very low.

Procurement for emergency stockpiles can be done during normal bidding but often are done outside of normal bid when low-cost opportunities arise. Emergency stockpiles do more than just give agency peace of mind they give them a great purchasing power.

In some cases, agencies that have emergency stockpiles may have up to three years of their normal salt use. This gives them the flexibility to purchase salt when prices are low and to forgo the purchase of salt when prices are extremely high.

Another option, although not widely used, is to pay vendors to store an emergency supply in your state for you.

Generally, vendors do not want to store emergency supplies for agencies simply because in most cases they do not have the storage facilities to do this.

If the vendor does store salt for an agency, the agency pays for the salt and a storage fee to hold the salt. There is also normally a timeline by which the agency will need to take this salt. It is not an indefinite storage option.

Having an emergency stockpile provides an agency with protection against salt shortages that can develop during severe winters.

Practice in Salt Procurement	Impact of Practice
Having storage for 100% to 150% of average annual salt needs (AASN)	Lowers costs
Having emergency stockpile for 20% to 40% of AASN	Lowers costs
Specifying desired salt quantities as tightly as possible	Lowers costs
Requiring mid-winter delivery in short time period	Raises costs
Having Multi-year contracts	Lowers costs
Allowing salt deliveries at any given time (rather than during work hours)	Lowers costs
Requesting bids earlier in the year	Lowers costs
Having multi-year contracts	Lowers costs
Taking pre-season fills of salt	Lowers costs

The numbers: Ideally the emergency stockpile should hold at least 20% of the average annual salt usage, with a recommended maximum of 40% of average annual salt usage.

The Alternatives: Implement a plan to include emergency storage capability. Consider shared facilities with other agencies to reduce the cost of emergency storage and reduce the need to help other agencies when supplies get low. Consider paying vendors to have emergency supplies for you.

The needs: emergency storage requires an agency to have an additional site, of some sort, in an area that should be easily accessible during a winter season. It also requires that an agency have a funding mechanism in place in order to purchase salt, in excess of its normal use, at a time when prices are optimal. The sites require the same regulations, equipment and maintenance as any normal site.

The future: emergency storage may be one of the best options for agencies to increase the amount of salt they have available during severe winter seasons. Existing facilities are often very difficult to retrofit or construct additional storage facilities upon. Emergency storage can also benefit many agencies and that can sometimes make the option more palatable to elected officials and the public.

