

Toronto District School Board

Operational Procedure PR519

Title: **SEVERE WEATHER: SCHOOLS AND ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES**

Adopted: October 1, 2001

Revised: November 12, 2002, September 1, 2004, December 11, 2008, January 12, 2009, January 21, 2009, February 9, 2011, **September 26, 2011**

Reviewed: December 2012

Authorization: Administrative Council

1.0 OBJECTIVE

To provide a process to be followed during severe weather conditions, either occurring or predicted.

2.0 RESPONSIBILITY

Director of Education

3.0 PROCEDURES

Outdoor Activities

Children need an opportunity to get exercise and free play time outdoors. However, weather conditions sometimes warrant that indoor recesses, lunch periods and pre-entry periods be considered necessary for student and staff safety. Guidelines for such occasions are provided on Appendix B, Weather Guidelines, and may be communicated to parents in a school newsletter. The information on Appendix B is to be used by the school principal to help determine when action should be taken and may be customized for local use.

3.1 Decision to cancel transportation, cancel programs run by TDSB, close schools or administrative offices

- (a) The Director has the authority to cancel transportation, cancel programs run by TDSB, close schools or administrative offices, subject to the advice of the Deputy Director /Chief Financial Officer.
- (b) The decision to cancel transportation, cancel programs run by TDSB, close schools or administrative offices, prior to school opening is to be made by 5:45 a.m. This decision may be made the night before when possible.
- (c) Once a school opens for the day, it will not close during the school day, unless:

- (i) the decision to close schools early is made by 11:00 a.m.;
- (ii) the communication to close schools is completed by 12:00 noon.

3.2 Procedures for cancellation of transportation, cancellation of programs run by TDSB, closure of schools or administrative offices before the beginning of the day

- (a) If it is possible that transportation might be cancelled or schools and administrative offices closed, the Chief Financial Officer will inform the Director and Deputy Director by 5:30 a.m.
- (b) The following information will be provided by the Manager of Student Transportation to the Chief Financial Officer, in order to advise the Director:
 - (i) local vicinity weather report;
 - (ii) present weather report as stated by Environment Canada, Toronto;
 - (iii) anticipated 12 hour weather forecast from Environment Canada, Toronto;
 - (iv) road conditions in the Greater Toronto Area;
 - (v) condition of side streets and access to school parking lots;
 - (vi) wind-chill factor;
 - (vii) visibility;
 - (viii) walking conditions;
 - (ix) blizzard conditions;
 - (x) other weather emergency factors; and
 - (xi) information from Transportation Canada, and the Board's bus drivers;
 - (xii) related decisions by co-terminus or surrounding boards.
- (c) The Director will make the decision to cancel transportation and/or close schools and/or administrative offices by 5:45 a.m.
- (d) The Director will notify the Chair of the Board of the decision to cancel transportation services and/or close schools and/or administrative offices.
- (e) Communications
 - (i) The Chief Financial Officer will notify Communications and Public Affairs and the Call Centre by 6:00 a.m.
 - (ii) The Deputy Director or Chief Financial Officer will inform Senior Team and System Response Team. Superintendents of Education will inform Principals of schools affected by the decision to cancel transportation or close schools. Senior Team will inform staff in departments of responsi-

bility as applicable (including Continuing Education, Child Care Services and Transportation).

- (iii) Communications and Public Affairs will inform the media of the decision by 6:00 a.m. to be shared with the public by 6:30 a.m.

AM Radio	FM Radio	TV	.COM
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- (iv) Communications and Public Affairs will post/share information on the cancellation of transportation, closure of schools or administrative offices on the TDSB website, through e-mail and by using social media channels Twitter and Facebook.
- (v) Employee Services will communicate with all unions with impacted employee groups.
- (f) Superintendents of Education will ensure that schools have established a plan for administrative coverage for schools in the event of school closure.
- (g) Senior Team (where applicable) will ensure that central departments have an established plan for administrative coverage of departments as required in the event of administrative site closure.

3.3 Transportation cancellation before the beginning of the school day

- (a) Transportation services cancelled at 5:45 a.m. will be cancelled for the entire day.
- (b) Cancelled transportation services include all excursions and school-to-school service.
- (c) Schools remain open when transportation services are cancelled, unless there is a decision to close schools or administrative offices.

