

CLOSURE – SEVERE WEATHER AND STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

Background

Because of the geographic size of Prairie South School Division the Board believes that enabling policy providing local discretion in dealing with weather conditions is both prudent and appropriate.

The Director of Education is authorized to dismiss students, discontinue transportation services, and/or close school in emergency situations.

Procedures

1. Responsibility of the Director of Education

- 1.1 The Director of Education, in consultation with the principal(s), may close one or more schools in the Division.
- 1.2 The Director of Education is to instruct the Transportation Manager, who shall inform bus drivers when classes have been rescheduled, students have been dismissed, or a school has been closed.
- 1.3 The Director of Education shall receive, review, and maintain on file reports from the Transportation Manager and principals regarding the stopping of any operation of buses or schools.
- 1.4 The Director of Education will cancel applicable bus routes when the temperature including wind chill reaches -40°C or lower.
- 1.5 Buses may be cancelled pending consideration of the following factors:
 - Severely drifted or extremely icy roads
 - Limited visibility because of fog or blowing snow
 - Other environmental conditions are typically announced by Environment Canada through its telephone information services, web site or on a local radio station.
- 1.6 The decision to cancel morning buses shall be made by 6:00 a.m.
- 1.7 The decision to cancel afternoon buses shall be made no later than 2:00 p.m.
- 1.8 If a bus is cancelled in the morning due to cold weather it will not operate in the afternoon.
- 1.9 School buses provided for out-of-school curricular and extracurricular activities are also cancelled on days that transportation services are cancelled.

2. Responsibility of Principals

- 2.1 In consultation with the Director of Education, principals are responsible for deciding when to relocate students or, when applicable, to reschedule classes to ensure the safety and well-being of students.
- 2.2 When students are relocated, the principal is to arrange for each student to be directed to a safe, supervised location and then inform respective parents or guardians either directly or indirectly.
- 2.3 The principal is to inform the principal(s) of any other school(s) and other appropriate authorities affected by the decision.
- 2.4 If necessary, the principal is responsible for billeting students and staff at the school. The Division will assume any costs incurred.
- 2.5 The principal is to maintain a record of emergency residences for all bus students.
- 2.6 The principal is to ensure that the school is accessible to students during normal school hours when classes have been dismissed or when the school has been closed.
- 2.7 Due to the diversity of weather conditions within the Division, the principal may contact the Director of Education seeking direction for school closure in response to local weather conditions.

3. Responsibility of Bus Drivers

- 3.1 Each bus driver in rural areas is responsible for canceling a route to ensure the safety and well-being of his/her passengers. This includes school buses used for transporting students for other educational and school related activities.
- 3.2 Having made such a decision, the bus driver is to inform the Transportation Manager or designate by text, email or telephone.
- 3.3 Under no circumstances should buses start on the route at the height of a winter storm.
- 3.4 Under no circumstances shall bus drivers commence their routes prior to normal departure time.
- 3.5 If the decision is made before students have been picked up from home in the rural area, the driver is to inform parents or guardians of all passengers that the bus will not operate.
- 3.6 If the decision to stop operation is made after students have been picked up, the driver is to arrange to deliver each student to a safe, supervised destination. In the rural area, drivers are to inform parents or guardians directly or indirectly of the location of the students. The driver must also inform the principal and Transportation Manager.
- 3.7 Local radio stations will be informed of bus cancellations when an entire school is affected. Bus cancellation information shall be available on the Prairie South Schools website at www.prairiesouth.ca and on social media pages.

4. Responsibility of Transportation Manager

- 4.1 The Transportation Manager is to facilitate communication among schools, bus drivers, and parents or guardians.
- 4.2 The Transportation Manager is to inform the Director of Education whenever bus operations have been cancelled due to weather conditions.
- 4.3 In the event bus service is cancelled pursuant to 1.5, the Transportation Manager shall notify the bus drivers and schools through local radio stations, social media and internal communication.
- 4.4 The Transportation Manager is to update website, social media pages and to notify news media to broadcast pertinent information for parents and students.

5. Responsibility of Teacher and Other School Personnel

- 5.1 Except when notified that the school is closed, all teachers and personnel are expected to be in attendance for the purpose of performing their normal or related duties. Personnel are not to lose pay when informed that the school has been closed.
- 5.2 Upon receipt of a written explanation, the Superintendent of Human Resources may deal with individual instances of absence due to weather or other hazardous situations.

6. Responsibility of Parents or Guardians

- 6.1 Parents or guardians of all bus students are to arrange for appropriate emergency residences for the individual students and to inform the school and bus driver of those arrangements.
- 6.2 Parents and guardians always have the right to keep their children at home during severe weather conditions or when in the considered opinion of the parent or guardian, they have concern regarding the safety of their children. They also have the right to drive their children to school if the bus does not run.
- 6.3 Parents or guardians are responsible to ensure that their children are appropriately dressed for weather conditions.

Reference: Highway Traffic Act
Sections 85, 87, 194, 195, 196, 197, Education Act

May 17, 2021