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Date: 2000/10/27 Friday Page: 020 Section: NEWS

Ooze gets aahs 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 conveyor-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's 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, N.Y., company that make the substance.

GRAPHIC CHART:

	Magic Minus Zero	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

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Date: 1999/11/05 Friday Page: 031 Section: COUNTY

Sussex prepares to fix crumbling parking garage

\$434,000 slated for judicial complex structure

By Fred J. Aun
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It will cost Sussex County about \$434,000 to repair the county judicial complex's disintegrating parking garage in Newton, even though the \$2.5 million structure is only about 7 years old, officials said yesterday.

The county set aside the funds over the past two years, anticipating the work, and is gearing up to spend the money, Sussex County Administrator Carmine Marchionda said.

It did not take long for problems to emerge at the parking structure off High Street.

In 1995, less than three years after the three-tier structure received a certificate of occupancy, chunks of concrete ~ including a 25-pound slab -began falling from failing support columns.

Some of the concrete on the structure is deteriorated from the effects of calcium chloride, applied to melt ice, that seeped into poorly designed joints, Sussex County Director of Facilities Management Joseph Biuso said.

He said there are places where you can scoop up portions of the disintegrated concrete with bare hands.

Wondering about the extent of the structure's obvious problems, the county freeholders last year hired Cowley Engineering, a structural and forensic engineering company from Bedford, N.Y., to conduct an inspection.

"They went in, did a very nice job and quantified all the problems in the facility, the design defects, construction defects, deficiencies by poor maintenance, actions required, costs for repair and long-term maintenance recommendations and costs, II Biuso said.

Repairs were made to the garage over the years, and Biuso said it is not about to collapse.

However, he said fixing the structure will be a major undertaking that will create "a big disruption" since sections will be closed during the work.

Neither Marchionda nor Biuso knew when the work will begin. -

Marchionda said Sussex County Counsel Dennis McConnell is studying the case to see whether the county should take legal action against Prismatic Development Corp., the Fairfield contractor for the judicial complex and garage, or any other company involved in the construction.

A man who answered the phone late yesterday at Prismatic, but declined to give his name, said nobody was available to discuss the situation.

However, he said the garage was built by a subcontractor from Virginia whose work was approved by the county.

Repairing the structure is only the beginning, according to the Cowley report.

The document warns the county that it must treat the garage with care.

“During snow removal, care should be taken not to damage the decks and sealer with snowplows or other equipment,” the report said.

“Also, axle weights for snow removal equipment should not exceed 4,000 pounds. A snowplow blade must not be allowed to touch the concrete deck surface, sealants, toppings or joints.”

The report notes a “heavy rubber blade edge” can be mounted to the snowplow blade, but even that should be kept about a half-inch off the surface during snow removal.