

AVON MAITLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

NO. 178

SUBJECT: INCLEMENT/SEVERE WEATHER

Legal References: *Education Act: Section 265 (1) (j) Duties of Principal: Care of Pupils; Child and Family Services Act, S.O. 1984, Section 75, Subsection 3*

Related References: *Administrative Procedure 170 School Emergency Procedures; AP 175 Accidents, Incidents and Occupational Illnesses; AP 589 Transportation, AP 219 Sun and Extreme Temperature Safety*

1. School Operations During Inclement Weather

- 1.1 The following administrative procedure governs school operations during inclement weather and instructions are to be announced annually by the principal to parents/guardians, bus operators, staff and students. Closure of the school for staff is a separate decision that takes place in consultation with the superintendent.
- 1.2 This procedure is to be followed by principals, all school and other work site staff when there is a necessity to close schools or cancel buses because of inclement weather.

2. Procedures

2.1 Decision to Cancel Buses or Close Schools Due to Weather

- 2.1.1 Decisions regarding bus operations are made by bus operators.
- 2.1.2 A decision to cancel buses does not mean a school is closed to staff.
- 2.1.3 Decisions regarding emergency school closure are made by principals in consultation with the Regional Superintendent. Principals shall follow Section 2 of this procedure when considering transportation decisions or emergency school closure.

2.2 Cancellation/Delay/Early Departure of Buses

- 2.2.1 Each September, principals, in consultation with the Huron Perth Student Transportation Services (HPSTS), will establish within their regions a process to coordinate both action and communication resulting from bus transportation decisions. See Section 2.2.3 below.
- 2.2.2 Principals of schools served by contracted buses, in consultation with the HPSTS manager, will establish a system of liaison with the bus contractors as appropriate. Principals will refer to guidelines in Section 3.3 of this procedure when considering early departure of students.
- 2.2.3 The HPSTS manager will designate one or several principals within each region to act as regional co-ordinator(s). The coordinator(s) will facilitate within this designated area i) bus contractor and principal communication, and ii) decisions related to emergency school closures. The coordinator(s) will report resulting decisions to the local media through the established internet vehicles as directed. Principals must also inform their regional superintendent of any transportation changes or school closures.

2.2.4 Procedures for changing bus schedules for integrated bus systems including more than one school and/or shared busing with the co-terminous board will be updated annually by the HPSTS manager after consultation with the affected personnel.

2.3 **Emergency School Closure**

2.3.1 The principal, using information provided by bus contractors, weather services, and other appropriate sources, in consultation with other designated principals and a regional superintendent, may decide to close the school.

2.3.2 Communication and action resulting from this decision will be coordinated in the same manner as detailed in 2.2.3 and 2.2.4 above.

2.4 **Communications**

2.4.1 Communication to media and staff should clearly indicate that the school is open for staff who can safely arrive, or the school is closed to staff and students due to safety concerns.

2.4.2 The principal will establish and announce methods of communicating such media announcements, phone fans, and calls to home to parents/guardians and staff, any decision regarding cancelling or delaying transportation, early departure or the closure of a school due to inclement weather.

2.4.3 Schools will be grouped in common geographical zones, as established from time to time by the HPSTS manager, in order to provide selected radio stations serving that particular region with the necessary closure, cancellation, or delayed transportation information, using a minimum number of calls. Each zone will designate a media contact person who will, on each school's behalf, contact the designated radio stations for his/her region. A regional media list will be prepared and updated from time to time by the communications manager.

2.4.4 The principal of a school or designate is responsible for the dissemination of closure, cancellation and transportation delay information as indicated in 2.2.3.

2.5 **Tornados and Severe Weather**

2.5.1 Environment Canada estimates that our district experiences one or two tornados each year. Tornados are most likely to occur during the afternoon of a very hot, hazy and humid day. They are generally preceded by very large cumulonimbus clouds, lightning, rain and hail.

2.5.2 **Environment Canada issues three types of alerts**

1. **A WEATHER WATCH**, which signifies conditions are right for the formation of severe thunderstorms and/or tornados.
2. **A SEVERE WEATHER WARNING**, when severe thunderstorms have been sighted on radar.
3. **A TORNADO WARNING**, when tornados have actually been sighted.

- 2.5.3 Environment Canada can generally provide adequate lead-time for Alerts 1 and 2; however, there is virtually no lead-time for Alert 3.

