

Toronto District School Board

Operational Procedure PR519

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

Adopted: October 1, 2001

Effectuated: 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, November 11, 2013, May 17, 2017, **January 10, 2023**

Reviewed: December 2012, November 2013, March 2016, January 10, 2023

Authorization: Executive Council

1. RATIONALE

The Severe Weather: Schools and Administrative Offices/Sites Procedure (the "Procedure") upholds the Board's commitment to the safety of TDSB students and staff.

The Procedure is designed to mitigate the negative impacts of severe weather conditions on system-wide school board operations.

This Procedure supports implementation of the Caring and Safe Schools Policy (P051), Transportation of Students Policy (P020), and Occupational Health and Safety Policy (P048).

2. OBJECTIVE

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

3. DEFINITIONS

Board refers to the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as the "TDSB."

TDSB is the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as the "Board".

4. RESPONSIBILITY

Director of Education and Associate Director, Modernization and Strategic Resource Alignment

5. APPLICATION AND SCOPE

This Procedure applies to all students and employees of the Board at both schools and administrative offices/sites.

The Procedure also covers, parents/guardians/caregivers, school council members, visitors, third party service providers, volunteers, permit holders, customers of the Board and other members of organizations while partaking in any activities that occur in Board premises or while engaging in Board related functions during severe weather conditions.

6. PROCEDURE

6.1. Outdoor Activities

- 6.1.1. 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.
- 6.1.2. Guidelines for such occasions are provided in Appendix B, Weather Guidelines, and may be communicated to parents/guardians/caregivers 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.

6.2. Cancellation of Transportation, Cancellation of Programs Run by TDSB, Closure of Schools, Administrative Offices or Sites Before the Beginning of the Day

- 6.2.1. If it is possible that transportation might be cancelled or schools, administrative offices or sites closed, the Manager of Transportation will inform the Director and Associate Directors by 5:30 a.m.
- 6.2.2. The following information will be provided by the Manager in order to advise the Director:
 - local vicinity weather report;
 - present weather report as stated by Environment Canada, Toronto;

- anticipated 12-hour weather forecast from Environment Canada, Toronto;
- road conditions in the Greater Toronto Area;
- condition of side streets and access to school parking lots;
- wind-chill factor;
- visibility;
- walking conditions;
- freezing rain;
- blizzard conditions;
- other weather emergency factors;
- information from the Toronto Student Transportation Group;
- related decisions by coterminous or surrounding boards.

6.2.3. While conditions can vary across the City, there is an increased likelihood that bussing may be cancelled in Toronto, if the following conditions exist:

- freezing rain;
- blizzard conditions;
- low driver visibility.

6.2.4. The Director will make the decision to cancel transportation and/or close schools and/or administrative offices and/or sites by 5:45 a.m.

6.2.5. The Director will notify the Chair of the Board of the decision to cancel transportation services and/or close schools and/or administrative offices and/or sites.

6.2.6. The Director to notify the Associate Directors.

6.2.7. The Associate Directors will inform Senior 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 responsibility as applicable (including Continuing Education, Child Care Services and Transportation).

6.2.8. Superintendents of Education will ensure that schools have established a plan for administrative coverage for schools in the event of school closure.

6.2.9. 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 office or site closure.

6.2.10. To support continuity of learning for those students/families who wish to continue learning at home on a day when schools are

closed, teachers will provide, where possible, homework or course materials for review that students may choose to complete. This asynchronous work can be provided in hard copy or provided electronically (email, BrightSpace, Google Classroom, etc.)

- 6.2.11. When buildings are closed, central staff who are scheduled to work on this day should do so remotely, where possible. Where remote work is not possible for some roles, staff are encouraged to complete any mandatory compliance training or engage in professional learning.

6.3. Communications

- 6.3.1. The Office of the Associate Director responsible for Transportation will notify Communications and Public Affairs by 5:45 a.m.
- 6.3.2. Communications and Public Affairs will post/share information on the cancellation of transportation, closure of schools, administrative offices or sites on the TDSB website and by using social media channels by 6:00 a.m.

