



## Inclement Weather

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**Memo To:** All Stakeholders

**From:** Director of Education

### ACCESSIBILITY:

To request this file in large print, please email [aoda@wcdsb.ca](mailto:aoda@wcdsb.ca) or call (519) 578-3660.

### PURPOSE:

This memo provides information to stakeholders on cancellations and closures related to inclement weather.

### REFERENCES:

- Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region ([STSWR](#)) Inclement Weather Policy
- Region of Waterloo Public Health "[Extreme Cold Weather](#)" (Accessed August 2024)
- Government of Canada "[Wind Chill and Cold Weather](#)" (Accessed August 2024)

### FORMS:

- APH008-01F: Emergency Dismissal

### REPORTS:

- N/A

### APPENDICES:

- Appendix A: Inclement Weather Procedure for St. Louis Programming

### COMMENTS AND GUIDELINES:

Severe weather conditions refer to conditions such as ice, fog, rain, sleet, snow, wind, and frigid temperatures which are considered serious enough to raise concerns regarding the safety of pupils traveling to and from school. Frigid temperatures exist at or below  $-35^{\circ}\text{C}$  with wind chill.

### Bus and Taxi Cancellations: Before School Starts

Before 5:30 a.m., the General Manager of STSWR will assess weather conditions in Waterloo Region and confer with local bus operators when necessary. If a recommendation to cancel transportation (including potential school closure) is to be made, the Director of Education (or designate) will be contacted by the General Manager of STSWR for discussion and decision-making.



In the case of frigid temperatures, the General Manager of STSWR will assess the temperatures in Waterloo Region using Environment Canada’s wind-chill index. If the temperature is forecasted to reach –35°C or colder with wind-chill at 7:00 am, he/she will inform the Director (or designate). Buses will not operate, but schools will remain open.

The decision to close a school will be based on additional factors related to severe weather conditions.

This process is to be followed for Region-wide transportation cancellation, or cancellation for a specific area.

**Bus and Taxi Safety: After School Starts**

Where weather conditions deteriorate during the school day such that there are concerns regarding the safe return of students by bus or taxi, sending students home earlier than scheduled will be considered. The General Manager of STSWR will consult with local bus operators, and a recommendation will be made to the Director of Education for decision-making.

This process is to be followed for system-wide transportation concerns, or for weather conditions affecting a specific area.

When a decision is made to run buses and taxis earlier than normal, wherever possible, walking students will be sent home at their normal dismissal times.

It is the principal's responsibility to prepare a plan for notifying each affected family in the case of early dismissal so arrangements can be made for students’ well-being. In addition, principals must remain at the school site until all students have been dropped off and arrangements have been made for stranded students.

**Communication Protocol for Parents/Guardians, Students, Staff, Media, Bus Operators and Taxi Companies**

Stakeholders should monitor the WCDSB website, social media feed, and radio stations for information on cancellations.

STSWR is responsible for communicating all decisions with respect to inclement weather to the media, school bus operators, and taxi companies.

By November of each school year, principals shall inform parents and guardians about bus and taxi cancellation, early student dismissal, school closure, and severe weather contingency procedures. The information will advise parents to refer to the WCDSB website, the WCDSB social media feed, and or listen to the following radio stations for bus cancellation and school closure information:

<b>KOOL-FM</b>	<b>FM 105.3</b>	<b>CKWR Kitchener</b>	<b>FM 98.5</b>
<b>MAGIC FM</b>	<b>FM 106.1</b>	<b>CHYM Kitchener</b>	<b>FM 96.7</b>
<b>570 News</b>	<b>AM 570</b>	<b>Dave FM</b>	<b>FM 107.5</b>
<b>KFUN</b>	<b>FM 99.5</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>FM 106.7</b>
<b>Faith FM</b>	<b>FM 94.3</b>	<b>The Beat</b>	<b>FM 91.5</b>
<b>CBC Radio</b>	<b>FM 89.1</b>		

**Townships**

Weather conditions in the Region’s Townships can vary from those experienced in the major cities. Because of this, buses and taxis can sometimes be cancelled in some areas of the Region and not in others. Specific cancellations may affect students in:

- Wilmot, Wellesley, and Woolwich Townships **or**
- Wilmot, Wellesley, Woolwich, and North Dumfries Townships **or**
- All areas in Waterloo Region

## **Field Trips**

By default, all field trips will be cancelled when buses and taxis are cancelled due to adverse weather conditions. If road and weather conditions improve during the day and the bus operator is satisfied that safety is not compromised, the school and the operator, in consultation with STSWR and the appropriate Superintendent of Learning, may elect to proceed with a previously scheduled excursion.

The bus operator has the ultimate responsibility to determine if road conditions are safe, and may alter a route, return to a school or point of pick-up based on this decision. In any of these circumstances, the bus operator shall notify the principal and STSWR. The principal will notify parents where early pick up is required.

## **Absences**

Students may be excused from school if parents and guardians consider their children's safety to be compromised. Parents may also come to school to pick up their child before regular dismissal time. In either case, the school office must be contacted for safety purposes.

Unless a school site is closed for the day, school staff must make every reasonable effort to get to school.

