



City School District of Albany

Weather Emergency Procedures

**Procedures for Weather-Related School
Closing, Delayed Opening and Early Release**

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**Dr. Kimberly Young Wilkins
Interim Superintendent of Schools**

SUPERINTENDENT'S CABINET

Dr. Kimberly Young Wilkins
Interim Superintendent of Schools

Cecily Wilson-Turner
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

Lori McKenna
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

William Hogan
Assistant Superintendent for Business Affairs

Karen Bechdol
Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Deborah Marriott
Human Resources Administrator

Eileen Leffler
Administrator of Grants and Program Development

Ron Lesko
Director of Communications

Kent Baker
Chief Information Officer

Jack Grogan
Director of Security

Mike Wager
Assistant Director of Security

Brian Dengler
Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds

Denise Towne
Supervisor of Transportation

Nicole Lindeman
Technology Coordinator

Lisa Finkenbinder
Food Service Director

WEATHER EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

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I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

One of the City School District of Albany's top priorities is creating and maintaining healthy school cultures. This priority is applicable at all times, including during the transportation of our students to and from school. Although it is the desire of the Superintendent to maximize student attendance and keep schools open each and every day of the school year, circumstances and weather events may create unsafe conditions for students that require adjustments to our normal operating schedule.

To ensure that all district and school-level staff are prepared, included herein are procedures for school closings, delayed openings, and early releases resulting from weather-related conditions that may jeopardize the safety of students. Both our internal and external stakeholders will be advised of our procedures, which include but are not limited to:

1. School board
2. District and school-level administrators
3. Collective bargaining units
4. School faculty and staff
5. Albany City Council PTA
6. Local law enforcement agencies
7. Mayor of Albany
8. City departments
9. Other community organizations

All comments and suggestions regarding these procedures should be directed to the Superintendent or the Director of Security.

II. MONITORING AND INFORMATION GATHERING

1. Decisions regarding school closures, delayed openings, and early releases are informed by multiple sources. Among these sources are:
 - a. Weather forecasts from local, state, and national services
 - b. Current and anticipated conditions of local streets and roads
 - c. Condition of district facilities, including parking
 - d. Condition of school and city buses
 - e. Decisions or anticipated decisions of surrounding school districts.

It is important to note, especially during months when cold weather is prevalent, that schools closures, delayed openings, and early releases can be caused by factors other than snow. Extreme cold air temperatures and wind-chill also are factors the district takes into consideration when considering the safety of students, families and staff members. For example, frostbite can occur on exposed skin in about 30 minutes in adults at -25°F and in as little as 10 minutes in adults at -40°F. It takes less time for children. Yet, frostbite can occur in children even before temperatures and wind chills dip into these extreme numbers; it just takes a little longer.

- a. No one should be outside with unprotected skin with *wind-chill factors of - 40° F*. This would be *a medical indication for school closure and suspension of outdoor activity, including all interscholastic outdoor sports*.
 - b. Injuries can occur sooner and at higher temperatures. As we are approaching *wind chills of -25°F*, it may be time to *consider late arrival or early dismissal*, especially for elementary children.
2. The district has created and will maintain a Weather Emergency Response Team that will be activated each time snow or other weather-related crises or emergency conditions develop or appear imminent. The Superintendent (or designee) will serve as the team's coordinator and will convene the team as needed to review current conditions and to ensure optimum readiness for closure, early release, or delayed opening by school and district staff. They will also ensure that all staff have up-to-date information on the status of decision-making relevant to weather-related events. Membership includes:
 - a. Superintendent
 - b. Cabinet members
 - c. Director of Security
 - d. Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds
 - e. Technology Coordinator
 - f. Supervisor of Transportation
 - g. Others as needed

3. The decision to close or delay school openings will be based on national and local weather reports; existing or potential road conditions; conditions of schools, including walkways and parking areas; and buses. When snow or other weather-related crises or emergency conditions appear imminent, the Director of Security and Transportation Supervisor will monitor and collect information on potential or existing hazardous street and road conditions from the following:
 - a. Local, state, and national weather services
 - b. Mayor of the City of Albany
 - c. Albany Police Department
 - d. Albany Fire Department
4. The Superintendent will monitor and collect information from the City of Albany departments of operations and transportation to assess the status of facilities, personnel, and programs planned that involve students, staff, and parents.
5. The Superintendent or her designee and the Director of Security, Supervisor of Transportation and Supervisor of Operations and Maintenance will consult with their colleagues in surrounding school districts.
6. All decisions regarding make-up days and pay issues resulting from emergency school closing, delayed opening, and early release will be made within 72 hours of the event.
7. During ongoing weather emergencies (multiple days) the Superintendent, Cabinet members and the Director of Security will conference call with Board of Education members for daily updates and recommendations.

III. PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOL CANCELLATION OR DELAYED OPENINGS

1. The Weather Emergency Response Team will meet in a timely manner prior to a potential severe weather event to examine all information collected by the Director of Security, Assistant Superintendents and Supervisors of Transportation and Buildings and Grounds, including weather reports; existing or potential road conditions; conditions of schools, including walkways and parking areas; scheduled events; and buses.
2. If the team needs to meet and confer during a weekend, team members may be asked to meet at the district administrative building or by phone conference as determined by the Superintendent.
3. Each Principal and their Assistant Superintendent for Instruction will maintain for each school a bell schedule reflecting both a one-hour delay and a two-hour delay start for staff and for students. Breakfast will be served with appropriate accommodations extended to late-arriving students as needed.

4. On the evening prior to a potential closing or delayed opening, the Director of Facilities will provide a weather update to the Superintendent.
5. Between 3:30 and 4:30 a.m., the Director of Facilities provides a weather update to the Superintendent as well as a review of the current conditions of roads and facilities. This information, combined with information from other local school districts, and in coordination with the Director of Transportation, informs the recommendation to the Superintendent.
6. The Superintendent will recommend closing or delaying opening by **5:30 a.m.** on the affected day and will communicate her recommendation to the Director of Communications to ensure social media (SNN, Facebook and Twitter) and media outlets have correct information. The Director of Communications also will communicate this information to all staff via e-mail.
7. School cancellations or delayed openings will be applicable to all district school sites serving students unless otherwise noted.
8. All district offices will be open and district office staff is expected at work unless otherwise announced. **When district offices will be closed or opening is delayed, a separate announcement will be made.**
9. The Director of Communications will communicate district-wide the decision to close or delay opening as follows:
 - a. Send an all-staff e-mail and social media notifications, including School News Notifier (SNN) text and e-mail messages, no later than 5:30 a.m. informing all recipients of school closure or delayed openings.
 - b. Communicate with all local media affiliated with the The School Closings Network the decision to close or delay opening. All staff and parents should monitor the TV or radio media for announcements of school closures or delayed openings.

IV. PROCEDURES FOR EARLY RELEASE FOR INCLEMENT WEATHER

1. On days when there is a strong forecast for inclement weather, the Weather Emergency Response Team will convene to review information provided to the Superintendent by the Director of Security, Supervisor of Transportation and Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds as indicated in the Monitoring section of these procedures. This information includes, but is not limited to, updated weather forecasts; street and road conditions; and other pertinent information.

2. Based on information gathered, including the recommendation of the Security Director and the Weather Emergency Response Team, the Superintendent will decide not to release students early or to commence with an early release of all schools either one, two or three hours earlier than their typical dismissal time. It is our desire on early release days to have a minimum of four (4) hours of instruction.
3. All principals will be notified by noon of early release by telephone and e-mail by their assistant superintendents within fifteen (15) minutes of the Superintendent's decision.
4. * In the event of an emergency (e.g. a significant number of students still remain in the building awaiting pick-up) the Principal will remain and seek volunteers. If there are no volunteers, the Principal shall remain until all students are dismissed.
5. The Supervisor of Transportation will call the Superintendent to inform her or her designee when all students have been safely discharged.
6. On early release days due to inclement weather, **ALL** after-school activities including athletics, professional development, adult evening school and other activities are cancelled unless otherwise announced. The secondary principals (high school and middle school) should contact the Athletic Director to coordinate scheduling of interscholastic athletic contests, when applicable.
7. Decisions and announcement for all non-school sites will be made separate from decisions affecting school sites.
8. The Director of Communications will communicate **early release** decisions to:
 - a. Principals via e-mail
 - b. Media outlets (TV, radio, newspaper, etc., via The School Closings Network)
 - c. Parents via all social media tools and district website informing them of school closure or delayed openings.
9. Saturday and Weekend Programs/Activities – In the event of an emergency closing of schools on Friday, a determination will be made at that time regarding weekend activities. The appropriate program/activity coordinators will be notified by their Assistant Superintendent of any cancellations.
10. The Business Administrator will communicate with and ensure timely execution of responsibilities by the following:
 - a. Food Service Department
 - b. Transportation Department
 - c. Buildings and Grounds Department

