

# COTE BLANCHE FACT SHEET

## WHO WE ARE

- The Cote Blanche salt mine has operated since 1961 and is among the largest private employers in St. Mary Parish.
- It is located on Cote Blanche Island, which is approximately 1,000 acres. It is the youngest of the five “salt dome” islands in the area that rise 75 feet or more out of the surrounding marshes.
- The mine has more than 180 employees whose families live, work, play and go to school in St. Mary and Iberia parishes.
- The mine’s employees, vendors, suppliers and contractors contribute an estimated \$2.7 million per year to the local economy.



## WHAT WE MAKE

- Cote Blanche salt mine produces more than three million tons of rock salt per year. The salt is used primarily by governments and contractors for deicing public roads. It also is sold to manufacturers that make plastics, detergents, disinfectants and other important products.
- Cote Blanche salt mine is the largest producer of Louisiana’s three major salt mines.
- The salt mine produces nearly 15% of America’s highway deicing salt.

## SAFE PLANT, SAFE DRIVERS

- Safety comes first at the Cote Blanche salt mine, with all employees participating in numerous trainings throughout the year to ensure positive safety performance.
- The Cote Blanche Mine rescue team claimed four awards from the 44th Annual Southern Mine Rescue Competition. The team earned the Dwight C. Bonin Memorial Award for finishing first in the Southern Salt Division. The members also picked up the Salt Institute Southern Regional Mine Rescue Association’s traveling trophy for first place in the overall Southern Salt Division. Finally, the team won first place in the smoke contest and finished third in the field competition.
- The rock salt produced at the mine is used to keep Americans safe as they travel through winter snow and ice. The mine’s salt is used on roadways in 18 states from Georgia to Minnesota.

## HISTORY

- Geologists believe that 300 million years ago a narrow saltwater ocean covered what is now Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. When the sea evaporated, it left behind a vast sheet of salt that then was covered by thousands of feet of sediment. Since the density of salt is generally less than that of surrounding material, the salt moved upward during geological shifts, forming domes. Thousands of years ago these upthrusts breached the surface marsh in several places. When more water turned the marsh into the Louisiana coast, the upthrusts became five islands – now named Cote Blanche, Avery, Weeks, Belle Isle and Jefferson.
- Inhabitants have gathered salt from brine springs along the Louisiana coast for centuries. The first salt mine in North America began in 1862, when workmen on nearby Avery Island enlarging brine springs to produce more salt for the Confederacy hit solid salt at a depth of 16 feet. The salt works were destroyed by Union forces the following year, but after the war, a mine shaft was sunk through 58 feet of a solid salt dome to a depth of 90 feet. Salt mining in the area has continued ever since.
- Although geologists were aware of the salt deposit at Cote Blanche Island due to oil exploration early in the 20th century, it wasn't until 1961 that Carey Salt began excavation of the Cote Blanche salt mine. The mine became part of the Compass Minerals family in 1990.



## HOW IT WORKS

- Cote Blanche Island miners work 1,500 feet underground – the equivalent of four football fields, end-to-end, and straight down. Miners cut into the rock salt face using specialized equipment, then drill holes into the face and use five tons or more of explosives per day to break the salt into small pieces. Front-end loaders and trucks load and haul the salt to equipment that crushes, screens and sorts the rock salt to the required sizes. Then the salt is hoisted to the surface and loaded onto barges for shipment.

### CONTACT US

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### KEY PERSONNEL

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