

INCLEMENT AND EXTREME WEATHER

Background

The Division believes that, schools should remain open during inclement weather; however, it recognizes that weather conditions may result in school closures, early dismissals and/or adjustments in regular bus schedules.

Guidelines

1. The Superintendent or Secretary-Treasurer have the authority to suspend school bus service and/or close schools in the Division when weather conditions constitute a hazard to the safety of students and staff.
2. Parents and school bus operators shall be advised annually of the procedures used when the suspension of bus services, early dismissal or school closure is necessary. Parents are to be asked to listen to local radio broadcasts and check the Division website at www.gsacrd.ab.ca or Parent Portal for up-to-date information regarding the cancellation of bussing.
3. A rural school bus operator shall not operate the school bus if, in his/her opinion, road or climatic conditions are of a nature that would make the operation of the bus hazardous to the safety and well-being of the school bus passengers.
4. Parents shall ensure that their children who are passengers on a school bus are properly dressed in accordance with prevailing or potential weather conditions.
5. During inclement weather which forces the cancellation of rural and or urban bus operations only, schools will remain open.
6. Staff are expected to be in school on days regardless of school buses being canceled or when schools are closed for students. Staff who are unable to get to work due inclement weather, must contact Human Resource Services as well as their principal regarding their potential absence. Special arrangements may be required on days when Alberta Education diploma and achievement tests are scheduled. Staff members are asked to listen to local radio broadcasts for precise information. In addition, all staff are encouraged to ensure that they are prepared for winter driving conditions (see this [link](#) for more information). *If staff are not comfortable driving to work due to weather conditions but the impassable road code is not available, they may access other entitlements, such as a personal day.*
 - 6.1. The “impassable roads” code/entitlement may be accessed for staff in the following circumstances:
 - i. they are unable to drive to work when heavy snowfall or ice has made all routes for the staff member to school inaccessible for vehicles;

- ii. when a highway or road has been closed and there is not an alternative route for the staff member;
 - iii. when public transportation facilities are suspended, and the staff member accesses public transportation to get to their work site.
- 6.2. Any use of the “impassable roads” entitlements must be approved by the Assistant Superintendent or Manager of Human Resource Services.
7. In extreme weather conditions, the final decision to send a child to school or to the bus rests with the parents even though buses and schools may be operating.
8. In weather that is uncomfortable due to higher temperatures, schools should follow OH&S practices to ensure that all staff are safe. <https://www.alberta.ca/working-extreme-temperatures.aspx>

Procedures

1. The Superintendent of schools, or designate, shall direct a Division-wide suspension of rural school bus service in every instance where, in his/her opinion, climatic and/or road conditions constitute a significant hazard to the safety and well-being of school bus passengers.
 - 1.1. Road conditions on Highway 2, identified in [511 Alberta](#) as “Red” (designated as closed) or “Pink” (designated as covered with snow and/or ice) may constitute a significant hazard to the safety and well-being of school bus passengers, and may result in cancellation of service.
2. School bus service shall be suspended on all days which the forecast temperatures in the affected area is equal to or colder than minus forty (-40) degrees Celsius (including wind chill).
 - 2.1. The temperature shall be that forecast by Environment Canada via the [WeatherCAN](#) app. The visibility shall be less than 1 kilometer, as determined by [511 Alberta](#).
 - 2.2. Should rural and/or urban school bus service be suspended, bussing for charters and/or field trips from rural and/or urban locations shall also be suspended.
 - 2.3. Decisions regarding the provision of transportation services for sports and recreation academies and school-based field trips during inclement weather will be made by school administration (and the consultant for Sports Academies when applicable) as deemed necessary and appropriate.
3. A school bus operator shall not operate the school bus at the start of a school day if, in their opinion, road or climatic conditions in the area of service do not meet the guidelines set out in this administrative procedure and are of a nature that would make the operation of the school bus unsafe.

- 3.1. Whenever a school bus driver, prior to the start of a run, identifies hazardous conditions of any kind, they shall immediately notify their employer (the Division's Contractor) who will gather the details and contact the Division Transportation Manager. The Division Transportation Manager, in conjunction the Secretary Treasurer, will decide if the route will be cancelled or delayed. Subsequently, the Transportation Manager will notify the Principal and the parents of each child on the route regarding the status of transportation services on the affected route(s).
 - 3.2. A school bus driver may determine during the course of the route that road or climatic conditions make it unsafe to continue on the route. In this circumstance, the school bus driver shall attempt to park the bus in a safe location off the traveled road allowance and immediately attempt to establish radio contact with their contractor. The contractor will then contact the Division Transportation Manager who will notify parents of the circumstances and location of their children.
4. Should a bus breakdown occur in the morning; the bus driver shall immediately attempt to establish radio contact with their contractor to arrange for a replacement vehicle. The contractor will then contact the Division Transportation Manager who will notify parents and the school.
5. Passengers will be required to have on their person, proper outerwear, headgear, mitts and footwear, when applicable.
6. The Division Transportation Manager will contact school administrators informing them of any cancellation.
7. The Principal is responsible for arranging for school staff to be available at the school during school closures to answer the phones and to provide reasonable measures for students to return home safely.
 - 7.1. For those days when roads are impassable or public transportation facilities are suspended or weather conditions constitute a hazard to the safety of staff, the Principal will develop annually a plan that will identify which staff can be present at the school to receive students who arrive at a school to ensure a safe return to their home.
 - 7.2. The Principal will communicate the plan to staff at the first staff meeting of each school year.
8. The Manager of Operations Services or designate will be responsible for ensuring that at least one member of the custodial or maintenance staff is available at each school and the Division Services Centre.
9. The Superintendent or Secretary-Treasurer is responsible for arranging for a staff member to be available at Division Office to answer phones.

10. Parents are responsible for staying informed about inclement weather procedures, available on the Division [website](#).
11. For all students accessing transportation services, the Secretary-Treasurer or designate will advise parents/guardians the status of transportation operations and school closures via one or more of the following methods: automated notification system, radio, television, and/or website messaging. In each instance, these announcements may be made the preceding evening or between 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. on the same day that bus services are to be suspended.

Announcements of any cancellations will be broadcast on the following radio and television stations:

- GSACRD APP
- GSACRD Social Media Platforms
- AM Radio Channels: 630, 740, 880, 1260
- FM Radio Channels: 92.5, 97.3, 100.3, 103.9, 104.9
- Television Stations: Global, CityTV, CTV

It is recommended that two or more broadcasts be heard to ensure accuracy.

12. It shall be communicated to parents that it is very important—they make advance, adequate provisions for their child(ren) in the event that weather or mechanical difficulties may:
 - 12.1. Force suspension of regular bus service.
 - 12.2. Cause early dismissal of students.
 - 12.3. Result in a bus being more than ten (10) minutes late for a scheduled stop.
13. School leaders will support their staff in managing extreme high temperatures. Some examples of these strategies to help keep people safe in extreme heat are the following:
 - 13.1. take breaks if needed.
 - 13.2. drink lots of water (1 cup of water every 15 minutes).
 - 13.3. wear clothing and protective equipment designed to reduce heat stress.
 - 13.4. minimize physical activity in hot environments.
 - 13.5. know the signs of heat stress.
 - 13.6. change the work location to a cooler shaded area.
 - 13.7. create a cooling station where workers can rest.
 - 13.8. allow workers to adapt to the temperature.
 - 13.9. schedule more physically demanding jobs for cooler times of the day.

- 13.10. do a hazard assessment, put controls in place for protection and educate workers on hazards of working in the heat.