

## Highway Dept. eyes brine

By Joe Darrow

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The town may begin using salt in place of sand to counteract snow and ice next year, according to Highway Superintendent Glenn Jorgensen.

In addition to faster melting, brine — salt suspended in water — is becoming increasingly cost-effective in comparison to sand, according to town officials.

New state Department of Environmental Conservation requirements prevent Smithtown from storing sand swept off streets following winter in its Montclair Avenue Highway yard, as was recent past practice. The town can use the sweepings to line landfills, but its final landfill, cell 6 in Kings Park, will soon be completely capped, at which point it has arranged to cart and dispose of the sand at a Town of Brookhaven site.

The additional transportation and storage charges are quickly making sand a costlier melting and traction agent in foul weather, according to town Environmental Director Russ Barnett.

Another economic upside is that unlike sand, which is spread on top of snow, brine can be sprayed on streets the day in advance of a snowstorm, allowing the Highway Department to do more of the storm response work during regular hours and cut down on overtime costs, Jorgensen said Tuesday.

A drawback, however, is that partial or complete conversion to salt would require new equipment, Jorgensen added. Trucks could be outfitted with new brine spraying units to cover most streets, but special vehicles, equipped with direction-controlled nozzles, would likely be needed to treat the larger state highways, such as Routes 25 and 25A, the Highway chief said.

Jorgensen said he planned to visit other Long Island towns that have begun using brine during the snowstorm forecast for Wednesday to inspect the results. He's already acquainted, though, with one complaint other municipalities have encountered since making the switch. Salt is less noticeable than sand, and residents feel they aren't getting their tax dollars' worth of highway services, Jorgensen said. "People are used to seeing brown."