

Halachos of Daily Living

There is a wet snow falling on Shabbos, and I am concerned that my front steps and walkway will freeze over and become very slippery, am I permitted to put down salt on Shabbos?

In general,

it is forbidden to actively melt ice on Shabbos (See Shulchan Aruch OC 320:9).

Also, one may not handle ice melting pellets, since they are *muktza*. However, when there is a public safety

concern, it is permitted. Shulchan Aruch (OC 308:18) writes that one may remove a public safety hazard from the road, even in a place where there is no *eiruv*, so long as one's act of carrying does

not violate a Torah prohibition. Based on this, Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchaso

[25:9:(49)] writes that to protect the public from dangerous icy conditions,

one is permitted to put down salt on Shabbos. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, *zt"l* ruled that in this area of *halacha*, "the public" is defined as any group

of three or more individuals, even if they are members of your family. If three

or more people might walk down your front steps, and it would be dangerous if

it turns to ice, this is considered a public hazard, and it is permitted to put

down salt.

What is the bottom line – may I shovel my walkway on Shabbos?

Having ruled

leniently in all of the Shabbos issues raised above, the Nishmas Shabbos

(4:247) concludes that there is an element of *zilzul* (degradation) of Shabbos in

shoveling snow on Shabbos as it appears inappropriate to the general

population. As such, it is best to shovel only when there is a real danger of

people falling and harming themselves. Even then, it would be better to use a

broom rather than a shovel and, if at all possible, a non-Jew should do the

shoveling.