

## "Ooze Gets AAAHS for Keeping Ice off Parkway"

By Joe Malinconico

*Star-Ledger Staff*

No one ever made a big deal about the brown, sweet-smelling goo that oozed from the pipes at the Hungarian vodka distillery. Not until a chemist at the plant noticed something strange about the small, slow-running stream that ran by the distillery. It never froze, no matter how cold outside.

Eventually, some enterprising folks converted the substance into a de-icing product that made its way to the market and now to the Garden State Parkway, where officials swear it will make this winter's driving safer and smoother, and cause less rust and corrosion to vehicles.

Parkway officials announced yesterday that the marvelous goo, which goes by the brand name **Magic Minus Zero™**, will be their main weapon against highway icing this year. The New Jersey Highway Authority, which runs the Parkway, has agreed to buy \$1.36 million worth of the stuff, which can be used in several ways.

The authority's existing stockpile of 11,566 tons of rock salt will be run through a giant conveyer-driven machine that will mix it with the substance, not unlike coating popcorn with caramel. In addition, the state is buying 25,000 tons of salt already treated with the product, and Parkway officials also plan to try spraying the substance in its liquid form on the roadway to prevent freezing.

**Magic Minus Zero™** does not come cheap. The pellets pre-treated with **Magic Minus Zero™** cost about 40 percent more than standard sodium chloride, or rock salt. In its liquid form, the substance costs twice as much as the calcium chloride liquid that the highway had been using.

But officials insist the stuff is worth the price because it is noncorrosive: It will save money because it will not gnaw away at metal bridges, tollbooths and guardrails. And although anyone driving through the syrupy glop will notice an unsightly brown film on windshields and paint jobs, Parkway engineers said it will hose right off and that windshields can be cleared just as easily as when rock salt is used.

Because it's used in highly diluted form, officials said, it won't gum up salt spreaders and it won't stick to car fenders or the soles of people's shoes.

It's also biodegradable, meaning runoff will not taint fields and waterways. "It supposed to be safe enough that you actually can eat it," said Rob Fischer, Parkway construction manager. Not that anyone has tried a taste.

But the Parkway last year did test **Magic Minus Zero™** capabilities as an ice-fighter on

sections of the road near the PNC Bank Arts Center in Holmdel and in Bergen County. "It worked well," said Dan Noxon, the highway's chief maintenance engineer. "Last year we never got one complaint."

The New York State Thruway and many counties and towns in upstate New York have used the material the past two years, Parkway officials said. **Magic Minus Zero™** also has been used in Pennsylvania and throughout New England, according to Daren Crawford, vice president of sales and marketing for Imus Inc., the Rome NY, company that make the substance.

**GRAPHIC CHART**

	<b>Magic Minus Zero™</b>	Calcium Chloride
Liquid form	Thick and sticky	As fluid as water
Produces	Brown film	White flaky residue
Environmental impact	Biodegradable	Highly corrosive
Origins	Agricultural byproduct	Chemical compound
Effective at temps as low as	40 degrees below zero	31 degrees below zero