



**Policy No. 2.1.5**

**Section: School Related Operations**

**Related References:**

**Appendices: A**

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**Review Date:**

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**TITLE: INCLEMENT WEATHER**

**1.0 Rationale:**

It is the policy of District School Board Ontario North East to provide appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of its students and staff when experiencing inclement weather.

**A. EDUCATION ACT PROVISIONS**

The Education Act, 1998, outlines the statutory powers of a school board relative to school operations as follows:

[a] Section 170

Every school board shall,

11. keep open its schools during the whole period of the school year determined under the regulation, except where it is otherwise provided under this Act.

and

[b] Section 19

A board may close or authorize the closing of a school or class for a temporary period where such closing 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.

School closures due to very extreme and location unique conditions may be instituted only with the permission and indeed the initiative of the respective Superintendent of Schools or in the Superintendent's absence the Director of Education.

**B. SCHOOL CLOSURES DUE TO PLANT BREAKDOWN**

School closures due to plant breakdown are to be decided in consultation with the Superintendent of Schools or in the Superintendent's absence the Director of Education. All staff are expected to report to work at the affected work site or an alternate location as required and announced.

**C. CANCELLATION OF SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION PRIOR TO 9:00 A.M.**

Cancellation of school bus transportation prior to the commencement of the regular school day will be a decision taken and acted upon by the Transportation Officers as prescribed in the Joint Transportation Policy Procedures as follows:

The primary concern is the safety and welfare of pupils. Therefore, the Transportation Officer may cancel transportation before the school day if significant risk exists for the safety of pupils.

- a) School bus operators who service the area(s) affected by the inclement weather will communicate with each other. The designated operator will contact the Transportation Officer with their recommendation prior to 6:30 a.m.
- b) The designated operator will consult with the Transportation Officer to confirm that it is unsafe to transport the students to school.
- c) The Transportation Officer will communicate with all radio stations, prior to 7:00 a.m. and inform them of the following:
  - i) school buses are cancelled for all Boards, specifying areas affected, companies involved, and where appropriate, the individual schools it pertains to;
  - ii) schools will remain open
  - iii) it is the responsibility of the parent to determine whether or not it is safe for a student to leave for school at any time particularly when severe weather conditions prevail. It is the responsibility of the parent to get the student to and from school.
- d) The Transportation Officer will inform the Directors of Education or designate.

- e) Where transportation services have been cancelled, the Principal or designate will ensure that the school building is opened by 8:30 a.m. to accommodate those students who arrive.
- f) When regular attendance taking shows that a student is absent and his or her parents have not contacted the school, the parents will then be contacted to report the absence and confirm that the child is safe.

***D. STUDENT SAFETY AT BUS STOPS DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER***

- (a) It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that their child is not left unattended at a bus stop when school bus transportation has been cancelled.
- (b) During severely cold weather parents/guardians should make arrangements to ensure that their child gets on and off the bus in a timely manner.
- (c) It is the school bus operator's responsibility to ascertain that parents/guardians are present before leaving Junior Kindergarten and Senior Kindergarten pupils at home. This is very important in order to avoid serious consequences, especially during cold weather periods. School bus operators will be advised of other arrangements by the school. Principals must be notified immediately of any incomplete routes.

***E. INCLEMENT WEATHER CONDITIONS AND EMPLOYEES REPORTING TO WORK***

- (a) Staff should adhere to the wording addressing inclement weather in their respective collective agreements and to the Board's Inclement Weather Operational Procedures.
- (b) All employees shall make every reasonable effort, consistent with personal safety, to be on duty on a Board-Designated Inclement Weather Day unless instructed otherwise by the Board.

***Authorized Absence***

An authorized absence is a staff absence whereby the employee made every reasonable effort, unless otherwise instructed, to be on duty on a Board-designated inclement weather day.

An authorized employee absence is an absence whereby an employee is informed of an official emergency conditions day and advised not to attend the workplace or leave the workplace due to an emergency.

***Unauthorized Absence***

An unauthorized employee absence is an absence whereby the employee did not make, as determined by the supervisor, every reasonable effort to be on duty on a Board-designated inclement weather day or a day that is not declared an official emergency conditions day. An unauthorized absence may result in a loss of pay.

***F. CANCELLATION OF SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION AFTER 9:00 A.M.***

**(a) Definition of School Weather Zones:**

Zone 1: Hearst	Zone 8: Matachewan
Zone 2: Kapuskasing	Zone 9: Larder Lake, Kirkland Lake, Swastika
Zone 3: Smooth Rock Falls	Zone 10: Englehart, Charlton
Zone 4: Cochrane	Zone 11: Elk Lake
Zone 5: Timmins, S. Porcupine	Zone 12: Kerns
Zone 6: Iroquois Falls	Zone 13: New Liskeard, Cobalt, Haileybury
Zone 7: Ramore, Matheson, Val Gagne	Zone 14: Temagami

**(b) Early Dismissal**

- (A) The decision shall be made following consultation and confirmation from the weather offices, the Ministry of transportation and the Ontario Provincial Police, and released prior to 11:15 a.m. whenever possible.
- (B) Board designates shall inform the bus operators, appropriate Supervisory Officers and Principals of the decision.
- (C) Each school shall be responsible for the formulation of a school plan wherein parents, pupils and teachers are made aware of procedures and contingency arrangements.
- (D) The procedures outlined in the school plan shall also include:
  - (i) Alternative accommodations for those pupils whose parents are not at home (up to and including grade six)
  - (ii) Alternative accommodations for those pupils with special physical needs who may be at risk due to the adverse weather.
  - (iii) Names of staff members to remain at school in the event that pupils are stranded overnight.
  - (iv) A communication plan.

