

Durham Public Schools

Inclement Weather Protocol

Inclement weather, by its very nature, is highly unpredictable. Making decisions about the welfare of students and staff is a significant responsibility – one that is always made with safety as the highest priority. The following protocol and guidelines are used by the administration and staff when making decisions regarding weather related early dismissal or school cancellations and delays.

Guidelines for Monitoring Weather Conditions

- The Operational Services Department will assign staff to monitor weather, road, and school campuses to assess whether it is safe to hold school.
- School staff will communicate with local and state emergency management officials as appropriate.

Guidelines for School Closure / Early Dismissal

School Closure or Delay for Students Before the School Day Begins

- When conditions warrant, Operational Services will recommend to the Superintendent that school be closed for the day or to have a delay in the starting time.
- The Superintendent will make a decision regarding school closure or delay.
- Information on the decision will be forwarded via multiple outlets – School Messenger notification, TV news, Channel 4, DPS website, Social Media, etc.
- It is our goal to make a decision regarding school closure or delay by no later than 8pm the night before the cancellation or delay if the conditions warrant. If not, then the decision will be made by 5:00 a.m. so that all personnel can be properly notified before buses pick up the first students.

School Closure for Students While Buses Are in Route

- When conditions warrant, Operational Services will recommend to the Superintendent that school be closed for the day.
- In the unlikely event that school does close for the day while buses are in route, a decision will be made whether to drop students at the school to be housed in “shelter format” or to return students to their bus stops. Communication will go out through school messenger to inform the parents and the community.

Early Dismissal for Students

- When conditions warrant, Operational Services will recommend to the Superintendent early dismissal.
- The Superintendent will make a decision regarding early dismissal.
- An announcement will be made over the emergency radio system and will include the time information for dismissal. Additional communications to the public will be made from the Office of Public Affairs.
- Transportation will proceed with a School Messenger notification for all bus drivers to report to work immediately.
- Schools should issue a School Messenger notification to parents advising them of the early dismissal.
- Transportation will monitor all buses via radio and contact schools when buses have dropped off the last student for each respective school.

Note: Schools are asked to be mindful that buses may not be able to run on schedule, depending on weather conditions. Principals should prepare staff in advance for delays that may occur.

Inclement Weather Protocol for Operational Services

Adverse Weather and A.M. School Delays/Closings

It is the responsibility of the Transportation Director to be vigilant and aware of potentially adverse weather or road conditions that may affect the safety of school-related transportation. Being aware includes monitoring weather forecasts on TV, radio, NWS and communications with local government agencies on the days/hours leading up to the event and during/after the event. It will also be the responsibility of the Executive Director of Maintenance and the Executive Director of Security and Safety to determine if any conditions or situations exist from a campus standpoint that will prohibit schools from opening.

Upon awareness of potentially adverse road conditions or weather, the Transportation Director will notify the Chief Operating Officer by 8:00 p.m. on the night prior to the next school day. In this notification, the Transportation Director will clarify:

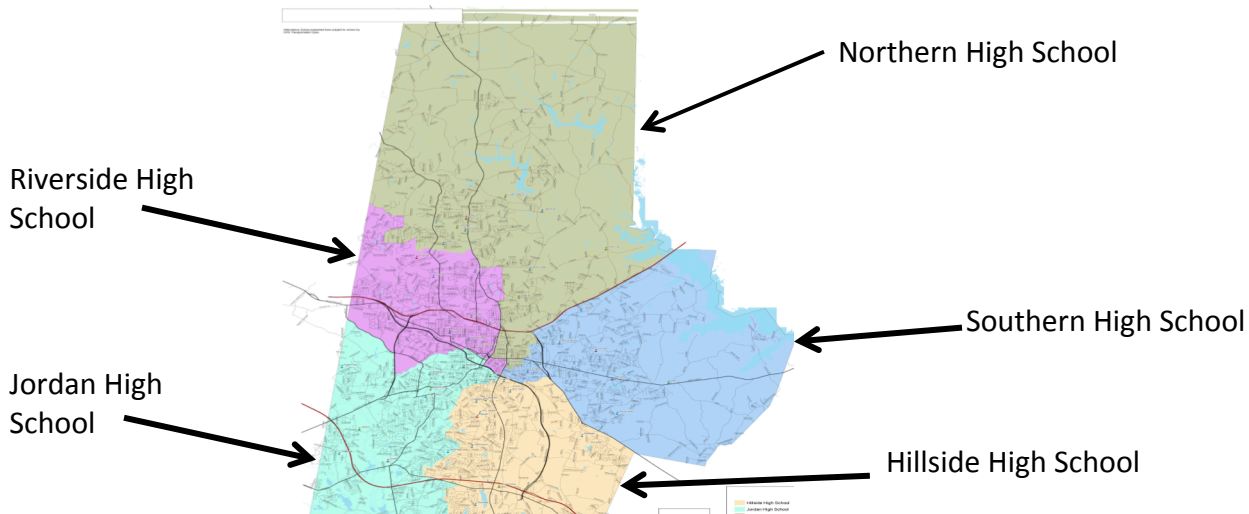
- That Transportation is aware of and monitoring potentially adverse road conditions for the next morning;
- That the Transportation Director will call the Chief Operating Officer by 4:45 a.m. of the next morning to review the status of road conditions and make a recommendation.

The Chief Operating Officer will alert the Superintendent of the potential for adverse weather.

The Transportation Director will assign the necessary staff to monitor, first-hand, the road conditions between 4:00 and 4:30 a.m. on the morning of concern.

