

# TRAFFIC AND SAFETY INFORMATIONAL SERIES

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION #19

### **How Does a County Make Decisions about Dust Control on Gravel Roadways?**

As anyone who lives near or travels on a gravel roadway knows, dust can be an annoyance. It can irritate the eyes and can make it hard to breathe. Heavy dust can also be a safety hazard if it reduces visibility at roadway intersections and curves. Additionally, dust means the loss of roadway material, which can lead to road deterioration in the form of washboarding, ruts, and potholes.

#### **How the state defines the problem**

Road dust on unpaved roads consists of fine particles that feel like powder when rubbed between the fingers. Most dust control strategies are aimed at reducing “fugitive dust,” which consists of airborne particles but not those emitted from a flue or stack and not those generated from farming operations or *ordinary travel on unpaved roads*.

#### **What are typical county policies on dust control?**

Many Iowa counties have approved dust control policies that specify procedures for public dust control applications and a permitting process for private application of dust control materials. Talk to the local county engineer for the specific policy and procedures followed in a particular county.

#### **What materials are used to control dust?**

Each county maintains a list of approved dust control materials and application procedures. Waste oil is no longer used to control dust because it may contain contaminants that are harmful to the environment. However, many other dust control materials can be used, such as calcium chloride, magnesium chloride, and lignin sulfate. These dust control materials are usually applied by coating the roadway surface to reduce interactions between the surface and the tires traveling over it.

#### **The cost of dust control**

The specific cost of dust control varies with the type of material used. The cost to treat all of the unpaved roads in a typical Iowa county could total several million dollars per year.

Because the application of dust control materials can be expensive, counties cannot afford to apply dust control materials on every unpaved road. As a solution, counties sometimes allow the general public (with proper permits) to apply dust control materials on unpaved county roads next to their property. Permits must be acquired from the appropriate county or counties, usually through the county engineer’s office. Permittees may be required to meet certain specifications related to the application of dust control materials.

#### **For more information**

For more information, please contact \_\_\_\_\_.