
EMERGENCY CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS AND/OR SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION

Background

To ensure a safe and caring school environment that is conducive to effective learning, due consideration must be given to the safety of students and staff with regard to hazardous conditions. Schools must remain open to students during the times and dates established in the school calendar. However, conditions can arise which require the temporary closure of a school or schools, or the cancelation of a bus route. The Superintendent, therefore, may temporarily close a school or schools or temporarily suspend school bus service if the health and safety of students and staff are endangered.

Procedures

1. **Closure of Schools.** Schools may be closed when emergency conditions in or near the school create an unsafe environment for students and staff.
 - 1.1 If conditions in or near the school create an unsafe environment for students and staff, the principal will implement the provisions of the school's Emergency Response Plan.
 - 1.2 The principal will advise the Superintendent of conditions at the school that caused the implementation of the provisions of the school's Emergency Response Plan.
 - 1.3 The Superintendent will, upon being advised by the principal of the unsafe conditions at the school and the implementation of the school's Emergency Response Plan, decide whether to close the school.
 - 1.4 When a decision to close a school has been made, students and staff will remain away from the school until the condition causing the closure has been improved to allow school operations to continue.
 - 1.5 Each principal will develop procedures that address local issues resulting from the emergency closure of the school, and will communicate these procedures to parents of students in the school.
 - 1.6 Each principal will develop a school Emergency Response Plan.
 - 1.6.1 This plan will identify the emergency procedures to be invoked for situations in or near the school that create an unsafe environment for students and staff.
 - 1.6.2 The plan or updated plan will be submitted to the Office of the Superintendent, the Director of Facilities, and the Director of Transportation by October 31 of each school year.
 - 1.7 Schools may be closed due to inclement weather when safety becomes a factor.
 - 1.8 When the Director of Transportation Services or the Office of the Superintendent receives information that a state of inclement weather exists in a community or area that compromises student and staff safety if the school remains open, the Superintendent will consult with the Principal, the Director of Transportation, the

Director of Facilities, and the Manager of OH&S to determine the severity of the weather. The Superintendent will then make the decision, for that community or area, either to close the schools or to keep them open.

- 1.9 If principals in a community or area identify that a state of inclement weather exists that puts students and staff at undue risk if the schools are kept open one (1) of the principals will contact the Superintendent or Transportation Services by 0530 hours.
 - 1.10 If the Superintendent has made the decision to close the schools in a community or area, all Division staff members of the affected schools will not be required to report to work.
 - 1.11 If the Superintendent has made the decision to close the schools in a community or area, the Principal will ensure that at least one (1) Division staff member is present at the school at normal school opening times to ensure that children from families that have not received the school closure message are safely housed until they can be safely returned home.
2. **Early Dismissal.** Students may be dismissed early to avoid travel in adverse weather conditions.
- 2.1 When weather or road conditions deteriorate during the school day, Transportation Services may authorize any or all buses to leave the school prior to regular dismissal time.
 - 2.2 When school buses take students home at a time other than the normal bus operating time, the Principal and school bus operators will make all reasonable efforts to contact parents.
 - 2.2.1 If a parent cannot be contacted, the principal will ensure that students have adequate access to residences or make safe accommodation arrangements for the student.
 - 2.3 If the early dismissal is reasonably close to the normal dismissal time, the Principal will make a judgment regarding the necessity to contact parents. The Principal will ensure that the safety of all students is protected.
3. **Supervision of Students.** Students will be housed at a school or schools if weather conditions occurring during the school day would put students at risk when traveling home.
- 3.1 If weather conditions occur during the school day that would put students at risk when traveling home, students will be housed at a school or schools until conditions allow for safe travel.
 - 3.1.1 Transportation Services will consult with the Superintendent regarding severity of the weather and the road conditions and the decision regarding the operation of buses in that community or area.
 - 3.1.2 The Superintendent will then make the decision, for that community or area, whether students would be at risk when traveling home and to house students at a school or schools until conditions allow for safe travel.
 - 3.2 If weather conditions occur during the school day that would put students at risk when traveling home, bus operations will be suspended until conditions allow for the safe transportation of students.
4. **Cancelation of School Bus Service.** Bus services may be suspended due to severe weather or road conditions.
- 4.1 When Transportation Services receives information that a state of inclement weather

- poor visibility or unsafe road conditions exist in a community or area that compromises school bus transportation safety, Transportation Services will decide on a route-by-route basis regarding the cancelation of school bus services and will initiate any required communications.
- 4.2 Transportation Services may suspend bus service in a community or area when the temperature is -36°C as measured or a windchill of -40°C .
 - 4.3 Transportation Services will use whatever information source deemed appropriate for specific communities or areas to determine temperatures. If there is a temperature of -36°C or more, Transportation Services may suspend bus service in that community or area for the day.
 - 4.4 When unsafe road conditions occur on an individual bus route that put student safety at risk, an individual bus operator in consultation with Transportation Services has the authority to decide that conditions warrant the cancellation of bus service on his/her bus route and to terminate the completion of the morning route by returning students to their homes.
 - 4.4.1 The bus operator will ensure that all students have adequate access to residences and ensure that the parents of all children are duly notified.
 - 4.5 Schools will remain open during inclement weather, even when conditions prevent buses from operating.
 - 4.5.1 Schools will be closed for inclement weather only when the Superintendent has determined that a serious safety issue exists for staff and students.
 - 4.5.2 Any decision to close schools for inclement weather will be made on a community-by-community basis.
 - 4.6 All staff members will report for duty to provide programs for students on days when enrollments are reduced due to buses not operating unless a decision has been made pursuant to clause 1.10 above.
 - 4.7 It is expected that students attending school on days as described in clause 2.6 will receive meaningful instruction.
 - 4.8 Parents who transport their children to school on a day when bus service has been suspended because of inclement weather or hazardous road conditions will be responsible for the transport of their children at the end of the school day.
 - 4.9 Parents have the option, always, to decide not to send their children to school if they think the weather conditions present an unacceptable safety risk for their children.

5. Wildfire Emergency Evacuation Process

- 5.1 In the event of an emergency evacuation order, principals will alert all parents/guardians of the 30 minute pick up window via the School Messenger Phone Alert Platform. The reunification location will be provided for parents unable to make the 30 minute pick up window in time.
- 5.2 Transportation Services will dispatch buses to all the schools impacted by the evacuation order.
- 5.3 After 30 minutes, all remaining students at the school will be placed on a bus which will immediately depart for the reunification location.
- 5.4 Parents/guardians will meet their children at the reunification location.
- 5.5 Regular bus service will be suspended in the evacuation area.

Reference: Section 11, 33, 52, 53, 60, 196, 19, 222 Education Act
Employment Standards Code
Occupational Health and Safety Act

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