



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE 131
EMERGENCY CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS AND/OR SCHOOL BUS
TRANSPORTATION

Background

In order to provide a safe and caring school environment that is conducive to effective learning, due consideration must be given to the safety of students and staff with regard to hazardous conditions. Schools must remain open to students during the times and dates established. Conditions can arise which require the temporary closure of a school or schools. The Superintendent, therefore, may temporarily close a school or schools or temporarily suspend school bus service if the health and safety of students and staff are endangered.

Procedures

1. Schools may be closed when emergency conditions in or near the school create an unsafe environment for students and staff.
 - 1.1 In the event that conditions in or near the school create an unsafe environment for students and staff the Principal or designate shall implement the provisions of the school's "Critical Response Plan".
 - 1.2 The Principal shall advise the Superintendent of conditions at the school that caused the implementing of the provisions of the school's "Critical Response Plan".
 - 1.3 The Superintendent shall, upon being advised by the Principal, of the unsafe conditions at the school and the implementation of the school's "Critical Response Plan", decide whether or not to close the school.
 - 1.4 When a decision to close a school has been made, students and staff shall remain away from the school until the condition causing the closure has been improved to allow school operations to continue.
 - 1.5 Each school shall develop policy and procedures that address local issues resulting from the emergency closure of schools, and shall communicate the policy and procedures to parents and guardians of students in the school.
 - 1.6 Each school shall develop a school "Critical Response Plan". This plan shall identify the emergency procedures to be invoked for situations in or near the school that create an unsafe environment for students and staff. The plan or annual updates shall be submitted to the Director - Transportation Services by October 31 of each school year.

2. School bus service may be suspended due to severe weather or road conditions.
 - 2.1 When the Director - Transportation Services receives information that a state of inclement weather exists in a community or area that compromises school bus transportation safety, the Director - Transportation Services shall make a decision on a route-by-route basis regarding the closure of school bus services and shall initiate any required communications.
 - 2.2 The Director - Transportation Services or designate may suspend bus service in a community or area when:
 - 2.2.1 Lobstick Area - the temperature is -36° C as measured at a designated driver's home at 0500 hours.
 - 2.2.2 Edson and Area - the temperature is -36° C as measured at a designated driver's home at 0500 hours and Edson Municipal Airport.
 - 2.2.3 Hinton - the temperature is -36° C as measured at a designated driver's home at 0500 hours.
 - 2.2.4 Grande Cache - the temperature is -36° C as measured at a designated driver's home at 0500 hours.

The Director - Transportation Services shall use whatever information source deemed appropriate for specific communities or areas to determine wind chill factors. In the event that there is a wind chill factor of -45° C or more the Director – Transportation Services or designate may suspend bus service in that community or area.
 - 2.3 School Bus/Transportation Advisors shall be appointed by the Director – Transportation Services in each of the areas identified below to assist in formulating a decision regarding the suspension of school bus service due to inclement weather or road conditions.
 - 2.3.1 Lobstick area
 - 2.3.2 Edson and area
 - 2.3.3 Hinton
 - 2.3.4 Grande Cache
 - 2.4 When unsafe road conditions occur on an individual bus route that put student safety at risk, an individual bus operator has the authority to decide that conditions warrant the cancellation of bus service on his/her bus route and to terminate the completion of the morning route by returning students to their homes. The bus operator shall ensure that all students have adequate access to residences and to ensure that the parents of all children are duly notified. The bus operator shall report the decision to the Director - Transportation Services.

- 2.5 Schools shall remain open during inclement weather, even when conditions prevent buses from operating. Schools will be closed for inclement weather only when the Superintendent has determined that schools are to be closed for safety. Any decision to close schools for inclement weather will be made on a community-by-community basis.
 - 2.6 All staff members shall report for duty to provide programs for students on days when enrollments are reduced due to buses not operating unless a decision has been made pursuant to procedure 3.1 below.
 - 2.7 It is expected that students attending school on days as described in 2.6 will receive meaningful instruction.
 - 2.8 Parents who transport their children to school on a day when bus service has been suspended because of inclement weather or hazardous road conditions shall be responsible for the transport of their children at the end of the school day.
 - 2.9 Parents have the option, at all times, to decide not to send their children to school if they think the weather conditions present an unacceptable safety risk for their children.
3. Schools may be closed due to inclement weather when safety becomes a factor.
 - 3.1 When the Director – Transportation Services receives information that a state of inclement weather exists in a community or area that compromises student and staff safety if the school remains open he/she shall consult with the Superintendent regarding severity of the weather and the Director – Transportation Services’ decision regarding the operation of buses in that community or area. The Superintendent shall then make the decision, for that community or area, either to close the schools or to keep them open.
 - 3.2 In the event that Principals in a community or area identify that a state of inclement weather exists that puts students and staff at undue risk if the schools are kept open one of the Principals shall contact the Superintendent or the Director – Transportation Services by 0530 hours.
 - 3.3 In the event that the Superintendent has made the decision to close the schools in a community or area, all GYPSD staff members of the affected schools shall not be required to report to work.
 - 3.4 In the event that the Superintendent has made the decision to close the schools in a community or area, the Principal shall ensure that at least one GYPSD staff member is present at the school at the normal school opening times to ensure that children from families that have not received the school closure message is safely housed until they can be safely returned home.
 4. Students may be dismissed early in order to avoid travel in adverse weather conditions.

- 4.1 When weather or road conditions deteriorate during the school day, the Director – Transportation Services may authorize any or all buses to leave the school prior to regular dismissal time.
 - 4.2 When school buses take students home at a time other than the normal bus operating time, the school and school bus operators shall make all reasonable efforts to contact parents or guardians. In the event that a parent or guardian cannot be contacted, the school shall ensure that students have adequate access to residences or make safe accommodation arrangements for the student.
 - 4.3 In the event that the early dismissal is reasonably close to the normal dismissal time, the Principal shall make a judgment regarding the necessity to contact parents or guardians. The Principal shall ensure that the safety of all students is protected.
5. Students will be housed at a school or schools in the event that weather conditions occurring during the school day would put students at risk when traveling home.
 - 5.1 In the event that weather conditions occur during the school day that would put students at risk when traveling home, students will be housed at a school or schools until conditions allow for safe travel. The Director – Transportation Services shall consult with the Superintendent regarding severity of the weather and the road conditions and the Director – Transportation Services’ decision regarding the operation of buses in that community or area. The Superintendent shall then make the decision, for that community or area, whether students would be at risk when traveling home and to house students at a school or schools until conditions allow for safe travel.
 - 5.2 In the event that weather conditions occur during the school day that would put students at risk when traveling home, bus operations will be suspended until conditions allow for the safe transportation of students.

Reference: Section 57, 60, 61, 113 School Act
Employment Standards Act

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