

# **Weather Emergency Procedures**

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

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## **WEATHER EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

One of Paterson Public Schools' 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 State District 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. Advising the contents of these procedures to our internal and external stakeholders that 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. District-wide Council of Presidents for PTA/PTO/Home School Councils
6. Local law enforcement agencies
7. Mayor of Paterson
8. City departments
9. Other community organizations

In addition, the procedures will be reviewed periodically by these stakeholders. All comments and suggestions regarding these procedures should be directed to the Deputy 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.
  
2. The District has created and will maintain a Weather Emergency Response Team that will be activated each time snow or other weather related crisis or emergency conditions develop or appear imminent. The Deputy Superintendent 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 has up to date information on the status of decision-making relevant to weather related events. Membership includes:
  - a. State District Superintendent
  - b. Deputy Superintendent
  - c. Chief of Staff
  - d. Assistant Superintendents
  - e. Director of Security
  - f. Executive Director /Special Assistant to the Superintendent
  - g. Executive Director of Facilities
  - h. Director of Instructional Technology & Library Media Services
  - i. Transportation Staff
  - j. 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 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 Paterson
  - c. The City of Paterson Department of Public Works
  - d. Paterson Police Department
  - e. Paterson Fire Department
  
4. The Deputy Superintendent will monitor and collect information from all Assistant Superintendents and appropriate Directors or Supervisors to assess the status of facilities, personnel, and programs planned that involve students, staff, and parents.

5. The Deputy Superintendent or her designee and the Director of Security will consult with their colleagues in surrounding school districts. The State District Superintendent will also consult with the Passaic County Executive Superintendent.
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.
8. **Emergency partial District closures**
  - Contact Transportation
  - Contact Food Service staff
  - Contact Security staff
  - Contact Facilities staff
  - Contact Communication staff
  - Contact Union President(s)

Make arrangements for students in overflow situations, magnet schools and new comers program.

Madison Early Learning Center is attached to School 15.

### **III. PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOL CANCELLATION OR DELAYED OPENINGS**

1. The Weather Emergency Response Team will meet no less than 24 hours prior to a potential severe weather event to examine all information collected by the Director of Security, Assistant Superintendents or other staff 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 Deputy Superintendent.
3. Each principal and their Assistant Superintendent for Administration will maintain for each school a bell schedule reflecting a 9:40 a.m. start for staff and a 9:45 a.m. start for students. All breakfast programs will be served 9:45 a.m. with appropriate breakfast accommodations extended to late arriving students as needed. Those schools that have breakfast after the bell will have breakfast in the classroom after the start of the day. The delayed opening schedule shall have reduced periods of equal length except for the lunch periods which shall be 40 minutes each.

4. Buses will start picking students up at 8:00 a.m. Bus aides will be paid for the additional time on the bus prior to their 9:45 a.m. start time.
5. All Administrators, Secretaries, District Security Officers, Security Guards, School Resource Officers and Cabinets Members, Executive Directors and Directors will report to work as close to normal work hours as possible for delayed openings. (All other personnel shall report at 9:40 a.m.)
6. At **10:00 p.m.** on the evening prior to a potential closing or delayed opening, The Director of Security will provide a weather update to the Deputy Superintendent.
7. By **4:30 a.m.**, a second weather advisory will be provided to the Deputy Superintendent as well as a review of current conditions of roads and facilities provided by City Departments and district staff. This combined with information from other school districts will be provided to the Deputy Superintendent who will make the decision to close school for the day or institute a delayed opening for the day.
8. The Deputy Superintendent will recommend to close or delay opening by **5:00 a.m.** on the affected day and will communicate her recommendation to the State District Superintendent. The final decision will then be relayed for other appropriate staff as noted on the district phone tree. All other staff responsible for phone calls will complete them by **5:30 a.m.**
9. School cancellations or delayed openings will be applicable to all district school sites serving students unless otherwise noted.
10. 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.**
11. As noted previously, all other **staff responsible for phone calls will do so by 5:30 a.m.**
12. The Executive Director of Information Services/Special Assistant to the Superintendent will communicate district-wide the decision to close or delay opening as follows:
  - a. Send a district-wide message by **6:00 a.m.** to all faculty and staff and to student homes informing them of school closure or delayed openings.
  - b. Communicate with all local television and radio media 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 Deputy Superintendent by the Director of Security 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 Deputy Superintendent will decide whether or not to release students early. If there is a need to stagger release times for elementary/middle schools and high schools, that decision will be made at that time as well. It is our desire on early release days to have a minimum of 4 hours of instruction; this would make dismissal at 1:00 p.m.
3. All principals will be notified of early release by telephone and email by their Assistant Superintendents within fifteen (15) minutes of the Deputy Superintendent's decision.
4. All staff shall remain in the building on early release days for 20 minutes after the student dismissal time; staff shall then be released.
5. \* In the event of an emergency (e.g. a significant number of students still remain in the building awaiting pick-up) the Building Administrator may retain up to three (3) certificated staff members for an additional 20 minutes.
6. These three (3) staff members shall first be selected by taking volunteers, if none volunteer, the Principal shall direct the three least senior certificated staff members to remain behind for the additional 20 minutes.
7. Security officers shall be required to remain in the building until the principal releases them.
  - \* The Building Administrator makes the determination if it's necessary to retain the three (3) employees.
8. Cabinet Level Administrators, Building Principals, Executive Directors, Directors and Supervisors will remain at their location until the Deputy Superintendent communicates to them that all students riding buses have arrived home safely.
9. 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. High school principals should contact the Assistant Superintendent for High Schools to coordinate scheduling of interscholastic athletic contests, when applicable.

