

SEVERE WEATHER

Background

Schools in the Division are expected to remain open and operational on all designated days of the school year. However, in order to ensure the health and safety of students and Division personnel during periods of severe weather conditions, a decision may be made to suspend the operation of school buses and/or schools.

Procedures

1. The Director is authorized to dismiss students, discontinue transportation services, and close schools as emergencies arise. If either of the following conditions occur, buses will not run:
 - 1.1. Temperature at or colder than -40 degrees Celsius by no later than 7:00 a.m.
 - 1.2. Severe wind chill at or colder than -45 degrees Celsius no later than 7:00 a.m.
2. When procedures 1.1 and 1.2 do not occur, road conditions may be determined by drivers in consultation with the Supervisor of Transportation. The bus driver, prioritizing the safety of students, shall use their best judgement in determining whether or not to run the bus under the following conditions:
 - 2.1. Severely drifted or extremely icy roads.
 - 2.2. Limited visibility because of fog, blowing snow or blizzard conditions.
 - 2.3. Freezing rain or other unsafe road conditions.
3. The Director or designate may cancel school 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.
4. In the absence of a decision by the Director or designate, the individual driver is granted discretionary power to cancel or alter their route to ensure the safety of students being transported. Should a driver decide not to run any particular route, they shall make that decision for themselves and not be influenced by the actions of other drivers within the area.
5. Parents/Guardians have the right to decide whether to send students to school in the event of inclement weather. However, schools and their operations will be open and the students will be marked absent. Parents/Guardians are urged to notify the school in the event of retaining their student(s).

6. Where the individual driver makes the above decision(s), they will advise the parents, the Principal of the respective school and the Transportation Office. The Supervisor of Transportation will in turn notify the Director or designate.
7. Where the Director or designate determines that in the interest of safety the normal operation of buses must be cancelled, they will notify the Supervisor of Transportation and the other immediate parties of such a decision. When possible this will be done by direct communication prior to 7:00 a.m.
8. Regarding inclement weather, schools will remain open to students even if any or all school buses are not operating.
9. If extreme weather conditions exist when bus drivers are returning students from school to their homes, the bus driver shall ensure each student is delivered to their home and enters the house. If circumstances make it impossible to deliver the student to their home, the driver shall keep the student in the vehicle and, in consultation with the Principal, make appropriate arrangements for the safety and wellbeing of the student.
10. School buses are not to leave schools earlier than their usual times in circumstances of extreme weather.
11. Principals are responsible for establishing billets in town for all bus students. This is to be done no later than October 15 of a school year. The Principal is responsible for the safe care of all students and staff at the school until safe transportation is assured.
12. In the event a school bus or buses are not operating, the regular staff and in-town students are expected to be in their regular appointed places.
13. All students riding on school buses during winter months are required to wear winter footwear and outerwear and to carry with them winter headwear and gloves or mitts. In cases where children are not appropriately attired for winter conditions, the bus driver may restrict access until appropriate conditions are met. The bus driver shall advise the Principal of such action(s).

Reference: Sections 85, 87, 175, 196 Education Act

Approved: February 20, 2019