Weather Watch

- The school is alerted of the potential of severe thunderstorms and/or tornadoes.
- Classes taking place outside are to come into the school to a predetermined area.
- The administration/office will monitor the situation on radio.
- Class activities and school routines continue as usual.
- Teachers take attendance and inform office of missing students.

Severe Weather Warning/Tornado Watch

Shelter-in-Place procedures put into effect.

- Principal or delegate will make the **Shelter-in-Place** announcement.
- Staff will check that designated areas are empty.
- Classroom teachers will lead students to a pre-determined safe location in school.
- If time permits windows should be closed and doors closed on exit from rooms.
- Students and staff assume crouch position in safe location.
- Remain in position until all clear is announced.

- 2.5.4 If a **TORNADO WARNING** is issued prior to the bus departure time, buses will not run. Busing will resume when the Tornado Warning is cancelled. If a tornado is sighted on route, bus drivers will:

1. Stop the bus.
2. Lead the students off and away from the bus.
3. Have the students get in a ditch or the lowest lying area possible.
4. Have the students lie flat and cover their heads until the emergency passes.

3. Overall Expectations for Inclement Weather

3.1 **This procedure is based on the following premises:**

- a) The safety and well-being of students and staff are paramount;
- b) The decisions for emergency closure and delay/early leaving will be made as early as possible and communicated to the public in accordance with the above procedure;
- c) Subject to weather conditions, every effort will be made to keep schools open to serve students and staff who can reach the schools safely;
- d) The district experiences a diversity of weather conditions which vary significantly from location to location, and so local decisions are needed;
- e) Under most circumstances, if students arrive safely at the start of the day, they will remain until regular dismissal time; and
- f) All bus delays will be for TWO (2) hours.

3.2 **Factors for consideration in closing a school, cancelling/delaying buses or deciding that students should depart early due to inclement weather include:**

- a) The weather conditions, i.e. wind chill factor, wind speed, snow accumulation, temperature, ice, fog, and tornados (Section 2.5); see AP 219.
- b) The number of staff members available to provide adequate supervision and care for students to ensure satisfaction;
- c) The level of deterioration from normal conditions of highways, streets and city or town walkways.

3.3 **The following additional factors must be addressed before dismissing students early:**

- a) Parents/guardians, road maintenance crews, bus contractors, bus drivers, and the general public are often “caught off guard” when students return early and are not prepared or available;
- b) Weather history in our district indicates that winds and storms are often more calm at the end of the afternoon (regular dismissal time), so it is presumed to be safer for students and staff to remain at school until regular dismissal time;
- c) Parents/guardians are able to be alerted and informed that their children are being sent home early. Approximately 2 hours (depending on school size) should be allowed for the ability to notify bus drivers and parents/guardians.
- d) When students are dismissed other than at the regular dismissal time, the principal must be assured that each student has appropriate care upon arriving at home or at another prearranged destination. Only when the principal is satisfied that the welfare of students concerned has been assured, should they be dismissed. It is necessary to ensure adherence to the provision of the *Child and Family Services Act S.O. 1984, Section 75, Subsection 3:*
“No person having charge of a child less than 16 years of age shall leave the child without making provision for his or her supervision and care that is reasonable in the circumstances.”

4. Expectations for Staff

- 4.1 Bus cancellations are made primarily based on road conditions and consideration for travel on back/county roads where students may not be able to be picked up or returned safely. Bus cancellations do not mean that staff should not attempt to report to work.
- 4.2 All staff members are expected to make a reasonable effort to reach their work site where safe to do so.
- 4.3 When it is deemed unsafe to reach a worksite, a supervisor shall be notified according to a method that follows the direction of the supervisor. Likewise, principals will develop and communicate to staff a process whereby they verify staff members’ arrival at the school. Staff shall continue to monitor weather and road conditions and assess their ability to attend their workplace.
- 4.4 In the event that staff members cannot safely reach their worksite, a “weather” entry shall be made in Smart Find Express.
- 4.5 Days of emergency work site closures are work days and staff members continue to be paid. Staff shall be working from home and available for contact by the supervisor or colleague.
- 4.6 Staff may work in a school which is closed to students, but can be accessed safely. Staff may also work at an alternate work site or school which is open to students and to which they can travel safely.
- 4.7 In all cases, common sense must prevail. Staff members are not expected to take undue risks when travelling to and from school during inclement weather.