10. Decisions and announcement for all non-school district offices will be made separate from decisions affecting school sites.
11. The Executive Director of Information Services/Special Assistant to the Superintendent will communicate early release decisions to:
  - a. School Principals via All-Call
  - b. Media outlets (TV, Radio, Newspaper, etc.)
  - c. Parents via an All-Call message to student homes informing them of school closure or delayed openings.
12. 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.
13. All staff responsible for phone calls noted on the phone tree will also do so within 15 minutes of the decision.
14. All other staff responsible for phone calls will do so by **5:30 a.m.**
15. The Business Administrator will communicate with and ensure timely execution of responsibilities by the following:
  - a. Food Service Department
  - b. Transportation Department
  - c. Facilities 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, principals will enact “Shelter in Place” procedures as detailed in the School Safety & Security Plan.
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. 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. 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, change the recording to indicate that the school is closed, students and staff are remaining in the building until authorities advise that it is safe to leave.
6. If necessary, have employees familiar with your building's mechanical systems turn on heating systems.
7. Gather essential supplies, such as nonperishable food, student medications, bottled water, battery-powered radios, first aid supplies, flashlights, batteries, and plastic garbage bags.
8. 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. It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone in room(s) you select for emergencies and to periodically communicate status reports to parents and school officials.
10. If children have cell phones, allow them 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. 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. COMMUNICATIONS**

1. In addition to communications specified in the above referenced procedures, all households for students enrolled in district schools will receive All-Call messages for school closings, delayed openings, early release, and shelter in place due to inclement weather. In the event of early release, the announcements will include any pertinent changes to bus stops.
2. The Executive Director of Information Services/Special Assistant to the Superintendent will also ensure that announcements for school closings, delays, or early releases are posted on the District Website, District TV, District Phone Hotline, District Social Media as well as News Media Stations such as Channel 12, WNBC, WABC, WCBS TV and WCBS Radio, and other news outlets the Executive Director of Information Services/Special Assistant to the Superintendent deems necessary.

3. 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 All-Call or phone calls. Parents may call the district's call center (973-321-0911) for additional information.
4. The State District Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent and Executive Director of Information Services/Special Assistant to the Superintendent 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.
5. During early release, the State District Superintendent or his 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
6. During early release, principals must call or email their Assistant Superintendent for Administration when all students have vacated their buildings.
7. The Deputy Superintendent will notify cabinet and building principals when all students riding buses have been dropped off safely at home.
8. During delayed openings, school principals must call or email their Assistant Superintendent when all buses have arrived.
9. The Executive Director of Information Services/Special Assistant to the Superintendent will provide status reports to the media as approved by the State District Superintendent or Deputy Superintendent.

## **DELAYED OPENING PROCEDURES**

### **PRINCIPALS CHECK-LIST**

- Establish, communicate, and use Emergency Phone Chain until All-Call messaging system problems are resolved
- Schedules updated to reflect 9:40 A.M. start for staff and 9:45 A.M. 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
- All Breakfast Programs begin at 9:45 A.M.