

# PUBLIC HEALTH CONNECTION

FEBRUARY 2009



SCOTT COUNTY  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT



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## WINTER SAFETY

Bitter cold temperatures, snowy streets, icy sidewalks, and overall blizzard like conditions... some may say it's just another winter day in the Midwest! Living in the Midwest, we may expect such winter conditions; however, we may not be prepared for them. The first step to keep yourself and your family safe during this time of year is to know how to prevent cold related health problems and what to do if a cold weather emergency arises. These tips and explanations should help you prepare for common cold weather emergencies.

### Frostbite

Frostbite is an injury to the body caused by freezing. It most often affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers or toes, causing loss of feeling and color. Frostbite is serious and can cause permanent damage, even amputation.

Signs of frostbite include:

- a white or grayish-yellow skin area
- skin that feels unusually firm or waxy
- numbness

If you must be outside for any length of time in extreme cold, be sure to keep exposed skin covered and check yourself and

your children for these signs. Warm up frozen or chilled skin by pressing against normal temperature skin. Seek medical attention if skin does not quickly return to normal color or pain occurs and continues.

### Hypothermia

In cold temperatures, your body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced. Being in the cold for a long time will eventually use up your body's stored energy. When this happens you could get hypothermia. Hypothermia is low body temperature.

Recognizing signs of hypothermia is the first step in preventing this dangerous condition. Adults could experience:

- shivering, exhaustion
- confusion, fumbling hands
- memory loss, slurred speech
- drowsiness

In infants you may notice

- bright red cold skin
- very low energy

If the person's body temperature is below 95°F the situation is an emergency so seek medical attention immediately.

### Injury from Falls

With extreme winter weather comes the hazards of slippery streets, sidewalks, and parking lots. Injuries from falls can range from minor bruises to broken bones or brain concussions. Falls are especially serious for older adults. We should all prepare ourselves for slippery conditions by knowing what to do to avoid a fall and what to watch for if a fall does happen.

Symptoms of a brain concussion include:

- confusion
- headache
- blurred vision
- nausea

If you fall and hit your head and you experience these symptoms, it is best to call your healthcare provider, or if necessary call 911. The best protection against falls is prevention. If you must go out on slippery surfaces, be prepared:

- Wear treaded, rubber-soled boots
- Walk on the grass when the sidewalks are slippery
- Sprinkle ice-melt or cat litter on slippery steps
- Take your time, go slow

## WINTER DRIVING TIPS

NOTE FROM  
PUBLIC HEALTH SAFETY SERVICE AREA

When it comes to winter weather, road conditions often deteriorate quickly.

Below are some winter driving tips to remember when snow and ice are on the horizon.

Tip #1: If you get stuck, do not spin your tires. Reverse gently, and move back as far as possible without spinning your wheels. Then accelerate gently forward in the wheel track you just

created. Repeat as necessary.

Tip #2: If your brakes lock up, do not panic. Reduce brake pedal pressure just enough to feel the wheels roll again. Straighten the vehicle's path with gentle use of the steering wheel. Reapply brakes gently.

Tip #3: If you encounter a front-wheel slide, slow the vehicle down by smoothly lifting off the gas pedal. Turn

the steering wheel back to center, or if you are already braking, lift off the brakes and straighten the steering wheel.

Tip #4: If you encounter a rear-wheel slide, lift off the gas pedal and do not touch the brakes. Steer into the direction you want to go, and once you feel the vehicle stop rotating, turn the wheel the other way.



## PROTECT YOURSELF FROM RADON

NOTE FROM ENVIRONMENTAL  
HEALTH SERVICE AREA

Radon is a radioactive gas, which you cannot see, taste, or smell. Radon gas is produced from the natural breakdown of uranium in soil, water, and rocks, and is found in the air you breathe. Radon gas can seep into homes and buildings through cracks and holes in the foundation, where it can become trapped inside. Radon can be found in buildings new or old and it is impossible to tell if there is a

radon problem without testing. Testing is relatively simple and inexpensive and is highly recommended.

Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Radon gas radioactive particles are breathed into the lungs where they get trapped. This may damage the lungs and may lead to lung cancer. If you are a smoker and have high levels of radon in your home, your chances of

getting lung cancer are increased. Your chance of getting lung cancer depends upon the amount of time you spend in your home, the radon levels in your home, and whether or not you ever have or currently smoke.

Visit [www.radon.com/](http://www.radon.com/) or your local hardware store to purchase a radon test kit. Make plans to test your home today!

