

# Newer technology should save money, keep roads safer

**Paul Cluff**  
Goderich Signal Star

A newer technology of rock salt should keep county roads safer and save taxpayers cash in the long run.

At their Nov. 13 meeting, Huron County council agreed with a public works recommendation for the purchase of 4,500 tonnes of ThawRox, an amount needed for the winter. Total cost is \$403,393.

Dave Laurie, director of public works, said ThawRox could save the county a significant amount of money in staffing and equipment.

This will be the third winter that the county has used this particular brand of road salt, Laurie told the Signal Star. The county used 3,200 tonnes of the product last year, up significantly from the year before. The product, mined in Goderich, is stored at the county's salt sheds in Auburn, Wingham, Wroxeter and Zurich.

Some 107 municipalities and counties use the product in Canada- owned by U.S. based Compass Minerals - a spokesperson told the Signal Star.

According to its website, ThawRox can help reduce applications by 20 to 30 per cent and 95 per cent of the application stays on the road, about 25 per cent more than typical treatments, according to the company.

Paul Johnson, operations manager for the County of Wellington, said ThawRox is about five times as effective as regular road salt.

"The big thing is you don't get the bounce and scatter of regular salt," he said.

It also has a residual effect so less has to be used (and lasts longer) and it works at far lower temperatures. "Ice starts to melt immediately, versus the other dry salt that has to attract moisture to start working."

Johnson said he played a

part in inventing the product using a combination of mixtures to try and find a better product, after the province downloaded highways.

"We mixed it and put it in pile. Over the years we convinced Sifto it was something we should be using and delivering."

"They built their first facility at our Harriston shop - a coverall building and put in the scales." Liquids had been used for winter maintenance for decades Johnson said.

Magnesium chloride and a refined corn are added to the salt nowadays. The blue colour comes from a food grade colouring added to the liquid mix - helpful at 3 a.m. when treated and untreated salt are in close proximity.

"It is a very effective product. It has a very low freezing point and dilutes perfectly. It has taken off now, to the point where more and more are using it."

ThawRox is pricier than traditional road salt, but only about \$20 per tonne, Johnson said. "It is more expensive because you are starting with same base of salt, plus adding the cost of liquid and cost of mixing it."

According to its website, ThawRox was awarded the Design for the Environment (DfE) label by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for environmental benefits and uses natural, environmentally friendly additives. It also states that safe and clear roads can be achieved through less product, less chlorides are used than traditional road salt and the colouring is non-staining and doesn't impact waterways or vegetation.

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