3.4 Cancellation of classes, cancellation of programs run by TDSB, early closure of schools or administrative offices during the school day

- (a) Conditions

- (i) The decision to implement early closure will be made by 11:00 a.m.
 - (ii) The communication to close schools will be completed by 12:00 noon.
 - (iii) No student in JK to Grade 5 will be sent home until parents have been notified and the principal is assured that suitable arrangements have been made for the child's supervision.
 - (iv) Parents of students in Grades 6 to 12 may designate in writing that their child will be permitted to be dismissed early or remain at school until picked up (Form 519A, Section I).
 - (v) Students over 18 years of age may use their discretion.
 - (vi) Principals will provide supervision for all students whose parents or guardians have not been contacted or who have not previously indicated in writing their intentions during severe weather conditions.
 - (vii) During severe weather conditions, students will remain inside the school with adequate supervision until they have been picked up.
 - (viii) **Staff members might be called upon to perform duties beyond those stipulated in contractual agreements in fulfilling their legal responsibilities to ensure the safety of students.**
- (b) Advancing transportation schedule during the school day
- (i) If it is necessary to advance the transportation schedule, the Chief Financial Officer will consult with the Deputy Director. The decision to advance transportation will only occur in exceptional circumstances.
 - (ii) The Chief Financial Officer will advise the Director based on the conditions outlined in 3.2 b). The Director will make the decision to move up the transportation schedule and/or to the early closing of schools by 11:00 a.m.
- (c) Communications
- (i) The Director will inform the Chair of the Board.
 - (ii) The Chief Financial Officer will inform the Communications and Public Affairs and the Call Centre.
 - (iii) The Deputy Director or Chief Financial Officer will inform Senior Team and the System Response Team. Senior Team will inform staff in departments of responsibility as applicable (including Continuing Education, Child Care Services and Transportation).

- (iv) Superintendents of Education will inform Principals of schools affected by the decision. Principals assume responsibility for early dismissal of students.
 - (v) The Principal or Vice-Principal will communicate to parents and remain at the school until all students have been picked up.
 - (vi) Communications and Public Affairs will inform the media of the decision by 11:30 a.m., to be shared with the public by 12:00 noon.
 - (vi) Communications and Public Affairs will post/share information on the cancellation of transportation, closure of schools or administrative offices on the TDSB website, through e-mail and by using social media channels Twitter and Facebook.
 - (vii) Employee Services will communicate with all unions with impacted employee groups.
- (d) Early Dismissal of school staff
- (i) Principals may begin to dismiss teaching and support staff (excluding caretaking staff) following a closure announcement once all students are home, or dismissed as pre-planned, or their parents have been contacted and arrangements made;
 - (ii) The Principal or Vice-Principal will remain at the school until all students have been picked up;
 - (iii) The Principal will inform their Superintendent of Education once all students have been picked up, staff has been dismissed and the school is secured (as applicable).

3.5 Summary of Responsibilities

- (a) Director will:
 - (i) decide school closing by 5:45 a.m.;
 - (ii) decide early school closing by 11:00 a.m.;
 - (iii) inform Chair of the Board of the decision;
 - (iv) inform Chief Financial Officer of decision.

- (b) Deputy Director will:
 - (i) consult with Director and Chief Financial Officer on the decision;
 - (ii) inform Senior Team of the decision;
 - (iii) support Chief Financial Officer and Director, Communications and Public Affairs with communication;
 - (iv) inform System Response Team of the decision and direct as applicable.
 - (v) share decision to cancel Continuing Education evening classes by 4:30 p.m. with Communications and Public Affairs. Communications and Public Affairs to share with the media the cancellation decision and post on TDSB website, Twitter and Facebook by 5:00 p.m.
 - (vi) share decision to cancel Continuing Education Saturday classes with Communications and Public Affairs by 6:00 a.m. Communications and Public Affairs to share with the media the cancellation decision and post on TDSB website, Twitter and Facebook by 6:30 a.m.;

- (c) Chief Financial Officer will:
 - (i) advise Director of severe weather conditions by 5:30 a.m. if closure is a possibility;
 - (ii) notify Communications and Public Affairs and the Call Centre of decision by 6:00 a.m.;
 - (iii) advise Director of weather conditions for potential early closing by 10:45 a.m.;
 - (iv) notify Communications and Public Affairs and the Call Centre of decision for early closure by 11:15 a.m.

