

# OPINION

## AN ECHO PRESS EDITORIAL

# Tips for dealing with ice dams

It's the season for ice dams. If your home's roof has developed these frozen outgrowths in past winters, then the new year may be a good time to make a resolution to take action to save yourself from costly home repairs, according to the Minnesota Commerce Department.

There are right and wrong ways of dealing with the problem. The commerce department offers the following advice for homeowners to conserve energy in their home and prevent ice dams.

### What causes ice dams

Ice dams are not caused by roofing, ventilation or gutter problems, as often believed. The real problem is a home that is leaking warm air.

Due to inadequate air sealing, heat from the home's interior gets into the attic and melts the underside of the snow on the roof. The melted snow water flows down the roof surface until reaching a cold spot such as the eaves or soffit, where it refreezes and forms an ice dam.

Over time, especially with a snow-covered roof in subfreezing temperatures, more ice can build up. Eventually, water starts seeping into the home.

The result? Dislodged roof shingles, sagging gutters, water-soaked insulation, stained ceilings, peeling paint, damaged plaster and even mold or structural damage to the home.

### How to prevent ice dams

Because the primary cause of ice dams is air leaking from the attic, the best way to prevent them is to seal leaks with caulking or expanding spray foam, with attic insulation installed to a minimum of R-50 as space allows.

An advanced home energy assessment, or audit, is your first step to preventing ice dams and making your home more energy efficient. The assessment will use equipment such as an infrared camera to identify attic air leaks and what needs to be done to seal them.

A home energy audit can be arranged through your local utility, a nonprofit energy group or an HVAC professional.

Once problem areas are detected, get bids from at least two licensed contractors to have the work done.

### If you have ice dams...

If you need to remove an ice dam on your home, the safest and most effective action is to hire a professional ice dam removal company that uses steamers.

There are also some things you should not do.

- ▶ Do not install heating cables, which shorten the life of your roof and cost money to operate.

- ▶ Do not remove ice with chippers, chemicals or heat, which can damage shingles, gutters and other building components.

- ▶ Do not add roof vents, including powered vents, which will not eliminate ice dams and often make the problem worse.

To stop ice dams, the best course of action is to attack the root cause, the attic air leaks. Sealing these leaks will help stop ice dams, prevent costly home damage and save on your energy bill.

For more information on preventing ice dams, sealing air leaks and adding insulation, check out the Minnesota Commerce Department's Home Energy Guide (pages 8-20) at [mn.gov/commerce-stat/pdfs/home-energy-guide.pdf](http://mn.gov/commerce-stat/pdfs/home-energy-guide.pdf).

## LETTERS

### A solution to the salt problem - new tires

To the editor:

I read your article about the ongoing salt problem ("What to do about salt," Jan. 4) with interest. I am a Smithsonian subscriber so I've been thinking about it for a while.

Rebates from the government for high efficiency water softeners is a great idea. In a free market society, incentives from the state are often necessary to convince people to make financial decisions that are in the interest of the common good. They also stimulate the economy.

People in our society are too accustomed to making short-term decisions in the interest of short-term profits or savings. These economic concepts play themselves out in a unique way every winter when, at times, we must all share the roads with others who have not made a seasonal upgrade in their choice of automobile tires.

So - why not help people pay for new tires? We could certainly use less salt on our roads if more people used the best snow and ice tires. I purchased new ones and the difference is mind-boggling. It's a unique joy being able to obtain traction on glare ice.

Not only could we get by with less salt, but most importantly, we could all be safer if more of us were properly equipped for winter travel.

A stitch in time saves nine.

Judd Hoff  
Forada, MN

### Broadband initiative contains major flaw

To the editor:

Rural communities are increasingly depending on high-speed internet to complete an education and talk to their doctors. Meanwhile, connecting to broadband internet has become a necessity in today's digital

economy. As we advance deeper into the 21st century, broadband access will grow as an important indicator of quality of life for communities across the nation.

In December, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced its Reconnect Program to supply broadband to communities with less than 20,000 people. This program is a step in the right direction to bring rural areas on an equal footing, but it willfully ignores a major barrier to broadband development.

Under current rules, internet service providers report their broadband service information twice per year through Form 477 based on the census blocks they serve. There are 11,078,297 census blocks nationwide, and if one household is reported as "served," the whole block is reported as having access to broadband - even if their neighbors have no hope of connecting.

Census blocks can span for miles - there are more than 3,200 in the U.S. that are larger than the District of Columbia and eight are larger than Connecticut.

If a household miles away has access to broadband, it makes no difference to rural Americans who are unable to grow their small business or complete a school assignment - they are considered "served" if on the same census block.

While not all states rely on this data, those that do must take action to ensure this flawed information is corrected before applying for USDA Reconnect Program funds for broadband expansion.

Cody Smith, policy assistant  
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Lyons, NE

Established in 1973, the Center for Rural Affairs is a private, non-profit organization working to strengthen small businesses, family farms and ranches, and rural communities.

## IT'S OUR TURN

# Sifting through a 55-year career

For the past two months, Ron Stoen has been unpacking. It's a slow process when you're 78 years old and you're sorting through more than a half-century of your life.



ROSS EVAVOLD  
Editor

Ron and his wife, Jeanette, owned Stoen Farm Supply on Highway 55 in Lowry for 55 years, until last November when a combination of health issues and age caused them to close the doors.

