

Ice Wars

Here's what Branch Creek and Secure Winter Products are doing to help you fight the worst that winter throws at you.

By Jeff Cross

When winter strikes, virtually all cleaning professionals are concerned about icy sidewalks and the liability of someone slipping and falling.

They are also concerned that what they put down to melt the ice will be tracked into their buildings, leaving



unsightly and even damaging residues on carpet and hard floors. Entry®, a product of Branch Creek, offered through Secure Winter Products, could be the answer.

As the world moves toward safer and more environmentally friendly products, Branch Creek and Secure Winter Products is taking the lead. This company is known for researching and developing organic solutions for the soil in the agricultural, commercial, residential, and golf industries. Branch Creek is committed to creating earth-friendly alternatives.

Enter Entry, the first 100% chloride-free de-icer. This greener, residue-free, liquid formula is much safer for surfaces and the environment and clears outdoor surfaces rapidly of ice and snow before slips and falls can happen. Entry melts ice, snow, and worries—without the mess of salt.

The creation of Entry

Nate Clemmer, CEO and founder of Branch Creek and Secure Winter Products, says, “We work with a large number of landscape contractors who, in the winter sea-



Entry solves the issue of the salt being tracked into buildings, and leaves no more residue than plain water.

son, manage snow and ice. As a result, we have used our plant assets that would normally be making liquid and granular fertilizers into making liquid and granular ice melts.”

Over the years, landscape customers would often ask for product options that would reduce damage to metals, not kill grass, harm pets, etc. Clemmer adds, “We listened to these requests and ultimately created the product we know as Entry.”

The right fit

But once Branch Creek created the product, sales did not go as smoothly as they had hoped. For the first two seasons that Entry was on the market, the same landscaper contractor customers who asked for

it were not buying it. Clemmer relates, “We were close to quitting on Entry when we decided to attend some trade shows that catered to facility managers and building owners. As soon as we started talking to this audience, we began to hear things like, ‘I have been looking for a product just like this,’ or ‘Why did my landscape contractor never tell me about this?’”

From that point, they focused on facilities. Today, 90% of traditional ice melt products are sold to landscape/snow contractors. The *flipside* is that 90% of Entry sales are to facility managers and building owners.

Other challenges

The creation of Entry came with other challenges as well. First, because it is a seasonal product, the company does not have the ability for continuous improvement.

“We have essentially nine months to plan for three months. If we do not make an incremental improvement in the winter

beacon of hope in the industry, providing a product to address real concerns.

Clemmer is especially proud of the fact that Entry earned Green Seal® certification, the only de-icer product, he says, to do so.

And last, but not least, they had to ensure that their product was not the only thing that was innovative. Clemmer explains, “A product can be innovative, but if nobody wants to use it or sell it, you really have not innovated.” As a result of this reality, Branch Creek and Secure Winter Products developed application equipment

challenges that ice melt tracking creates for the custodial staff,” says Clemmer.

“The ISSA marketing team was instrumental in helping us understand how to speak the language of facilities.”

Entry was the top winner in the ISSA Innovation Award Program at ISSA Show North America 2019.

Growth and reaction

At this moment, Branch Creek and Secure Winter Products only offer Entry for sale in North America. International expansion is being considered for the

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months, we waste a year and in the early stages, could abandon the innovation,” Clemmer explains. “The best comparison I can make is to a child who spends an afternoon setting up an entire table of dominoes. The goal is for the final domino to drop off the table into a cup on the floor. After all the preparation, the child knocks down the first domino. The result could be a domino in a cup, or it could be a failure after a small portion of the dominoes drop. You don’t know what you have until you try, and if you fail you do not get another chance for another year.”

Secondly, the ice melt industry does not have regulatory oversight. Subsequently, Branch Creek and Secure Winter Products had to bring to market a product that had integrity and could be a

that makes the use of Entry better than ripping bags and applying ice melt with salt spreaders. “We created battery powered sprayers that have broken down the walls of staff that do not want to change. When we combine a better product with a better process, we call that ‘innovation squared.’ We also had to develop a distribution model that would attract top tier companies to support Entry.”

The ISSA impact

Branch Creek and Secure Winter Products work with an array of trade organizations across the variety of industries they support. But their experience with ISSA has surpassed all of them by a considerable margin.

“ISSA’s Cleaning Management Institute helped us understand the unique

second half of 2020. With that in the works, and despite the less-than-normal winter weather in North America, they are as busy as they can handle.

“The end-user and distributor reaction has exceeded our expectations. Customers are thrilled to have an alternative to the mess and damage caused by traditional products,” claims Clemmer.



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