- (d) Superintendent of Education will:
 - (i) review Severe Weather operational procedures and establish a plan for school administrator coverage for schools at a Family of Schools meeting at the beginning of each school year;
 - (ii) inform schools of decision for early closure by 11:30 a.m.;
 - (iii) inform appropriate schools of advanced transportation schedule;
 - (iv) receive confirmation from Principals that each school has been closed according to outlined operational procedures.

- (e) Principal will:
 - (i) inform staff, students and parents of Severe Weather operational procedures;
 - (ii) brief staff on their roles and responsibilities;
 - (iii) remain at school until all students have been picked up;
 - (iv) dismiss remaining staff (excluding caretaking staff);
 - (v) close the school;
 - (vi) inform their Superintendent of Education once all students have been picked up, staff has been dismissed and the school is secured (as applicable).

- (f) Manager of Student Transportation will:
 - (i) when severe weather conditions threaten school opening, provide detailed weather and road conditions to the Chief Financial Officer by 5:15 a.m. as outlined in 3.2 b;
 - (ii) when severe weather conditions necessitate early school closing, provide detailed weather and road conditions to the Chief Financial Officer, by 10:30 a.m. as outlined in 3.2 b.

- (g) Parents/guardians will:
 - (i) keep children at home if weather conditions appear to be extreme;
 - (ii) become familiar with the Severe Weather procedure which will be shared in a letter at the beginning of each school year;
 - (iii) listen to designated media outlets for school closure beginning at 6:30 a.m. or for possible early closing at 12 noon, or visit TDSB website;
 - (iv) provide school with emergency telephone number for child;
 - (v) be prepared to pick child up or make arrangements for the welfare and safety of child if required.

- (h) All employees will:
 - (i) become familiar with Severe Weather operational procedures;
 - (ii) listen to designated media outlets for closure decision beginning at 6:30 a.m.;
 - (iii) visit the TDSB website for information;
 - (iv) look for information updates on Outlook;
 - (v) **be prepared to perform duties beyond those stipulated in contractual agreements in fulfilling their legal responsibilities to ensure the safety of students.**

- (i) Communications and Public Affairs will:
 - (i) prepare a sample letter (see Appendix A) and newspaper clipping (Form 519B, Section I) informing parents/guardians of Severe Weather operational procedures;
 - (ii) maintain up-to-date contact list of media outlets, including direct telephone numbers, contact person and fax numbers;
 - (iii) communicate any school closure message to media by 6:00 a.m. or for early school closure by 11:30 a.m.;
 - (iv) ensure the information is posted and updated on the TDSB website, Twitter and Facebook;
 - (v) assist the Deputy Director in getting information updates to all staff through Outlook;
 - (vi) copy media alerts to the System Response Team.
- (j) Facility Services will:
 - (i) ensure staff access to 5050 Yonge Street regardless of closing;
 - (ii) inform and direct caretaking staff regarding closure;
 - (iii) copy Principals on caretaking direction.
- (k) Caretaking Staff will:
 - (i) make every effort to come to work and open building;
 - (ii) take direction regarding closure from Chief Facilities Officer or designate.
- (l) Childcare operators will:
 - (i) review Severe Weather operational procedure;
 - (ii) follow their own established protocol for informing parents/guardians regarding school closure.
 - (iii) not be permitted to occupy school space during a school closure announced prior to school opening;
 - (iv) be permitted to remain open until children are picked up in the event of school closure announced during the school day.
- (m) Continuing Education will:
 - (i) consider with Deputy Director, the factors listed in 3.2 b) in deciding cancellation of evening classes when schools are open during the day;

- (ii) share decision to cancel evening classes with Continuing Education program staff by 4:30 p.m.;
- (iii) for Saturday classes, consider with Deputy Director, the factors listed in 3.2 b) and decide by 5:00 a.m. the status of Saturday classes;
- (v) share decision to cancel Saturday classes with Continuing Education program staff by 6:00 a.m.;

3.6 For more information

Student Transportation: Manager, Student Transportation, 416-394-6190

School Operations: Appropriate Superintendent of Education

Communications and Public Affairs: Manager, Media Relations and Issues,
416-518-5551

4.0 APPENDICES

Appendix A: Sample Letter to Parent/Guardian

Appendix B: Weather Guidelines

5.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Form 519A: Severe Weather Conditions, Permission to Leave School

Form 519B: Severe Weather, Work With Your School for Student Safety



School Name
 Address
 Phone Number

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Occasionally, severe weather conditions may require the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) to cancel transportation and close schools. This may occur before the beginning of the school day or, if conditions become severe, during the school day. To ensure the safety and welfare of students and staff during school hours, the Board’s Severe Weather operational procedures will guide decisions and operations.

