

## Administrative Procedure 750

---

### SEVERE WEATHER AND EMERGENCY CLOSURE

#### Background

The Superintendent may close schools, cancel or suspend bus service, and/or arrange for the early dismissal of students in situations where the health and safety of students is at risk.

The primary consideration in the event of severe weather conditions shall be the health and safety of students. The Superintendent may suspend or curtail school bus service to any school or schools and/or close schools or cancel classes when weather or road conditions constitute a hazard to the safety of students.

During severe weather, the final decision to send a child to the bus stop or to school rests with the parents, even though buses and schools may be operational. Parents are expected to exercise good judgment and care when deciding whether or not to send their child(ren) to school when weather or road conditions are extreme.

Area conditions shall dictate decision-making. Factors which threaten student health and safety are not always present in all communities at the same time. Thus, it is often necessary to close a group of schools in one region of the Division or even an individual school while others remain open. In weather related situations, it is even occasionally necessary to suspend operation of individual bus routes while the schools affected continue to operate.

Blizzards and drifted or icy roads are often the most difficult situations to assess. These conditions can vary greatly throughout the Division and can appear and disappear over short time spans. The Director of Transportation assesses these situations and puts forth a recommendation to run or to cancel school buses, to the Superintendent of Schools.

#### Procedures

##### 1. Emergency School Closure

- 1.1. Schools will be closed for students and staff if conditions are such that the students and staff are at a health risk. Any of the following factors, or combinations of them, shall serve as guides for considering school closure or early dismissal of students:
  - 1.1.1 Loss of power and heat;
  - 1.1.2 Inadequate water supply;



- 1.1.3 Sewer back-up;
  - 1.1.4 Structural damage to the school building;
  - 1.1.5 Illness epidemic; and/or
  - 1.1.6 Other emergent situations.
- 1.2 In the event of an emergency school closure of early dismissal:
- 1.2.1 The principal will:
    - 1.2.1.1 Consult with the Superintendent;
    - 1.2.1.2 Notify school personnel and other appropriate people of the decision to close the school or arrange for the early dismissal of students;
    - 1.2.1.3 In extreme emergency situations, exercise good judgment and decide and act on his/her own; and
    - 1.2.1.4 Initiate communication fan-outs to ensure proper information is given to parents regarding school closure.
  - 1.2.2 The Director of Transportation or designate will:
    - 1.2.2.1 Arrange for the school bus drivers to be notified immediately; and
    - 1.2.2.2 Initiate the spread of information to the school community via the “fan out” information system, and to the larger community via social media and the following radio stations:

Radio:

    - In Valleyview: CFGP 97.7 Rock, CJXX Big Country 93.1, CKYL YL Country, CKVH, CBC Grande Prairie, Q99
    - In Fox Creek: CFGP 97.7 Rock, CJXX Big Country 93.1, CKYL YL Country, CKVH, CBC Grande Prairie, Q99
    - In Whitecourt: CHED 630 AM, JOE, CISN, CFCW 840 AM, CBC 740, XM 105, Boom 96.7, Mix 96
    - In Mayerthorpe: CHED 630 AM, JOE, CISN, CFCW 840 AM, CBC 740, XM 105, Boom 96.7, Mix 96
    - In Sangudo: CHED 630 AM, JOE, CISN, CFCW 840 AM, CBC 740, XM 105, Boom 96.7, Mix 96
    - In Onoway: CHED 630 AM, JOE, CISN, CFCW 840 AM, CBC 740, XM 105, Boom 96.7, Mix 96

In Rich Valley: CHED 630 AM, JOE, CISN, CFCW 840 AM,  
CBC 740, XM 105 Boom 96.7, Mix 96

In Alberta Beach: CHED 630 AM, JOE, CISN, CFCW 840 AM,  
CBC 740, XM 105, Boom 96.7, Mix 96

In Darwell: CHED 630 AM, JOE, CISN, CFCW 840 AM, CBC 740,  
XM 105, Boom 96.7, Mix 96

- 1.3 Such closures will be announced on the Division website, Facebook page, Twitter feed, school websites and local radio stations. It is the parents' responsibility to watch and/or listen for these announcements and to make suitable arrangements for their children.
- 1.4 At the commencement of the term, principals shall communicate in writing the following information to parents:
  - 1.4.1 The current procedures on Emergency Cancellation or Closing and Severe Weather;
  - 1.4.2 Advice to the parents that their children are to be dressed warmly in severe weather;
  - 1.4.3 Advice to the parents that they make alternate arrangements for accommodating their children in the event school is closed, classes are cancelled or dismissed early when parents are away.
2. **Severe weather determination:**
  - 2.1 Any of the following factors, or a combination of them, shall serve as an indicator that severe weather conditions exist:
    - 2.1.1 Temperature, experienced with or without wind-chill, of  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  or below;
    - 2.1.2 Visibility of less than five hundred (500) meters;
    - 2.1.3 Reports from bus drivers and/or counties or municipalities that rural roads are, or will soon be, impassable; and/or
    - 2.1.4 Notification of severe weather through *Alberta Emergency Alert*.
3. **Safe transportation evaluation:**
  - 3.1 When preparing a recommendation for transportation continuation or cancellation for the Superintendent, the Director of Transportation Services shall solicit advice:
    - 3.1.1 From a sampling of experienced bus drivers;