V. SHELTER-IN-PLACE PROCEDURES DURING WEATHER-RELATED EMERGENCIES

1. In the event that inclement weather prohibits or places at great risk the transportation of students, district office will enact “Shelter in Place” procedures.
2. Principals or site administrators will activate the school or facility’s emergency plan. Follow reverse evacuation procedures to bring students, faculty, and staff indoors. If there are visitors in the building, provide for their safety by asking them to stay and not leave. When directions are provided to shelter in place, everyone must take those steps immediately, where they are, and not drive or walk outdoors.
3. Principals or site administrators will provide for answering telephone inquiries from concerned parents and families of staff by having at least one telephone with the school’s listed telephone number available in the room selected to provide shelter for the school secretary, or person designated to answer these calls. There should be a way to communicate with people in all rooms.
4. Principals or site administrators will ideally, provide for a way to make announcements over the school-wide public address system from the room where the top school official takes shelter.
5. If the school has voice mail or an automated attendant, Principals or site administrators will change the recording to indicate that the school is closed, and that students and staff are remaining in the building until authorities advise that it is safe to leave.
6. Principals or site administrators will have employees familiar with your building’s mechanical systems available.
7. Principals or site administrators will gather essential supplies, such as nonperishable food, student medications, bottled water, battery-powered radios, first-aid supplies, flashlights, batteries, and plastic garbage bags.
8. Principals or site administrators will select a room(s) that has adequate space for everyone to be able to sit. Avoid overcrowding by selecting several rooms if necessary. Classrooms, libraries, meeting rooms, auditoriums, and gymnasiums may be used.
9. Principals or site administrators will have a hard-wired telephone in room(s) you select for emergencies to communicate status reports to parents and school officials.
10. If, Principals or site administrators will allow children that have cell phones to use them to call a parent or guardian to let them know that they have been asked to remain in school until further notice, and that they are safe.
11. Principals or site administrators will write down the names of everyone in the room, and call your schools’ designated emergency contact to report “who” is in the room with you.

VI. WEATHER GUIDELINES FOR OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Rationale and Overview

Outdoor activities can be an integral part of the school day. Weather conditions, temperature, and wind chill must be reviewed in order to determine if it is safe for students and staff to engage in outdoor activities. Severe climate conditions in which temperatures and wind chill dip into certain extreme ranges can cause medical concerns for the safety of children and adults.

Procedure Steps and Decision Points

- When temperatures are below 20 degrees Fahrenheit, including wind chill, outdoor activities should be suspended, including outdoor sports, physical education, clubs, and playground/recess.
- Weather conditions and wind chill should be reviewed daily in order to determine if the conditions are too risky for outdoor activities.
- When students engage in outdoor activities, they should be properly clothed for the weather conditions.

Cold Weather * (Based on wind-chill temperatures)

Above 25 degrees F	Regular outdoor activities
16-25 degrees F	Sunny days – regular outdoor activities Overcast days – limited outdoor activity (10-15 minutes)
10-15 degrees F	Sunny days – limited outdoor activity (10-15 minutes) Overcast days – no outdoor activity
Below 10 degrees F	No outdoor activity

**Proper dress is required to take part in outdoor activities.*

Hot Weather (Based on heat index temperatures)

Above 95 degrees F	No outside activity
90-95 degrees F	Limited outdoor activity (10-15 minutes)
Below 90 degrees F	Regular outdoor activities

Air Quality Index

Above 200	No outdoor activity
150-200	Limited outdoor activity (10-15 minutes)
Below 150	Regular outdoor activity

VII. COMMUNICATIONS

1. The Director of Communications will ensure that announcements for closings, delays, or early releases are posted on the district website, social media (School News Notifier/SNN, Facebook and Twitter), and media outlets via The School Closings Network. In the event of early release, the announcements will include any pertinent changes to bus stops.
2. During early release, bus companies must provide the district hourly status reports as buses are dropping students at their stops or homes. This information will be used to provide updates to parents by principals and/or district-level staff at a minimum of every hour, or more frequently as needed via School News Notifier or phone calls. Parents may call the district's call center (518-475-6010) for additional information.
3. The Superintendent and Director of Communications will receive regular updates at a minimum of every hour, or more frequently as needed from the Security Director on the status of schools during early release.
4. During early release, the Superintendent or her designee will consult and update every two hours:
 - a. School Board
 - b. Mayor's Office
 - c. Police Department
 - d. Office of Public Works
 - e. Others as needed
5. During early release, principals must call or e-mail their Assistant Superintendent when all students have vacated their buildings.
6. During delayed openings, principals must call or e-mail their Assistant Superintendent when all buses have arrived.
7. The Director of Communications will provide status reports to the media as approved by the Superintendent.

DELAYED OPENING PROCEDURES

PRINCIPAL'S CHECK-LIST

- ┌ Schedules updated to reflect one-hour and two-hour start times for staff and for students
- ┌ Review schedule with staff immediately upon completion
- ┌ Identify staff member(s) covering supervision for early student arrivals and location where it will occur
- ┌ Identify staff members covering breakfast
- ┌ Identify staff members overseeing student sign-out
- ┌ Update and regularly maintain student emergency contacts in the event of early dismissal

