



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE 193 SECTION: GENERAL ADMINISTRATION	
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Inclement Weather and Disruption to Essential Utilities Supporting Facilities

Definitions

“Inclement Weather”

Abnormal weather conditions including hail, snow, cold, high winds, extreme high temperature or the like which creates an unsafe environment for employees and students.

“Interruption to Essential Utilities”

The failure of a utility essential to the safe and smooth operation of a site, potentially including services related to heating, electricity and/or water.

Background

The Renfrew County District School Board (RCDSB) is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all students and staff. Inclement weather, emergency conditions, or an interruption to essential utilities (heating/water/electricity) may occasionally result in the release of staff or closure of schools.

The *Education Act* gives school boards the permission to “close or authorize the closing of a school or class for a temporary period where such a closure appears unavoidable because of (a) failure of transportation arrangements or (b) inclement weather, fire, flood, the breakdown of the school heating plant, the failure of an essential utility or a similar emergency.”

Procedure

As a matter of practice, schools will only close in extreme circumstances, and, after consultation between the Principal/Vice-Principal, Superintendent of Education, and the Director’s Office.

Inclement Weather

Staff are to make every reasonable effort to be present at their District workplace. Forecasted conditions do not permit staff to stay at home. Staff will assess the impact of current weather conditions on their ability to travel to their assigned worksite and in the event that they are unable to travel, they must enter their absence in SmartFindExpress, and complete and submit the RCDSB 'Application for Leave' form, and submit it to Human Resources.

If approved, the absence will be coded as 'inclement weather' otherwise the absence will be documented as 'Special Leave'. Should the employee's special leave allocation be exhausted, the absence will be marked as 'Leave Without Pay'.

If an inclement weather event occurs during the course of the school and work day, staff may approach their Principal/Vice-Principal/Manager/Area Supervisor to request an early departure. If the request is approved, the staff member must fill out the RCDSB 'Application for Leave' form and submit it to Human Resources.

In the case of individual school closures due to inclement weather, as instructed by the Director of Education or designate, custodial staff will remain at school until all students and staff have left the building. Prior to leaving, the following must occur:

- Principal will advise any shared space tenants (daycare site supervisor, public library manager and/or community centre manager) that the school will be closing;
- Custodian will check heating system and fire alarm system to ensure they are operating, and, report any problems to Facility Services Department following the Facility Services Emergency Procedures at 613-735-0151 ext. 2264;
- Custodian will check that all windows and doors are closed and locked, all space heaters are off, and other heating units are not blocked with paper and/or other classroom materials;
- The Custodian will contact the Community Use of Schools Coordinator and inform them of the closing should there be a booking. The custodian will also place signage on school doors informing the group that the school is closed.

Once the above is completed, custodial staff will arm the school security system and depart.

Inclement Weather and Remote Learning

School boards are required by the Ministry of Education to develop inclement weather plans that may include pivoting to remote learning. The following outlines the District's expectation on this matter.

Educators shall utilize the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE as Google Classroom and/or D2L Brightspace) with reasonable regularity throughout the course of the school year.

In the event of busing cancellations due to inclement weather or a school closure due to disruptions to essential utilities, independent activities, assignments or review materials shall be prepared to be shared with students (messedged through Google Classroom and/or D2L Brightspace). This will ensure the continuity of learning for students who are unable to attend in person.

These independent activities, assignments or review materials shall consolidate existing learning and will not include new learning lessons. The learning may take place synchronously or asynchronously, based on the professional judgement of staff.

Educators are encouraged to follow the guidelines for remote learning in Policy/Program Memorandum 164 – *Requirements for Remote Learning (PPM 164)* regarding the number of minutes of instruction during inclement weather days and/or school closure days. Staff are not expected to engage students in a hybrid-learning environment unless they choose to do so.

Unless they are unable to travel to their school site due to unsafe road conditions and/or road closures, educators shall be present in their classrooms to welcome students who may be attending school in person during an inclement weather day.

Elementary school staff must be present to welcome students at the start of the school day, even though classes could be combined for the remainder of the school day (or a portion of it). Similarly, staff in secondary schools must be present at the beginning of each period to welcome students to their classrooms, even though these students may also be amalgamated for some portion of the period/day.

Students who engage in remote learning during a school day in which there has been inclement weather causing the cancellation of transportation and/or disruption to essential utilities causing a school closure shall be recorded as a 'G' day for attendance.

Staff and students enrolled in Remote Synchronous Learning (RSL) through the Virtual Elementary School (VES) are to continue with the regular school day, as would normally be the case.