- 3.1.2 From similarly affected neighbouring school jurisdictions regarding their plans; and
    - 3.1.3 From Environment Canada and/or Alberta Transportation when available.
  - 3.2 After carefully evaluating the weather, the Superintendent or designate shall determine the extent to which transportation services are limited or cancelled or, in extreme cases, the extent to which schools are closed.
- 4. **Cancellation of transportation services:**
  - 4.1 The Director of Transportation, in consultation with the Superintendent, may cancel bus routes for all or certain regions of the Division the night before or in the morning due to inclement weather.
  - 4.2 The Director of Transportation Services shall arrange for the school bus drivers to be notified immediately.
  - 4.3 The Superintendent, or designate, shall initiate an expedited spread of appropriate information to the schools, families, and regional transportation partners, through electronic mass distribution (i.e. emergency contact services) and appropriate local media.
- 5. **Regarding emergent severe weather with the potential to impact schooling:**
  - 5.1 Whereas our severe inclement weather typically may cause the cancellation of transportation with schools remaining open for learning, the weather may become severe enough to require an early dismissal or closure of the school. School closure would only be considered in extreme circumstances, and should not be confused with the cancellation of transportation.
  - 5.2 In the event of emergent severe weather, an early dismissal may be deemed to be necessary in extreme circumstances and approved by the Superintendent or designate:
    - 5.2.1 The Principal shall consult with the Superintendent or designate to determine the potential utilization of the school's alternate emergency site; and
    - 5.2.2 The Principal shall ensure that effective planning and appropriate parent contact occurs so that all students are safely delivered to a parent or guardian in a prudent and timely manner.
  - 5.3 In the event of emergent, severe weather necessitating the closure of a school or schools:
    - 5.3.1 Transportation services shall be cancelled as per section 4; and

- 5.3.2 The school building shall remain open, when possible, so that any students whose parents cannot be contacted and who have no alternative place to go can remain there under adult supervision as arranged by the Principal, until accommodations can be found.
- 5.4 Staff are required to make a reasonable effort to travel to school if classes are cancelled due to severe weather or impassable road conditions.
- 5.5 If weather and road conditions place the welfare of staff in some jeopardy in reaching their usual place of residence, the Principal may authorize a staff member to leave prior to normal school closing time. The Principal must ensure appropriate supervision is maintained.
- 6. Learning considerations during transportation cancellation:**
- 6.1 Severe inclement weather, that necessitates the cancellation of transportation services, will also have a significant impact on families and the safe conveyance of students to schools. Our intention is to maintain learning, while providing options for our families with the highest regard for safety.
- When transportation is cancelled, Northern Gateway School Division's schools shall remain open for learning. Teaching and learning opportunities during transportation cancellation will vary depending on the number of students who are learning from home, balanced with the number of students who are able to attend school, and this may differ from class to class or grade to grade within schools across the Division. Communication about any inclement weather learning plans may be provided in advance of cancellation in situations where there is sufficient time provided for a severe weather notice. Sometimes, however, it may not be possible to provide learning plans in advance of the transportation cancellation.
- Generally speaking, teachers will attend to supporting student learning with the following considerations:
- 6.1.1 Teachers shall endeavor to balance the learning outcome requirements of students who have arrived at school with the learning outcome requirements of students who are remaining at home. Notably:
- 6.1.1.1 Teachers may distribute new or ongoing learning tasks through familiar online platforms and/or monitor and support learning tasks already in process; and
- 6.1.1.2 Teachers may check in with students when possible and prudent to do so:
- 6.1.1.2.1 The check in process may vary depending on the quantity of students at home versus the quantity of students at school; and

6.1.1.2.1 Parents shall not expect that synchronous learning (learning at the same time as the class) is available, given that teachers may also be responsible for students who are at school.

6.2 Northern Gateway School Division shall adhere to Alberta Education's guidelines with regard to missed Diploma Examinations or Provincial Achievement Tests.

7. **With respect to the severe weather protocol at school:**

7.1 The Principal may cancel outdoor activities at any time when considered prudent to do so.

7.2 Students shall remain inside due to the automatic cancellation of outdoor activities and/or recess activities:

7.2.1 At any temperature below -25°C with wind chill factored in.

7.2.2 During rainfall that is occurring to the point of impacting students' well-being or ability to play.

7.3 When weather and/or road conditions are a concern, principals shall consult with the Superintendent prior to approving any school sponsored travel.

Reference: Education Act 197, 222 Employment Standards Act	
	Date Approved: April 1, 2021
	Reviewed or Revised: Executive: April, 2021

References shall be updated as required and do not require additional approval.