## **Administrative Buildings**

The Catholic Education Centre and Facility Services Centre (Dutton Drive) will close when schools close.

## **Extended Day**

Extended day programs will not be run when a school is closed. If a school closes after the school day begins, extended day staff will stay until parents and guardians can pick up their children.

## **Inclement Weather During Secondary Exam Schedule**

If buses or taxis are cancelled in any geographic area of Waterloo Region, exams in all secondary schools will be postponed by one day. For clarity, exams that were to be written on Day 1 will be written on Day 2. Exams that were to be written on Day 2 will be written on Day 3, and so on.

## **Rental Permits / Community Use of Schools**

When schools are closed, all evening use programs and rentals are cancelled. If schools are open, and where weather conditions deteriorate during the day, supplementary notices regarding evening use will be provided via the WCDSB website, social media feed, and through electronic mail to permit holders.

## **District 8 Athletic Association Events**

If buses and taxis are cancelled throughout the Region, events organized by District 8 Athletic Association will be cancelled. When buses are cancelled in portions of the Region, decisions will be made based on the availability of teams and games scheduled that day.

## **Continuing Education**

If day schools are closed due to extreme weather, all St. Louis Adult Education sites will be closed as well.

Evening and weekend program closure procedures are outlined in Appendix A: Inclement Weather Procedure for St. Louis Programming.

## **Announcements**

For detailed sample announcements, please visit the STSWR website: [www.stswr.ca/inclement-weather](http://www.stswr.ca/inclement-weather)

## **Custodial/Maintenance Staff Instructions**

Should students arrive at school when it is closed, custodial staff must allow the students to enter the building. Students should be directed to a waiting area and the administrator or a teacher informed. When the administrator or a teacher is not in the building, custodians should call the Facility Services One Call Line (extension 5555) for further instructions.

When the system closes due to inclement weather, schools still need to be prepared for the next school day. Custodial staff are expected to go to their site when it is safe to do so. Snow clearing and salting should be prioritized before any cleaning takes place.

Maintenance staff are expected to attend to high priority, emergency, or scheduled maintenance work when it is safe to do so. Any work needed to ensure schools can operate the next school day should be prioritized.

### **Early Bus Dismissal / School Closure**

In the case of an early bus dismissal or individual school closure custodial staff are expected to remain at school until all staff and students have left the building. Prior to leaving, the following must occur:

1. Custodian (or school administration) will advise the daycare site supervisor, public library manager and community center manager that the school will be closing.
2. Custodian is to check heating system and the fire alarm system to ensure they are operating and report any problems for Facility Services (519 578 3660, ext. 5555).
3. Custodian is to check that all windows and doors are closed and locked, all space heaters are off, and other heating units are not blocked with paper or other classroom materials.
4. If school has a rental group scheduled, the custodian must place signage on school doors informing the group that the school has been closed due to inclement weather.
5. Once all staff and students have left the building, and all checks have been done, the custodian can arm the school security system and leave.

### **Inclement Weather After School Hours**

In situations where inclement weather conditions are expected during the evening hours a decision to cancel the afternoon custodial shift will be made, wherever possible, prior to 2:30 pm. During normal office hours (8:00 am to 5:00 pm) a decision to cancel the afternoon shift will be made by the Director of Education (or designate) in consultation with the Senior Manager of Facility Services.

If weather conditions appear to warrant school closure, the Senior Manager of Facility Services or designate will consult one or more Facility Services Supervisors to determine if custodial staff should be sent home. In the event

that a decision is reached to cancel the afternoon shift, prior to the shift starting, the Principal and Head Custodian at each affected school will be notified via email. It will be the responsibility of each Head Custodian to notify their afternoon shift of the cancellation. The shift cancellation will also be posted on the Board website along with the cancellation notice for any rental groups

In the event of an early dismissal the following procedure will be followed:

1. The Senior Manager of Facility Services or designate will send out an e-mail to all custodial staff informing them that the schools have been closed, or when they will be closed, and that the custodians are able to go home.
2. If the daycare, library or community center in the school is still open, the Custodian (or school administration) will advise the daycare site supervisor, public library manager and community center manager that the school will be closing.
3. Extended day programs will not be run when a school is closed. If a school closes after the school day begins, extended day staff will stay until parents and guardians can pick up their children.
4. If a rental group is using a school, the custodian will advise the group that the schools have been closed and everyone must leave. If required, the custodial staff will provide the rental group with telephone access to inform parents of closure and early pick up. The custodian must place signage on school doors regarding school closure due to inclement weather.
5. Custodian is to check heating system and the fire alarm system to ensure they are operating and report any problems for Facility Services (519 578 3660, ext. 5555).
6. Custodian is to check that all windows and doors are closed and locked, all space heaters are off, and other heating units are not blocked with paper or other classroom materials.
7. Once all rentals groups, afternoon programs, community partners have left the building, and all checks have been done, the custodian will arm the school security system and leave.

## **Weekend School Use**

Where weekend school use is scheduled, a decision to cancel would be made by 7:00 am by the Senior Manager of Facility Services in consultation with Program Supervisor and On Call Supervisor. On Call Supervisor will make every attempt to contact custodians scheduled to cover weekend use to inform them of cancellation