

How cold was it on Monday and Tuesday? Cold enough that state EMA officials and the Indiana State Police spent a lot of time over the weekend and the past two days sending out information about what to do if stranded, what vehicle emergency kits should include, warnings about closed or hazardous highways 'way up north in Indiana and general information about staying safely at home.

Cold enough that the Scott County Emergency Management Agency activated on Sunday, January 5, setting up a network of relief centers and, if needed, shelters, advised EMA Director David Murphy.

"We are very fortunate to have a great number of people wanting and willing to help those who need food, shelter and heat. We developed a plan of relief involving our local schools and churches as well as the Clearinghouse and animal shelter. And we did get a few calls where we were able to direct assistance," Murphy related. The EMA Center is located in the basement of the Scott County Courthouse. Its impressive array of equipment was obtained through grants and provides an easy way of keeping in touch with each member of its staff of volunteers as well as law enforcement, public officials and state agencies. Murphy was happy enough with the way things went that, by Monday, a meeting was scheduled to see if the local EMA should remain at Level 4 activation or de-activate. Odds are, with the cold temperatures expected that night and Tuesday, the agency would remain on alert. "We need to be ready to respond," Murphy said. It was cold enough that Indiana Governor Mike Pence called out 96 members of the Indiana National Guard on Sunday and put them to work in teams of four to help emergency services technicians trying to reach people who needed medical attention and stranded motorists, again mostly in northern Indiana. People up there got from 13 to 15 inches of snow. Yes, the same snow that was to fall here but missed Scott County for the most part. Cold enough that farmers who generally allow their cattle to weather the weather out in the open pasture brought the cattle inside their barns for at least two nights. Several were busy over the weekend, setting up hay feeding stations and making sure water sources were heated and available to their stock.

Dogs and cats who normally live outside were also brought inside by concerned pet owners.

Cold enough that one of the bulletins from the ISP, Sellersburg post, asked residents to make sure their fire hydrants were clear of snow. Just in case.

Cold enough that observers around bodies of water could see freezing fogs forming over the top of the water, giving a hazy appearance to some areas.

Scott Countians haven't seen cold this, er, cold since around 1996, according to Louisville-based meteorologists. For us old-timers, the blast from the arctic regions brought back memories of the blizzards (yes, blizzards!) of 1977-78 that literally froze commerce, except for gas stations and grocery stores, for some weeks and kept students home for OVER A MONTH. Now, that was weather!

Somehow we all muddled through that as well as the big snowstorm of '05 that dumped 29 inches here. Lost a lot of mailboxes in that storm. Honestly, the Highway Department crews really couldn't tell where the roads ended and the berms began. Until they hit a mailbox.

Road conditions can be obtained via the internet by going to <http://indot.carsprogram.org/> or by calling 1-800-261-ROAD (7623). Up-to-date county travel statuses were updated at a blog-type website at <http://www.in.gov/isp/3096.htm>.

Austin Mayor Doug Campbell reported that several Austin residents had called his office on Monday, January 6, to report problems with their water lines. He conferred with street and sanitation workers early that morning and decided no trash would be picked up that day and probably none would be collected Tuesday as well. "The safety of our workers is the number one issue for us, and these really cold temperatures make it hazardous to work outside. We'll get the trash once the temperatures go back up Thursday," he said.

That department's crew instead spent a lot of time scattering cinders at street intersections and at trouble spots to help those motorists who reported to work on Monday. Some salt was spread but not much, since salt needs warmer weather in order to melt ice.

Scottsburg City Hall also had just a skeleton crew working on Monday, mostly answering phones. Two calls came in from residents wondering why trash hadn't been collected. Don't worry, it will be, they were told, but not that day. Or probably Tuesday. Maybe Wednesday, depending on conditions.

Jill Baker, Scott County Highway Superintendent, was manning her office's phones on Monday. "We are trying to spread cinders as best we can, but in these temperatures, even cinders freeze. People just need to slow down and be cautious while these driving conditions exist," she stated. As least the ice cover wasn't so thick that it was breaking off tree limbs. "Knock on wood," Baker quickly added. "We'll probably be in the same boat on Tuesday. We're just waiting for the temperature to go back up so we can get some work done."

It was so cold that several meetings scheduled Monday and Tuesday were postponed. The Scottsburg City Council did not meet that evening as scheduled. Instead, it will meet on Tuesday night, January 21, unless a meeting has to be called to take care of business that cannot wait.

According to Mayor Campbell, the Austin City Council meeting set for Monday night was to be held as scheduled.

The Scott County Courthouse opened two hours later than normal on Tuesday morning, January 7, because of the cold.

The Scott County Visitors Commission normally meets on the first Tuesday morning of each month. It didn't, members opting to change the meeting date from January 7 to Tuesday, January 14. The meeting will be held at Heritage Station off North Main Street in Scottsburg at 10 a.m.

The annual meeting of Preservation Alliance Inc. set for Tuesday night, January 7, was also postponed until Tuesday, January 14. That meeting will take place starting at 5 p.m. at the Scott County Heritage Center and Museum.