



CUSTER COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

25365 US HWY 385

CUSTER, SD 57730

Phone: 605-673-5678

Fax: 605-673-5879

Some answers to common Mag Cl questions

A response to: “why did you cover up my Magnesium Chloride?”

Every August-September, we take complaint calls asking the above question and, “why did you blade through my Mag”, or “my Mag isn’t working anymore”. Magnesium Chloride is totally reliant on moisture to be really effective. So, when the weather turns dry and hot and the relative humidity drops way down, Mag is not nearly as effective. There’s a common belief out there that blading through Mag somehow makes the Mag disappear or push it off the road or stop it from working. That’s simply not true. Even after blading, the Mag is still there in the gravel and with sufficient moisture it will re-activate. You will even be able to see the Mag in the road again. On numerous occasions we have put a 4”+ lift of new gravel over top of a Mag section of road and the Mag will “draw” up into the new gravel and you will see Mag in the new road again.

The Custer County Highway Department retains the authority to conduct maintenance activities at any time, regardless of the private application of Mag Chloride. On private Mag applications, contractors will most likely have you sign a contract that re-iterates the same information about maintenance on a county road.

Generally speaking, for liability reasons, any agency (federal, state, or local) discourages a private individual from doing any kind of work on a public road. However, I understand that private landowners want to reduce dust generated from roadways. The county simply can’t afford to put Mag on every mile of road we maintain. That’s why we allow the application of Mag water by a private individual on a county road. We try to work with Mag contractors and coordinate the application of those private jobs on county roads. Each private application still requires that the county come to the site to blade/prepare the surface for the Mag they put on.

When we do maintenance blading we prefer to do the entire length of the road. Keeping crown in a gravel road is a never-ending challenge. Even sections of road with Mag on them lose shape and crown. After some time a mag section of road gets flat and can’t shed water and since Mag is ‘water seeking’, this, and a flat road, creates potholes. That’s why Mag gets bladed through.

Refer to ‘Mag Cl factors’ (also found here on the website) for more information on Magnesium Chloride.

Jess Doyle
Custer County Highway Superintendent