**School Emergency Plan**

- (i) Every school must employ a School Emergency Plan when bad weather conditions worsen to the point where it becomes unsafe and impossible to send students home. The procedures in the School Emergency Plan shall also include:
  - (a) Alternative accommodations for those pupils whose parents are not at home (up to and including Grade 6)
  - (b) Alternative accommodations for those pupils with special needs who may be at risk due to the adverse weather.
  - (c) Names of staff members to remain at school in the event that pupils are stranded overnight.
  - (d) A communication plan.
- (ii) The School Emergency Plan will be forwarded to the Superintendent of Schools by October 1<sup>st</sup> each year.

Parental Responsibilities

- (i) It is the responsibility of the parent to determine whether or not it is safe for a student to leave for school at any time, particularly when severe weather conditions prevail.
- (ii) It is the responsibility of the parent to get the student to and from the school bus stop.
- (iii) It is the responsibility of the parent, with special attention to junior and senior kindergarten children, to ensure that the student is safely on the school bus during severe weather conditions. It is also the parent's responsibility to ensure that a responsible person is waiting to receive the student at the school bus stop when classes are cancelled due to plant breakdown, inclement or severe weather conditions.
- (iv) If school buses are cancelled, the parent who transports a student to school is responsible for transporting the student home after school.

**PROCEDURES:**



**Inclement Weather Procedures**

**Definitions:**

Employee in this procedure means a permanent employee as defined by the collective agreement for the employee group and a Long-Term Occasional (LTO) employee as defined by the collective agreement for the employee group.

Casual Employee means a casual employee as defined by the collective agreement for the employee group.

Employee Group means one of the following:

- a) CUPE Local
- b) OSSTF Local
- c) OSSTF Occasional
- d) ETFO Local
- e) ETFO Occasional
- f) COPE
- g) OSSTF – EA
- h) OSSTF – PSSP
- i) OSSTF – DECE (when ratified)

All employees are expected to make every effort to attend work regularly. When schools/worksites are open, the expectation that all employees attend work remains in effect. At the same time, however, it is not intended or expected that employees should subject themselves to extreme risks in attempting to get to their work sites during inclement weather. “Inclement weather” refers to severe weather conditions involving snow, rain, wind and/or ice which has an adverse effect on road conditions, and consequently on the safety of travel.

When schools or administration sites are closed under the authority of the Director of Education or designate, employees/LTOs at those sites are not expected to attend work at their home school site. It is the expectation that employees will report to an alternate work site if possible.

When schools or administration sites remain open, employees are expected to make every reasonable effort to attend work at their home school site, or if not able, at an alternate work site.

Reasonable lateness on inclement weather days will be considered acceptable.

In the event that the Board's transportation services are disrupted, wholly or partially, by inclement weather and/or if localized circumstances make the employee's personal travel problematic, but schools/worksites are open, the expectation that employees attendance at work remains in effect, subject the following:

Employees should make an assessment of the impact of the inclement weather on their ability to get to their worksite safely;

Employees should make prior arrangements for use of carpooling or taxi services if necessary;

If the preferred option of attending at their own worksite is not tenable, employees should report to the most accessible alternate District School Board Ontario North East worksite;

If the secondary option of reporting to an alternate worksite is similarly not tenable, the third option is to remain at home.

### **Home Location Worksite**

For employees who are able to attend at their home worksite, they will be regarded as being "in attendance". This will also be the case for any employee who:

- Attends "late" as a result of the conditions or is dismissed early in response to deteriorating weather conditions.

### **Alternate Worksite**

For employees who choose to and /or are able to attend at an alternate worksite, they will be regarded as being "in attendance". Elementary school employees should report to the nearest Elementary School location if possible. Secondary school employees should report to the nearest Secondary school location if possible. When necessary, Elementary school employees may report to a Secondary school location and Secondary staff may report to an Elementary school location if it is a safer alternative. This is conditional upon advising their "regular" Principal/Immediate Supervisor (or designate) of the site they plan to attend, and discussing with the "hosting" Principal/Immediate Supervisor the duties and responsibilities to be performed at the alternate worksite. In such cases, these duties shall be within the parameters of the employee's normal role, under the direction of the "hosting" Principal/Immediate Supervisor.

### **Remaining at Home**

If an employee decides he/she is unable to travel to their home worksite or an alternate worksite, and the employee does not report for work, there is:

- An obligation to notify the Principal/Immediate Supervisor (or designate) by telephone of this initial decision, (voice mail message not acceptable), and;
- An ongoing obligation to re-assess the road and weather conditions throughout the day, and stay in contact with the Principal/Immediate Supervisor (or designate) about the appropriateness of attempting to report for work at their worksite or an alternate worksite later in the day.

When the Principal/Immediate Supervisor is satisfied that the above has been met, the employee will be regarded as being absent due to Inclement Weather. A leave form is to be submitted to the Principal/Supervisor upon the employee's return to work.

In the absence of a specific provision in a collective agreement Causal Employees will not be paid if:

- a) the school is closed
- b) busses are cancelled
- c) Inclement weather prevents a casual worker from reporting to work