Staff who work at the Mary Street Education Centre and the Administration Building are also expected to make a reasonable effort to be present at their place of work. However, when they are unable to report to their District assigned workplace due to inclement weather or a disruption to essential utilities resulting in a closure of their central site, employees at these locations may be permitted to work from home with manager/supervisor approval. The employee does not need to complete the "Special Leave" form.

When buses are cancelled or a school closes during an examination period, exams will be postponed by one day (i.e., exams that were to be written on Day 1 will be written on Day 2, and exams that were to be written on Day 2 will now be written on Day 3, etc.).

Busing

The Renfrew County Joint Transportation Consortium (RCJTC) will decide whether to proceed with the cancellation of bus route(s) shortly after 5:30 a.m.

Weather warnings from Environment Canada and consultation with bus operators regarding "on the ground" weather conditions are factors influencing a formal decision to cancel.

The RCJTC will post notifications through the following no later than 6:00 a.m.:

- Website (www.onthebus.ca)
- Twitter (@RCJTC_Trans)
- Facebook (RCJTC)

- iTunes with iPhone App (verify with "RCJTC")
- Google Play with Android App (verify with "RCJTC")
- Email to parents who subscribe for notifications.

When transportation to a school is cancelled, schools remain open to receive students. If parents choose to bring their child/children into school, they will be responsible for their transportation to and from school.

Interruption to Essential Utilities Supporting Schools

In the event of an interruption to the essential utilities supporting schools (heating, electrical power, water service, for instance), the Principal/Vice-Principal/Manager/Area Supervisor is expected to attend to the safety of the students and/or staff under their care and ensure there is no immediate threat or hazard created by the interruption.

The Principal/Vice-Principal/Manager/Area Supervisor shall promptly notify their Superintendent of Education of the situation on site.

Simultaneously, the Chief Custodian shall promptly inform the Area Supervisor and Facilities Manager of the situation on site.

When an interruption of essential utilities has occurred, the following must take place.

During the first hour of the interruption, the Principal/Vice-Principal/Manager will:

- determine whether or not the cause for the interruption in utility service is related to the malfunctioning of equipment internally (e.g., pipe burst, tree falling on site), or, an external cause (e.g., damaged power lines within the municipality due to inclement weather);
- seek confirmation regarding the length of the interruption;
- contact the Area Supervisor and Facilities Manager and/or public utility provider indicating that the school is without service; and,
- monitor the situation with respect to the impact on the students and/or staff on site and inform Superintendent of Education.

The Superintendent of Education will inform the Office of the Director of Education.

During the second hour of the interruption, the Principal/Vice-Principal/Manager will:

- apprise the Superintendent of Education of the status of the situation, and, its impact on site, particularly their observations regarding the impact the interruption is having on the safety and well-being of students and staff, as well as the ability to deliver programs and/or services adequately;
- give consideration to the contingencies necessary for providing support to students and staff on site, including basic necessities (e.g., provision of potable water for drinking; provision of water to flush toilets in order to remove waste in a sanitary manner and to physically wash hands with soap and water for hands that are visibly soiled; and, availability of 70-90% alcohol-based hand sanitizer to sanitize hands after use of washroom and/or when hands become unsanitary);
- review their emergency communications protocol at this time in the event there is a

need to move to a more comprehensive contingency plan at the third-hour mark;

Although a school may remain open temporarily without water service, all food preparation must be suspended pending approval from the Renfrew County District Health Unit. The Superintendent of Education will continue to provide updates to the Office of the Director of Education.

During the third hour of the interruption,

- Depending on the status of the situation, including feedback received from the Area Supervisor and Facilities Manager or public utility provider, the Principal/Vice-Principal/Manager – in consultation with the Superintendent of Education – will determine what additional contingencies to enact. They will address the safety and well-being of the students and/or staff on site (e.g., relocate students and/or staff to a different site, coordinate the early release of students with due consideration to “safe arrival” expectations and the provision of transportation services through RCJTC, for instance).

The Superintendent of Education will consult with the Director of Education and propose the contingency actions.

School principals are responsible for notifying parents of cancellations of any unique activities in their school. This may be through social media, the school website and/or SchoolMessenger.

After Hours Use and Community Use Permits

Weather conditions are monitored throughout the day. If the weather has worsened after dismissal or the school closes early, the Community Use Facilitator will notify the permit holder that the booking has been cancelled.

RCDSB References

[AP 131 School Opening and Closing](#)

[AP 140 Code of Conduct](#)

[AP 331 Safe Arrival Program](#)

[AP 402 Occupational Health and Safety](#)

[AP 407 Relationship of Procedures to Collective Agreements](#)

[AP 426 Special Leave](#)

[AP 495 Refusing Unsafe Work](#)

Legal Reference

Education Act, Sections 19, 170

Procedure History

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