6.4. Transportation Cancellation Before the Beginning of School

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

6.5. Early Closure: Cancellation of Classes, Cancellation of Programs run by TDSB, Early Closure of Schools, Administrative Offices or Sites During the School Day

Conditions

- 6.5.1. The decision to implement early closure will be made by 11:00 a.m.
- 6.5.2. The communication to close schools will be completed by 12:00 noon.
- 6.5.3. No student in JK to Grade 5 will be sent home until parents/guardians/caregivers have been notified and the principal is assured that suitable arrangements have been made for the child's supervision.
- 6.5.4. Parents/guardians/caregivers 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).
- 6.5.5. Students over 18 years of age may use their discretion.

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

Advancing Transportation Schedule During the School Day

- 6.5.8. If it is necessary to advance the transportation schedule, the Associate Director responsible for Transportation will consult with the Director. The decision to advance transportation will only occur in exceptional circumstances.
- 6.5.9. The Associate Director responsible for Transportation will advise the Director based on the conditions outlined in section 6.2.2. 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.

Communications in the event of midday closure

- 6.5.10. The Director will inform the Chair of the Board.
- 6.5.11. The Associate Director responsible for Transportation will inform the Communications and Public Affairs.
- 6.5.12. The Associate Director responsible for Transportation will inform Senior Team. Senior Team will inform staff in departments of responsibility as applicable (including Continuing Education, Child Care Services).
- 6.5.13. Superintendents of Education will inform Principals of schools affected by the decision. Principals assume responsibility for early dismissal of students.
- 6.5.14. The Principal or Vice-Principal will communicate to parents/guardians/caregivers and remain at the school until all students have been picked up.
- 6.5.15. Communications and Public Affairs will inform the media of the decision by 11:30 a.m.
- 6.5.16. Communications and Public Affairs will post/share information on the cancellation of transportation, closure of schools, administrative offices or sites on the TDSB website, through e-mail and by using social media channels.

Early Dismissal of School, Administrative Office or Site Staff

- 6.5.17. 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/guardians/caregivers have been contacted and arrangements made;

6.5.18. The Principal or Vice-Principal will remain at the school until all students have been picked up;

6.5.19. 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).

6.5.20. The decision of early dismissal for staff who do not work in a school will be made at the discretion of the supervisor, based on system needs and the responsibilities of the department.

6.6. Attendance of Staff and Recording of Absences when Schools, Administrative Offices or Sites Are Open – Regular Working Day

6.6.1. All employees will:

- Make every effort to come to work at their regular location unless otherwise informed;
- Become familiar with Severe Weather operational procedures;
- Listen to media outlets for information regarding closure decision; and,
- Visit the TDSB website for information.

6.6.2. Communications and Public Affairs will:

- Prepare a sample letter (see Appendix A) and Weather Guidelines (Form 519B, Section I) informing parents/guardians/caregivers of Severe Weather operational procedures;
- Communicate any school closure message via the TDSB website and social media by 6:00 a.m. or for early school closure by 11:30 a.m.

6.6.3. Facility Services will:

- Ensure staff access to 5050 Yonge Street regardless of closing;
- Inform and direct caretaking staff regarding closure;
- Copy Principals on caretaking direction.

6.6.4. Caretaking Staff will:

- Make every effort to come to work and open the building;
- Refer to The Caretaking Handbook, section E.16 for further information.
- Take direction regarding closure from Executive Officer, Facility Services or designate.

6.6.5. Childcare operators will:

- Review Severe Weather operational procedure;
- Follow their own established protocol for informing parents/guardians/caregivers regarding school closure.
- Not be permitted to occupy school space during a school closure announced prior to school opening;
- Be permitted to remain open until children are picked up in the event of school closure announced during the school day.

