



# Emergency School Closing

(Threats, Inclement Weather, Power Failures and Water Shortage)

AP 70-101

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**Principals/Regional Services Administrators shall have procedures in place in the event an emergency school closure is required.**

## **Background**

Safety of students is a primary focus of Pembina Hills Public Schools.

The Division recognizes that it has a joint responsibility with parents to ensure that the safety of students is not jeopardized. The Division further recognizes that the decision to cancel buses or cancel classes requires careful deliberation and early communication. Except in situations where health and/or safety of staff is an issue, schools will not be considered closed.

When school(s) are closed due to inclement weather, etc., major radio stations shall be notified for broadcast purposes and an announcement shall be posted on the website regarding school closure and bus operations – [www.phpschools.ca](http://www.phpschools.ca).

## **Threat to the Health, Welfare, or Safety of Students and Staff**

1. Schools shall be closed when conditions pose a threat to the health, welfare or safety of students.
2. The decision to close a school(s) rests with the Superintendent or designate who shall consult employees. The Superintendent will advise the Board Chair.
3. A Principal is authorized to vacate and close school premises (in the absence of the Superintendent) in hazardous or life-threatening situations.
4. All schools must have plans in place to activate a lockdown or shelter-in-place emergency procedure to protect staff and students from an external event or threat (e.g. tornado, animal on play area, etc.). As a precautionary measure, outer doors are locked. The Division requires schools to practice two lockdown drills each year to acclimate students and teachers to a procedure that they will be able to follow quickly, effectively and safely.

## **If Early Dismissal is Needed: Students**

All students are to remain in school until alternate arrangements have been made.

If students are dismissed early because of emergency conditions, schools shall attempt to contact parents, or the individuals on the student's emergency contact list. The closure will be announced on local radio stations and on the School/Division website when possible.

*Parents (or emergency contacts where parents are unavailable) of students under the age of 18 must be contacted before they are dismissed.*

Where it is suspected that no parent is at home or the student's emergency contact is not available, alternate arrangements shall be made.

Younger students cannot be sent home with older siblings unless parental permission is obtained or on file.

### **Early Dismissal: Busing**

When student transportation is affected by unforeseen early dismissal (i.e. inclement weather, power failure, etc.) staff will enact the appropriate notification procedures.

The Director of Transportation or designate will be responsible for organizing the bus arrivals for early dismissals; however, this process may take upwards of one hour or more and schools should have plans to keep students in school.

### **Inclement Weather**

Inclement Weather is defined as snow, blowing snow, winds causing difficulty and/or low visibility, or extreme cold temperatures (-40°C) or colder, which would prevent the safe transit of students to/from school. The Division recognizes that weather and road conditions can differ markedly across the Division.

### **Transportation Procedure**

Weather conditions will be monitored throughout the day. If weather conditions improve and safe transportation of students meets the criteria, afternoon transportation runs may take place.

Bus Drivers will determine if their route is to be cancelled due to inclement weather creating a safety hazard.

Due to hazards while driving in adverse weather and road conditions and/or limited visibility, the following procedure should be followed to ensure the safety of students and Bus Drivers.

1. A temperature registered of minus 40 degrees Celsius (-40°C) or colder at the start of the route will be used to halt transportation services. A Bus Driver is to report a temperature of -40°C or colder to the Director of Transportation.
2. Bus Drivers shall not stop when visibility is less than 300 metres on roads with a speed limit of 100 km/h.
3. Bus Drivers shall not stop when visibility is less than 100 metres on roads with a speed limit of 80 km/h or less.
4. Bus Drivers shall not cross any lanes of traffic in reduced visibility when it cannot be done safely.
5. Bus Drivers shall make alternate route plans for inclement weather and inform parents prior to the start of each school year.

Parents are asked to help prevent potential accidents by contacting their child's Bus Driver and alerting them of any danger that may exist due to adverse weather and road conditions and/or limited visibility at their stop.

If a Bus Driver determines not to make their run based on inclement weather, every reasonable effort must be made to notify:

- the parents of students on the route
- the Principal
- the Director of Transportation or designate of the cancellation as soon as possible

### **Division Wide Shut Down**

In the rare occasion when the Division halts part or all transportation, the following will apply:

- If weather reports forecast inclement weather, Pembina Hills Transportation Services will check road conditions.
- Director of Transportation or designate will notify the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and or designate of the recommendation not to run buses.
- Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources or designate will contact the Superintendent of the recommendation not to run.
- If decision is made to enact closure, the emergency school closure/inclement weather protocol will be enacted.
- Director of Transportation will contact Swan Hills, Barrhead and Westlock relay Bus Drivers by group text to both land line and cell phone, who, then, will contact all other Bus Drivers as per fan out list.
- Schools will remain open with staff in attendance unless otherwise authorized by the Superintendent of Schools.

### **Preparing for Inclement Weather**

Clothing – All students riding on a school bus during the winter months shall be required to be prepared for unexpected severe weather conditions. The student shall carry with them appropriate winter footwear, outerwear, including headgear, gloves or mitts. Students inadequately prepared for winter conditions will be reported to the parents and the Principal by the Bus Driver.

Bus Drivers are to hold themselves in readiness for service in cases of pending extreme storm conditions.

Should parents wish to make alternative arrangements for transporting students home, they must notify the Principal and their Bus Driver before the student will be allowed to leave the school.

### **Employee Attendance - Inclement Weather**

Unless otherwise announced or posted, staff shall attend during regular school hours. The Superintendent or designate will determine whether the absence will be due to inclement weather.

**Please note** that staff is to proceed to work/school when the roads are safe for public transit and work start times would depend on road conditions.

### **Power and Water Shortages**

In the event of power or water interruptions, the Principal or designate will contact the Director of Facilities and Director of Transportation to determine the cause of the interruption and the approximate time of when the power or water will be restored.

Often these shortages are restored within 1½ hours; therefore, the school should have a plan to keep students in school for that period of time.

During the interruption, students and staff in areas without proper lighting should be relocated within the school. Washrooms should be supervised.

The Director of Transportation will be responsible for calling in buses if an early dismissal is required.

The decision to close a school(s) rests with the Superintendent or designate.

## **Reference**

[School Act - Section 57](#)

Exhibit: Emergency School Closure/Inclement Weather Protocol (Internal distribution only)