They held an auction to unload what they had gathered over the decades, but Ron said that Saturday in November turned out to be coldest day of the month, with sub-zero wind chills. All 800 on their customer list were invited, but those who braved the weather didn't stay long, leaving the couple with much more than they hoped to sift through.

Stoen was just 23 when he started the business, just a couple of years after his father, Arnold, died on Christmas Day 1961. Arnold was only 38 when he came down with polio. It took a tank respirator, known as an iron lung, to keep him breathing, and he was hospitalized for two or three years.

Despite being paralyzed from the neck down, Ron's dad had plenty of determination and when he returned to his Starbuck home, he set to work by inventing a lift that could be used by Ron and others

to pull him out of his wheelchair and lay him in his bed. It was later patented as the Stoen Lift.

That sense of invention was passed down to Ron, who in the early 1990s devised a metal loading pad that was used by anyone who was mixing, loading or handling bulk chemicals. "We hit the ground running, and had big response in several states," he said. He has come up with other creations, too.

"I tried following in my father's footsteps," Stoen said.

He shared more than that with his father, who during the last several years of his life launched a business where he would call on farmers in the region, selling seed and farm products out of the back of a hearse. The hearse was renovated to accommodate his wheelchair, and he hired a Glenwood man to drive him around. Arnold and his unique vehicle made quite an impression on farmers. Just two years ago, a man from Sauk Centre came into the store and told Ron that he still had one of his Arnold's calling cards.

As the youngest of the kids and the only one left on the farm after his dad died, Ron and his mother milked cows and in 1963 he picked up where his dad left off and started selling farm supplies out of the farm. By the 1980s, he opened a store in Lowry.

Stoen Farm Supply kept people coming into Lowry, and in recognition of that and their contributions, Ron and Jeanette were presented by the Lions Club with the 2016 Citizens of the Year award.

By last year, however, business had dropped, and the Stoens decided it was time to get out. For someone who was used to going into work six days a week, retirement has been a big adjustment.

"I love to work," he said. "I miss it, especially the people coming in and visiting. A lot of the old timers would stop by. That was the main thing."

He also misses his best friend, Frank Chan, who died last month. The two became known in the National Wild Turkey Federation's local chapter as Two Grumpy Old Men, and at the group's state convention last year, received distinguished service awards for their work.

Stoen's not a coffee drinker, so he hasn't gone into town in the mornings for coffee as other retirees do. He and his wife live on Pocket Lake, five miles north of Lowry, but he isn't an ice fisherman, so he is bidding his time until the fishing opener in May.

But he is still unpacking, and with that comes plenty of memories - memories that will keep him company for quite a while.

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"It's Our Turn" is a weekly column that rotates among members of the Echo Press editorial staff.

## COMMENTARY

# What are panic attacks trying to tell us?

By Claudia Liljegren, MSW, LICSW,  
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People who experience panic attacks oftentimes have intense fear and stress that may be frightening to others as well as to themselves. Panic attacks usually begin abruptly, reach a peak within about 10 minutes, and subside over the next several hours.

Many who experience a panic attack have physical symptoms that can be truly alarming. For example, those suffering with panic attacks can actually experience symptoms that are feel similar to a myocardial infarction. The symptoms feel so real that emergency rooms are oftentimes used to decipher the source of these discomforts, especially if there has been a medical history.

Other symptoms include numbness or tingling sensations, trembling or shakiness, nausea or abdominal distress, chills or heat sensations, being short of breath, feeling smothered or choking, having chest discomfort or pain, having tunnel vision, fear of "going crazy" or of losing control, having a strong urge to escape at the time of onset, having chest pain, hyperventilating, and having a fear of dying.

Oftentimes, if an individual is aware that they are having a panic attack, they can oftentimes get through the experience easier. It is when people panic about having a panic attack that it gets tougher to beat. Unless there are real concerns that this experience is a sign of medical complications, it is very important to accept that the panic attack is just an automatic response to the anxiety in your life. It will pass, and you will go on. Usually, the experience is harmless, although frightening.

A panic attack is a physical reaction to heightened tension, as a muscle cramp is to stretching too hard, or tears are to sadness, or a growly stomach is to hunger, or a headache is to stress. Our bodies are miraculously made to give us clues about what is going on with us when our mind is too preoccupied with life. Oftentimes, we force our bodies to scream at us for attention, but because it requires too much change, we often don't listen.

Panic attacks strongly shrieks of a need for change for many. They are just too uncomfortable to endure. So, we may have to fall on our knees and succumb to the realization that we have to listen to our bodies. Even though relaxation is a very difficult thing to do for many these days, it just might be required. Of course, there are those strong-minded folks that are able to stifle their bodily signals with strong wills and a determination to keep going, but in the end - who really wins?

Although panic attacks are automatic and we have little control to stop them, we still have the ability to work with them. Relaxation is a skill, be it deep breathing, muscle relaxation exercises, challenging worrisome thoughts, engaging in pleasant activities, setting limits or boundaries, etc. No doubt, learning how to relax takes effort. It is a matter of changing what is important to us and making choices about who is in charge, ourselves or all the other stuff that gets in the way and keeps us running. As some famous person wrote, "Worry begets worry." If panic attacks are a problem, learn to relax and reduce your stress. Learn to breathe, smell the flowers, dance in the rain, take a nap, and tell yourself that it is time to make some changes. Maybe, you and your body will sing a new song.

### Submitting letters to the editor:

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