

## ***Hazardous Weather and Emergency Closing Procedure Supplement to Board Policy EBCE – Emergency Closing***

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### **Scope**

This policy applies to all District 51 employees and covers closures in the event of hazardous weather or other emergencies that threaten the safety, health, or welfare of students or employees.

### **Objective**

The objective of this procedure is to assist employees in interpreting school closure announcements, clarify work schedules and explain impacts on pay.

### **Procedure**

District 51 is committed to the safety and security of its students, teachers, support staff, and visitors. As a result, decisions about whether schools should close or remain open are based on overall concern for the school community.

### **Closure of Schools and Administrative Offices**

If hazardous weather conditions or emergency closings arise or are anticipated that might make it inadvisable to operate schools on a given day, the Superintendent may, at his/her discretion, close schools and/or administrative offices.

**Employees are expected to use their best judgment in assessing the travel risk of commuting to and from work based on individual circumstances.** Those who believe that the road conditions from home are dangerous are urged and even expected to stay home to prevent injury.

**Notification:** In the event of hazardous weather or emergency closure, the district webpage will include a banner at the top of the page displaying information about delay, cancellation, or closure decisions for the schools and administrative offices. District social media networks will have posts with the most updated information for all audiences. In addition, local news stations will broadcast delay and/or cancellation information and post the information on their websites and social media pages. In order to be as clear and consistent as possible, the following uniform statements will be used in case of hazardous weather or emergency closing messages:

1. Schools and administrative offices are closed; only identified emergency response staff are required to report to work.  
What it means: School-based and administrative office employees are not to report to work. Only identified emergency response staff are required to report to work. Emergency response staff will be paid one and one half (1 ½) times their regular rate of pay for the hours actually worked during this time. An emergency response employee who is required to report to work but is unable to do so should immediately contact his/her supervisor. All other employees who were ready and able to work will be compensated for a normal workday.
2. Schools will open on a delay. Staff should arrive early enough to receive students.  
What it means: Schools will open after the regular opening time for students. The delay time will be specified in the announcement. Employees should arrive at their work site as close to the normal starting time as is safely possible and early enough to receive students. Emergency response staff may be required to come in early to prep buildings for opening. If required, they will be paid one and one half (1 ½) times their regular rate of pay for the hours actually worked during this time. All other employees who were ready and able to work will be compensated for the delay in alignment with their normal workday. If an employee is unable to get to work or report at the scheduled time, they may opt to use accrued vacation or personal leave or take leave without pay.
3. Early dismissal of schools.  
What it means: Schools will close at a designated time. In the event the decision is made to close schools and administrative offices early, all employees will be compensated as if it was a normal workday. Those employees who are located in schools should plan to stay until all children are seen safely on their way home.

## **Hazardous Weather or Emergency Closing Communication Plan**

Once the Superintendent has made a decision to alter the schedule of a particular day, the following communication plan will be activated:

- Supervisors will contact direct reports. When schools are closed, the message will remind employees of those who are identified as emergency response and required to work during that period of school closures/delays. The message will encourage all employees to use their best judgment in traveling.
- The Communications Department will post a message on the district website, district social media accounts and inform media outlets. This message posted on the website will encourage all students/parents and employees to use their best judgment in traveling.
- The Communications Department will also send a call, email and text message out to staff and parents using SchoolMessenger. Staff can opt in to the D51 text messaging system by texting YES to 67587.

## **Responsibilities**

The COO and Director of Safety are charged with recognizing hazardous weather or other environmental factors that have the potential to disrupt the normal course of school. They will gather information sufficient to form a recommendation for action and will confer with the Superintendent.

The Superintendent or designee will decide which course of action to take with regard to postponing/closing schools or administrative offices, and canceling/postponing district activities or events in the event of hazardous weather or other emergency closings.

Principals will report to their school building in the event that students/parents were not aware of school cancellation.

Supervisors need to prepare for hazardous weather or emergency closings in two ways:

- First, they must notify those employees (if any) who perform emergency response duties of the expectation that they may be required to report to work during hazardous weather or emergency closings.
- Second, they need to prepare for notification by assembling up-to-date home phone lists, assigning calling responsibilities, and providing employees with their home/cell phone numbers, and reviewing the process with staff. It is important to respect the confidentiality of employee home phone numbers. It is incumbent on supervisors to share the communication strategy by announcing in a staff meeting and/or staff announcement, so staff fully understand in advance of hazardous weather or emergency closing how to obtain this information prior to traveling to work.

The Communications Department will provide guidance for consistent information and will be responsible for submitting and posting correct and accurate information about school and event cancellations or closures to the following sources:

Radio

Television

Other Media

- Social Media
- District Website
- School Messenger

Each October, the Communications Department will issue a Hazardous Weather and Emergency Closing reminder to all employees via e-mail. The department will also post the reminder on the Human Resources website and District Staff Connect site.

## **Definitions**

Administrative offices: BTK, Hawthorne, Administrative Service Center, Emerson

Emergency response staff: An employee who works in an emergency response function such as those responsible for snow removal or storm clean-up and may be required to work during school delayed starts or closures. Emergency response staff may vary depending on the situation and will be notified by their supervisor if required to report during a delayed start or closure.

Who identifies emergency response staff?

- Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent
- Chief Operations Officer
- Executive Directors
- Director of Safety & Security
- Director of Maintenance
- Directors of Site Leadership
- Principals

An example of emergency response staff for hazardous weather may include the following:

- Grounds workers
- Maintenance (if requested by supervisor)
- Custodians
- Principals
- Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent
- Chief Operations Officer
- All Executive Directors
- Director of Safety and Security
- Director of Communications
- Directors of Site Leadership
- Assistant Directors of Site Leadership
- Director of Maintenance
- Assistant Director of Maintenance
- School Secretaries (if requested by the principal)

Emergency response function: A function that has been designated as essential to the continued and safe operation of the district.

Hazardous weather: Environmental factors such as snowstorms, floods, ice, high wind, fire, lightning, earthquake, etc.

**Leave Options**: Employees who are required to report to work but choose to stay home because of hazardous weather or emergency closings may use accrued vacation, personal leave or leave without pay to cover the work time missed. Use of accrued sick leave is appropriate only in the case of illness. In cases in which employees do not have sufficient leave to cover the unexpected absence, supervisors are encouraged to allow employees to make up the time, if operational needs permit.

Please advise, current policy allows for 2 (two) closures per school year without make-up days. If make-up days are required, they will be added as necessary.