Each staff member will report his findings to the Transportation Director by 4:30 a.m. Staff will be assigned to monitor the roads to ensure coverage of all areas of the school district as follows:

- Hillside High Attendance Area: (Transportation Supervisor & Designated Back-Up)
- Northern High Attendance Area: (Transportation Supervisor & Designated Back-Up)
- Southern High Attendance Area: (Southeast Area Manager & Designated Back-Up)
- Jordan High Attendance Area: (Southwest Area Manager & Designated Back-Up)
- Riverside High Attendance Area: (Northern Area Manager & Designated Back-Up)



By 5:00 a.m., the Chief Operating Officer will hold a conference call with the Superintendent and the Deputy Superintendent to provide the following:

- A definitive recommendation on proceeding with, delaying or closing school based on transportation safety.
- A thorough explanation and justification for the recommendation.
- Information about the status of adjacent and area districts and their transportation decisions.

The Superintendent will make the final decision at or near 5:00 a.m. The Transportation Director will forward the decision to key Transportation personnel and drivers. The Chief Operating Officer will contact the Chief Communications Officer who will notify the media and send notifications to staff and parents.

If existing or potentially adverse conditions are discovered after the deadline stated above, the Transportation Director will contact the team as noted immediately. Backup for the Superintendent is the Deputy Superintendent, and for the Transportation Director is the Chief Operating Officer.

Inclement Weather Procedures for Non-School Days

School Activities and Events

(i.e., Athletics, Driver's Education, School Events, Professional Development)

In the case of inclement weather on a non-school day or after school (workdays, weekends, holidays, and/or after school), the system Athletic Director will communicate with the Chief Operating Officer or designee. A recommendation will be made to the Superintendent regarding closure or cancelation of events.

If a decision is made to cancel/delay school activities on non-school days, then the following will occur:

- The system Athletic Director will communicate the decision to Public Affairs.
- The system Athletic Director will communicate the decision with school Athletic Directors and/or Driver's Education teachers.
- Public Affairs will communicate with staff and public through news media, DPS website, School Messenger notification, Social Media and email message to Principal/Senior Staff list.
- When possible, the decision will be made the night before the day of cancellation/delay.
- A sample announcement would include the following:
 - All DPS events, activities, and functions are cancelled for Saturday, December 15th.
 - There will be no DPS events, activities, and functions before 9:00 am on Saturday, December 15th
 - There will be no evening DPS events, activities, and functions on Friday, December 14th.

The Deputy Superintendents' Office will work with schools to address any field trip or school-specific concerns that arise with delays/cancellations.

Delays/Cancellations include:

- Driver's Education
- Athletic practice, games, and events
- Professional Development
- School-Based Events (i.e., yard sale, play practice, PTA meeting)
- School Facility Rentals
- Community Ed.

Inclement Weather Procedures for Bus Drivers

When inclement weather conditions warrant transportation officials will monitor the situation.

Should it become necessary to delay or close school, drivers and safety assistants will be notified by their Transportation Area Manager (or their designee); in addition, Public Affairs will also use various methods, including School Messenger, to notify all employees. Drivers should also listen to television and radio stations for school cancellations or late school opening/early closing times.

During the school year, especially winter months, there is the probability of weather conditions creating unsafe traffic conditions. When such conditions exist, the school system may:

- Delay the opening of school by one or more hours.
- Close school early.
- Close school for one or more days.

In the event of school closings, delayed starts and/or early dismissals, when severe weather is forecast, (ex. snow, ice, sleet, high wind, and thunderstorms and lightening, floods) drivers should contact their Transportation Office for direction.

FLOOD

Floods often happen when bodies of water overflow due to heavy rainfall or thawing snow. A flash flood, which can strike anywhere without warning, occurs when a large volume of rain falls within a short time. If you approach a flooded street, follow the steps below:

1. Do not drive through flooded streets/roads.
2. Contact your Transportation Office to report the flooded street/road.
3. Take an alternate route or wait for public safety personnel to determine safety.
4. Proceed to school, home, or designated shelter, as appropriate.

TORNADO

Tornados are very dangerous for a school bus. During a tornado watch, conditions are favorable for tornados, and generally buses continue their regular routes. However, in the event of a tornado warning and/or sighting the following instructions shall be used:

On School Campus:

1. If a tornado warning is received, school buses shall not be loaded or put in transit until the “all clear” is announced by the school.
2. While at the school site, ALL bus drivers and student shall seek shelter inside the school building in designated areas.

****On the Road:***

Protection of students on buses in transit to or from school is the bus driver’s primary responsibility. As soon as the driver becomes aware of a warning or visually observes a tornado, the driver shall take the following actions:

1. Don’t try to out run a tornado.
2. Evacuate the bus as quickly as possible and go inside the nearest building. Take the first aid kit and student emergency forms if possible.
3. Keep students away from windows and glass store fronts.
4. If going inside is impossible:
 - Evacuate the school bus and get students away from the bus. (You want to prevent the bus from rolling on them.)
 - Have students get in the nearest ditch or low area and lay face down, covering their heads with their arms and tell them to keep their heads down.
5. After danger has passed, the driver shall check students for shock or injury.
6. Provide assistance as appropriate.
7. Contact the Transportation Office to report the nature of the situation.
8. If assistance is not needed, and there is no bus damage, board the students on bus and take them to their destination.

**Drivers should identify potential safe havens (buildings) during dry runs.*