Sample Letter for your Clients

Dear ………..

Re: Possible Road Salt Shortages

Landscape Ontario Horticultural Trades Association and our salt suppliers have informed us that there may be serious salt inventory shortages this year. Salt suppliers are predicting that the inventory shortage may last beyond 2019 depending on weather, production capacity at the mines and overseas import activity.

The reasons for this inventory shortage include:

* An Ice storm just before spring 2018 depleted inventory
* The Compass Minerals mine in Goderich (the world's largest salt supplier) experienced an 11-week strike this summer.

Please see: https://www.compassminerals.com/info/news/statement-from-compass-minerals-goderich-mine-regarding-strike/

This has seriously affected the amount of salt available for shipping and stockpiling. Salt is typically stockpiled during the summer months. Suppliers predict that it will be physically impossible to replenish the stockpiles before winter because of the logistics of moving salt.

* Another major producer (Cargill) is having difficulty with maintaining supply because of a water leak in their Cleveland mine. Please see: https://www.news5cleveland.com/news/local-news/cleveland-metro/cleveland-salt-mine-attributes-salt-shortage-to-water-leak-winter-storms
* Municipalities are ordering more salt due to liability issues.
* Increasing inclement weather events has necessitated the use of more road salt.
* Municipalities have been given priority because of contractual obligations.

The major North American mines have informed contractors and suppliers that there would be little or no supply from traditional sources.  As a result suppliers are sourcing salt from all over the world. However transportation costs are higher and logistics are complex. In addition the process is full of risk from quality, financial and transportation perspectives. Reduced supply and increased demand is causing a great deal of insecurity. We expect substantial price increases because of this situation.

As your service provider and safety partner we would like to work together to develop a proactive plan to deal with this serious issue. The issue affects both of us. We will not be able to do the same job as we did in the past with lack of salt.

Some ideas include the following:

* Work with suppliers to secure salt as soon as possible. This means that we will have to pre-pay for salt and find areas to stockpile the product. Would you be willing to work with us on securing and stockpiling salt? (Presuming we can secure supply)
* Develop a menu of service levels. Not all properties require the same service level. In some cases you may be able to close off areas. This could reduce salt considerably.
* Post warning signs and encourage tenants to wear proper footwear

It is also very important to revisit our contract to deal with possible salt inventory shortage, substantial increases due to rising salt costs and change in operational procedures.

Additional considerations for reduced salt use include using segmented plows, using treated salt when available, pre-wetting salt, enhanced training, calibration of equipment, locating snow piles judicially, using direct liquid applications prior to a snow event (Anti-icing), the use of sand and alternative products where appropriate etc. We will do all we can (within our control) to manage the situation.

As a responsible winter maintenance contractor, our role is to help you, so far as is possible, to meet your winter maintenance obligations at your premises. Given the salt shortage, different, creative and more expensive steps will have to be taken to do so. Unfortunately, if available strategies are not approved and deployed, we will be unable to properly assist you with your obligations. Although this is a circumstance beyond our control, we do look forward to working with you to manage the issue as effectively as is possible.