6.6.6. Continuing Education will:

- Consider with the Associate Director responsible for Transportation, the factors listed in section 6.2.2 in deciding cancellation of evening classes when schools are open during the day;
- Share decision to cancel evening classes with Continuing Education program staff by 4:30 p.m.;
- For Saturday classes, consider with the Director, factors listed in section 6.2.2 and decide by 5:30 a.m. the status of Saturday classes;
- Share decision to cancel Saturday classes with Continuing Education program staff by 6:00 a.m.;

6.7. Attendance and Duties

- 6.7.1. Facilities staff should refer to The Caretaking Handbook, section E.16 for further information.
- 6.7.2. If an employee is unable to report to work on time, due to severe weather conditions (e.g., extreme weather conditions at the employee's home area or between the home area and the employee's work site) they must call the Manager/Principal/Superintendent to advise them of the situation.
- 6.7.3. All employees will be expected to remain on duty until the end of the regular working day unless other directions are issued by the Director's Office.
- 6.7.4. If weather conditions are determined by the Director to be so severe that they warrant an earlier dismissal for staff, the Manager/Principal /Superintendent will permit employees to leave, at the time specified, in the Director's announcement with no loss of pay to the employee. An early dismissal would only be authorized when the safety and supervision of all students is ensured.

6.8. Reporting Absences When Schools & Sites are Open to Students - Regular Working Day

- 6.8.1. If, in the opinion, of the Director or designate, due diligence was exercised by the employee in attempting to get to their regular work location, the employee will be paid for the day with a deduction from Miscellaneous Leave credits under Special Circumstances Approved by the Director.
- 6.8.2. If no Miscellaneous Leave credits remain in the employee's account or if the employee is not eligible for Miscellaneous Leave credit, the employee will be given a leave of absence without pay or may use a vacation credit, if so entitled.
- 6.8.3. For employees who do not have any remaining vacation days nor a vacation allocation, a leave of absence without pay will be granted.
- 6.8.4. For more information contact:
 - Student Transportation - Manager, Student Transportation, at 416-394-6190
 - School Operations - Appropriate Superintendent of Education
 - Communications and Public Affairs - Manager, Media Relations and Issues, at 416-518-5551

7. EVALUATION

This Procedure will be reviewed as required but at a minimum every four (4) years.

8. APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Sample Letter for Start of Year to Parent/Guardian/Caregiver
- Appendix B: Weather Guidelines
- Appendix C: Sample Letter for Day Before Potential Closure

9. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Policies:

- Caring and Safe Schools (P051)
- Occupational Health and Safety (P048)
- Transportation of Students (P020)

Forms:

- Form 519A: Severe Weather Conditions, Permission to Leave School
- Form 519B: Severe Weather, Work With Your School for Student Safety



LETTER FOR START OF YEAR

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/or 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 procedure (PR519) will guide decisions and operations.

The safety and welfare of students is a shared responsibility with parents/guardians/caregivers. 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.

School Closures or Bus Schedule Changes Due to Severe Weather

- The decision to close schools is made by the Director of Education. Should a cancellation or closure (occurring before or during the school day) be necessary, information will be posted on the TDSB website and shared through TDSB social media

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 change. Staff 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. The Principal or Vice-Principal will communicate to parents and remain at the school until all students have been picked up.

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.

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

The above procedures are intended to clarify the role of schools and parents in the event of severe weather conditions. They are intended to ensure the safety of our students. We hope that they alleviate any concerns that you have about the safety of your children under such unusual circumstances.

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 an extreme cold weather alert is issued or when temperatures 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 available 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

Dear Parent/Guardian/Caregiver:

Occasionally, severe weather conditions may require the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) to cancel transportation and/or 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 (PR519) will guide decisions and operations.

The safety and welfare of students is a shared responsibility with parents and guardians. In the event of severe weather conditions, please keep children at home if possible.

Should a cancellation or closure be necessary, information will be posted on the TDSB website, shared through TDSB social media and provided to local media outlets.

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

Sincerely,

Principal