

CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS FOR EXTREME WEATHER CONDITIONS

Background

On occasion, it is necessary to temporarily close a school facility when extreme weather conditions might endanger the health and safety of students. The decision to close may also involve a discussion with the Medical Health Office, the police, or transportation personnel.

In the case of extreme weather conditions, the Superintendent or designate has authority, on behalf of the Board, to temporarily close a school.

Procedures

1. As a general expectation, parents are to be advised that schools are open. If parents believe the local conditions are unsafe, they may keep their child at home or arrange his/her early dismissal. If schools are to be closed before morning classes begin, an announcement will be made on local radio stations CKNW (980), CKWX (1130) and CBC (690) by 7:30 a.m. if possible. Wherever possible, the decision will be announced the previous day to enable parents more time to make alternate arrangements for their children.
2. When schools are closed for extreme weather conditions, they are closed for students. If the closure is communicated prior to school opening, schools are also closed for staff. All staff will be paid for this day.
3. If school is in session when the closure is announced, staff members are expected to stay and assist with the dismissal of students. Unless the situation is unsafe for staff (as determined by the principal in consultation with the assistant superintendent) they would be expected to work the remainder of the school day.
4. Administrators are expected to complete and have on file a "School Extreme Weather Closure Plan" (Form F-132-1). If a school were to be closed for extreme weather conditions, this plan outlines procedures to ensure the safety of any students that may arrive at school. This plan also provides for communicating with the district office and maintenance regarding school circumstances (attendance information, school conditions, immediate needs). This plan also lists the core group of staff, that includes the principal, to fulfill these functions.
5. The cancellation of a bus run does not mean that schools are closed. When a bus runs early in the afternoon, the safety of elementary students must be ensured.
6. During school electrical, water or heating failures, early student dismissal will be based on the prognosis obtained by the Principal on:
 - 5.1 heating/temperature conditions
 - 5.2 light availability in washroom and work areas
 - 5.3 recovery time estimated by BC Hydro, BC Gas or Manager of Maintenance
 - 5.4 student age

5.5 general safety factors

7. Authorization for early dismissal shall be obtained from the Superintendent or designate.
8. Prior to releasing elementary students, contact must be made with the home or alternate designated by the parent/guardian. If alternate arrangements cannot be made when the home is unoccupied, the child shall be dismissed at the normal time.
9. The Principal's Agenda Committee shall establish a 24-hour telephone "fan out" network to distribute priority information affecting school operation which has been initiated by the Superintendent.
 - 9.1 The fan out process is used only for emergency communications authorized by the Superintendent.
 - 9.2 The fan out process is designed to ensure prompt, accurate communication of information.
 - 9.3 The message is to go directly to the Principal. In event of his/her absence, to the Vice-Principal, head teacher, department head, or secretary. These people should have a copy of the fan out chart and be knowledgeable of the process. (This requires school procedures to be rehearsed.)
 - 9.4 As soon as possible, after receiving a message, the Principal is to share this information with appropriate staff in the school (teaching and support).
 - 9.5 If a Principal is unable to make contact with the next Principal or school indicated on the fan out chart, call the next Principal and immediately advise your Assistant Superintendent.
 - 9.6 The last Principal in the chain shall call the Principal initiating the communication and repeat the content, verbatim. If there is an error, give the correct wording and have the Principal repeat the communication, in reverse order on the fan out chain, to ensure accuracy.
 - 9.7 The verbatim communication and completion of the fan out is to be reported to the Assistant Superintendent by the last person in the chain.
 - 9.8 A print copy of the fan out communication will be forwarded to all schools each fall.
 - 9.9 Principals are to advise their Assistant Superintendent of a change in home telephone number whenever it is necessary.
 - 9.10 A copy of the fan out chart must be kept at home, as well as in the school by administrators.
 - 9.11 A copy of the fan out will be provided to all managers in the District. (While the local police, health and fire authorities are advised of administrators' home telephone numbers, use of the fan out may only be initiated by the Superintendent).
10. Any messages distributed by this network will be copied verbatim and given to staff members.

Reference: Section 73, 90, School Act
Board Minutes
February 1991 Volume 33 Page 32 Policy II-C-40
June 2005 Volume 47 Page 78 AP 132
July 2008 Volume 50 Page 81