

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSURE

Background

The safety of students and personnel, in and on school property, when school is in session or during school-sponsored activities is paramount. When the Division closes school(s) or cancels bussing it is done with careful consideration; students benefit academically and socially from being in school. It is important to note that when schools remain open on days with inclement weather, parents and guardians make the final decision on whether to send their children to school, and they can keep children home from school if they choose.

Procedures

1. Emergency School Closure

The Superintendent of Schools or designate has the authority to temporarily close schools in emergent situations where the health and/or safety of students and staff may be endangered.

1.1 Emergency Closure – Emergency closure may be required under the following circumstances:

- 1.1.1 Extreme weather conditions,
- 1.1.2 Power failure,
- 1.1.3 Water and sewer problems,
- 1.1.4 Fire, or
- 1.1.5 Any other situations that may endanger the health and safety of students and staff.

1.2 Early Dismissal and/or Closure

- 1.2.1 Whenever possible, students are to remain at school until normal school closure.
- 1.2.2 If early school closure is required, the decision is made by the Superintendent of Schools or designate.
- 1.2.3 If the Principal is unable to contact the Superintendent of Schools to make the decision in a reasonable period of time, the Principal shall contact the Assistant Superintendent Corporate Services, if both individuals are unavailable then the Principal is authorized to make the decision to enact early closure.
- 1.2.4 If early closure occurs, the Principal must ensure that parents and/or guardians are informed, and permission to release students is obtained before they are dismissed.
- 1.2.5 Bus drivers are to ensure that each child is left in the care of a responsible person when the bus reaches the child's home, or make arrangements for an alternative drop-off.

1.3 Partial System Closure

In some circumstances, especially when inclement weather is involved, it may be necessary to decide to close one (1) or more schools in a particular busing service area. Such a decision shall be made by the Superintendent of Schools or designate and shall be communicated to all concerned parties as outlined elsewhere in these procedures.

1.4 System Closure

When a decision is made by the Superintendent of Schools or designate to close all the schools in the jurisdiction, that decision shall be communicated to the media and all other concerned parties as outlined elsewhere in these procedures.

1.5 In all circumstances where there is a school closure, the Principal must ensure that there is a responsible staff member at the school to look after the needs of any students who may not have been aware of the school closure and who arrive at the school.

1.6 Staff are expected to be at their normal place of work and must make a reasonable effort to attend. If a school is closed prior to the start of the school day then staff may work from home.

1.7 Staff continue to be paid if they are absent from work in such circumstances.

2. Inclement Weather or Hazardous Road Conditions

2.1 The Superintendent or designate may choose to cancel busing in a community or throughout the Division, if at 7:00 p.m. the night before, or at 5:30 a.m. the day of, The Weather Network forecasts the **temperature with or without wind chill**, between the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., to be at or lower than minus forty (-40) degrees Celsius.

2.2 If buses are cancelled, schools will remain open to staff and students who can arrive safely.

2.3 Individual bus drivers are able to determine if road/weather conditions are a threat to the physical safety of students. If there is any concern over road/weather conditions, it is the responsibility of bus drivers to contact the Director of Transportation in order to receive final approval prior to cancelling their route.

2.4 In the event a driver deems the road conditions unsafe, the driver will not attempt to convey students on his/her route to their designated school, and will work with the Director of Transportation to inform the parents on the route, and Principal of the school the students attend.

2.5 The Superintendent of Schools or designate in consultation with the Director of Transportation, may cancel buses either individually or collectively when weather conditions are so inclement, or road conditions are so hazardous as to constitute a safety risk to the students being transported.

2.6 Bussing may be suspended for the entire school day under the following conditions.

2.6.1 When the **temperature with wind chill** in the affected area is at or lower than minus forty (-40) degrees Celsius.

2.6.2 When temperatures have had or have the potential to cause mechanical issues to a significant number of Division buses.

- 2.6.3 When the affected area has a reduced visibility that may make the operation of the bus hazardous to the safety and well-being of the school bus passengers and the reduced visibility is forecast to remain unchanged throughout the day.
- 2.6.4 When the affected area has road or climatic conditions that are forecast to be of a nature that may make the operation of the bus hazardous to the safety and well-being of the school bus passengers.
- 2.7 Suspend operations of a bus or buses for the morning bus run under the following conditions.
 - 2.7.1 When the affected area has a reduced visibility that may make the operation of the bus hazardous to the safety and well-being of the school bus passengers and the visibility is forecast to improve later in the day.
 - 2.7.2 When a weather event that jeopardizes travel in the affected area is forecast to improve later in the day.
- 2.8 Suspend operations of a bus or buses chartered for field trips under the following conditions.
 - 2.8.1 When the affected area has road or climatic conditions which are of a nature that would make the operation of the bus hazardous to the safety and well-being of the school bus passengers.
- 2.9 Require school buses to transport students home before the end of the school day
 - 2.9.1 When the affected area has road or climatic conditions forecast to be of a nature that would make the operation of the bus hazardous to the safety and well-being of the school bus passengers.
 - 2.9.2 When the Superintendent or designate has approved the decision.

3. Media Communication Timeline

- 3.1 Decisions to close schools and/or to cancel buses will be made and communicated as early as reasonably possible. Every effort will be made to adhere to the following timeline:
 - 3.1.1 Before 6:00 a.m., designated driver representatives will have reported road and weather conditions in their geographic area to the Director of Transportation.
 - 3.1.2 By 6:00 a.m., the Assistant Superintendent, Corporate Services will have informed AM1140 / The Eagle 100.9 FM / Sun Country 99.7 FM of a decision to close schools or to cancel buses in one (1) or more geographic areas or across the Division.
 - 3.1.3 Staff and families are notified by the Division “call out” system.
 - 3.1.4 The Division will also ensure that communication is up to date on its website and its avenues for social media.

Reference: Relevant Legislation & Guidelines