

# A Healthier Iowa: One Community at a Time

## EMS more than just responding to emergencies

Mention “EMS,” and most people think of flashing lights and sirens. After all, that’s what Emergency Medical Services is about, right? True, the emergency care provided by EMS is at the core of emergency medical services. However, in Iowa, EMS saves lives by preventing emergencies as well as responding to them.

Two examples of the preventive function of EMS come from Cedar Rapids and Clive. In each case, EMS providers show they’re going beyond emergency response to help protect and connect with their communities.



### Promoting bicycle helmets

In 2006, 416 of the 426 Iowa bicyclists injured were not wearing helmets. Clive Fire Department Assistant Chief, Brian Helland helps to promote helmet use by organizing community-wide bike rodeos and even setting up bike helmet giveaways at local trails.

“If we see kids riding without a helmet, we’ll get their attention and offer them a free one,” Helland said. “Sometimes the kids will ride back and forth, deciding if it would be ‘cool’ to wear a helmet. They usually end up stopping and taking one.”

Helland says the West Des Moines EMS efforts appear to be working. In the four years he has been involved in the program, more than 600 helmets have been given away. This past summer, a head count on a local bike trail showed 87 percent of children and adults were wearing helmets.

### Improving installation of child seats

Child safety seats or booster seats are required by Iowa law for all children from birth to age 6. Unfortunately, most seats are installed improperly, and therefore may not function correctly in the event of an accident.

*Following a bike rodeo and helmet giveaway event, Iowa EMS providers show residents their ambulance and other life-saving equipment.*

Derek LaGrange of Area Ambulance in Cedar Rapids conducts monthly child passenger safety seat checks. He’s also had special training in transporting children with special needs. Within weeks of that training, a mother with a special needs child arrived at a check-up event.

“Here was this mother with an \$850 or \$900 car seat, and no one had shown her how to use it,” Derek recalls. “She was so thankful. Her husband was serving in Iraq and she was on her own.”

Derek says the seat’s improper installation not only compromised its ability to provide protection during a crash, but the positioning of the seat was causing breathing problems for the child. Derek now works with a group for mothers of special needs children to ensure they have proper safety seat training.

Helland and LaGrange are just two examples of EMS providers who have taken emergency medical services beyond a reactive function to a proactive effort. There are 13,000 certified EMS providers in Iowa and more than 800 authorized services.

Prevent  
Epidemics & the  
Spread of Disease

Promote  
Healthy  
Behaviors

Prepare for,  
Respond to, &  
Recover from PH  
Emergencies

Prevent Injuries

Strengthen the  
Public Health  
Infrastructure

Protect Against  
Environmental  
Hazards