The safety and welfare of students is a shared responsibility with parents and guardians. It is important for everyone to understand how the Board operates under unusual weather conditions. Please familiarize yourself with the following procedures and communication plan so together we can ensure the safety of the students entrusted in our care.

- In the event of severe weather conditions, please keep children at home if possible.
- The decision to close schools is made by the Director of Education.
- Closure of schools or cancellation of transportation services will be announced from 6:30a.m. onward on the following stations:

AM Radio	FM Radio	TV	.COM
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Information on closure of schools and cancellation of transportation services or cancellation of classes will be posted on the TDSB website at www.tdsb.on.ca and on the TDSB social media channels Twitter and Facebook.

School Closures or Bus Schedule Changes During the School Day

- Should schools close during the school day or transportation schedules change, announcements will be broadcast on the radio stations above by 12:00 Noon and posted on the TDSB website. If there is no announcement and posting about schools closing before 12:00 Noon, schools will remain open for the day.

Child Pick-up

- Please be prepared to pick up your child or make arrangements for your child, if required, should schools close early or if transportation schedules are advanced.

Arrangements for Students

- For students in JK – Grade 5, parents will be notified and suitable arrangements for the child's safety will be made.
- For students in Grade 6 to 12, parents are required to designate in writing if the student is to be dismissed early or to remain at school to be picked up. This form (PR519A) is to be completed in September.
- Students over 18 may use their discretion when to leave.

The Principal's Responsibility

- Principals will provide supervision for all students whose parents or guardians have not been contacted or who have not previously indicated in writing their intentions during severe weather conditions. Students will remain inside the school until they have been picked up.

Contacting Parents and Guardians

- Please ensure that your school has an emergency number where you, or a responsible adult to whom you are willing to entrust the care of your child, can be contacted.

Thank you for your cooperation. Should you have any questions, please contact the school.

Sincerely,

Principal

Weather Guidelines
[add name of school here]

This information will be used by the school principal to help determine when action should be taken and may be customized for local use.

Children need an opportunity to get exercise and free play time outdoors, however, weather conditions sometimes warrant that indoor recesses, lunch periods and pre-entry periods be considered necessary for student and staff safety.

Conditions warranting indoor recesses

- (a) Rain, thunderstorms, lightning, hail, extreme winds and extreme cold.
- (b) Cold weather: When temperature and/or windchill factor indicates -28C or lower children will remain indoors due to risk of frostnip and frostbite.

When temperature and/or windchill factor indicates -20 to -28C, recesses may be shortened to 10 minutes and lunch recess be 20 minutes depending on local conditions. Children should be monitored closely for signs of frostnip, frostbite or difficulty breathing.

- (c) Humidity, Heat and Smog Alerts: The City of Toronto issues heat alerts and heat emergencies based on the daily forecast from May to September. Alerts are posted on the Web site www.toronto.ca/health or by calling (416) 338-7600. Staff and students should be vigilant about their level of activity and should take frequent breaks for water in order to remain adequately hydrated.

Other conditions:

Weather conditions change during the day. When necessary and if the weather is questionable, the school principal will consult the Environment Canada's www.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca or Toronto Public Health Web sites for information.

During extreme weather conditions, parents and students may wait inside [insert appropriate school location here] up to 15 minutes prior to the entry or dismissal bells.

LETTER FOR DAY BEFORE POTENTIAL CLOSURE



School Name
 Address
 Phone Number

Date

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Information on closure of schools and cancellation of transportation services will be posted on the TDSB website at www.tdsb.on.ca and on the TDSB social media channels Twitter and Facebook.

Thank you for your cooperation. Should you have any questions, please contact the school.

Sincerely,

Principal