**Testing your home is the ONLY way to know if you have a radon problem**

## CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

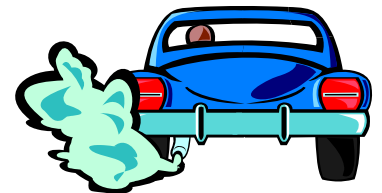
NOTE FROM  
CLINICAL HEALTH SERVICE AREA

During the cold winter months more people look to alternative methods of keeping warm indoors. When people use space heaters and fireplaces to stay warm, the risk of household fires increases, as well as the risk of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. CO is an odorless, colorless

gas that can cause sudden illness and death if inhaled. Carbon monoxide is found in combustion fumes, such as those produced by cars and trucks, small gasoline engines, stoves, lanterns, burning charcoal and wood, and gas ranges and heating systems. CO from these sources can build up in

enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces. People and animals in these spaces can be poisoned by breathing it.

Carbon monoxide detectors can be purchased at local hardware stores and can be used to alert people of the presence of the carbon monoxide in the home.



## SCOTT COUNTY SECONDARY ROADS

### COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Secondary Roads is a department of Scott County that is in charge of the construction and maintenance of all roads under the County's jurisdiction.

Funding for the construction and maintenance of Scott County's roads comes from several different sources. Scott County, like other counties in the State of Iowa, operates with revenue from two different funds. They include the Farm-to-Market

Fund and the Local Secondary Road Fund. The largest source of money going into these two funds is the Road Use Tax.

Secondary Roads is responsible for maintaining 561 miles of road, of which 217 miles are paved. They are also responsible for 120 bridges in Scott County. All 561 miles of county roads are plowed of snow, of which 344 miles are plowed by motor graders and 217 miles by trucks. There are 14 truck

routes and 8 motor grader routes. Typically, Secondary Roads takes delivery of approximately 1,500 tons of rock salt each year.

Secondary Roads operates on weekdays from 7:30am-4:30pm, and can be contacted at (563) 326-8640 for any questions or concerns. Visit <http://www.scottcountyiowa.com/roads/> for more information.



## NATIONAL CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH

### NOTE FROM COMMUNITY RELATIONS, INFORMATION AND PLANNING SERVICES

February is National Children's Dental Health Month. The focus is on providing oral health education to all children despite their economic status.

As a centerpiece to this national health month, *Give Kids A Smile Day* is observed on the first Friday in February every year. *Give Kids A Smile Day* was designed to provide education, preventative, and

restorative care to low income children who do not have access to care. In the Quad Cities, *Give Kids A Smile Day* is observed annually and benefits many children in need.

The *I-Smile Dental Home Project* is a collaborative effort that was created to fulfill the mandate that every child receiving Iowa Medicaid ages 0 to 12 years must have a dental home by 2010. The

Scott County I-Smile Coordinator is available to assist families living in Scott County who need help finding a dental home. The I-Smile Coordinator maintains a list of providers who accept Medicaid and can provide referrals to a dentist in your area. Call 563.326.8645 or visit [www.scottcountyiowa.com/health](http://www.scottcountyiowa.com/health) for more information.

Have You Been to a Dentist Lately?

## SALT VS. SAND

### COMMON CONFUSIONS: SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

When it comes to winter weather, keeping the roads safe for driving is a high priority. However, there often arises the debate about what is the best substance to use on roads: salt or sand?

While salt is helpful in melting away snow and ice, it is rising in cost. Sand

helps with traction, but has to be reapplied repeatedly during a snowfall and it can also accumulate on the roads and clog storm drains. Salt or salt alternatives still prove to be the best mechanism to combat snow and ice covered surfaces.

"Think Green" when it comes to snow and ice removal:

- Reduce salt use. Applying more salt will not speed up the melting process.
- Limit sand use. Sand does not melt ice, it only provides traction. Run-off containing sand can increase sediment levels in our creeks and streams.
- Try an alternative. Calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) was developed as a deicing alternative because it has fewer environmental impacts than salt and does not cause corrosion.

**SCOTT COUNTY  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

Scott County Administrative Center, 4th Floor

600 West 4th Street

Davenport, Iowa 52801-1030

Phone: 563.326.8618

Fax: 563.326.8774

E-mail: [health@scottcountyiowa.com](mailto:health@scottcountyiowa.com)

Web site: [www.scottcountyiowa.com/health](http://www.scottcountyiowa.com/health)

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**OUR MISSION:**

The Scott County Health Department is committed to promoting, protecting and preserving the health of the community by providing leadership and direction as advocates for the individual, the family, the community and the environment we serve.

**OUR VISION:**

As recognized and respected leaders in serving and protecting our citizens, we at the Scott County Health Department are committed to a safer, healthier community and environment. In so doing, we provide a multitude of services with Professionalism, Responsiveness, Involvement, Dedication, and Excellence.

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**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

- Friday, February 6, 2009; Give Kids A Smile Day
- Thursday, February 19, 2009; 12:00-1:00 p.m.; Scott County Board of Health Meeting  
*Open to the Public; Location: Scott County Administrative Center,  
Board Room-1st Floor*



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**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.