

HCS Emergency Closing Procedures and FAQs When Severe Winter Weather Strikes

Introduction

Winter weather in the Catskill Mountain Region and Northeastern Pennsylvania can be very unpredictable. When severe weather strikes our area, our number one concern is the safety of all Hancock Central School District students. Specific plans and protocols are in place to ensure that all students and staff members arrive at school safely.

Decision-Making Process

The decision to close school is made by the superintendent of schools working in consultation with the district transportation supervisor and representatives from New York State, Delaware County, DCMO BOCES, and the Town and Village of Hancock. Information provided by various weather service reports, newscasts, and computer simulations also factor into the final decision-making process. Finally, as needed, the Superintendent of Schools and Transportation Director will drive district primary and secondary roads in order to evaluate travel safety. Variables that factor into the school closing decision-making process include, but are not limited to, amount and type of snow or freezing rain, timing of first snowfall and anticipated end, ability to clear primary and secondary roads and school district parking lots, building conditions, temperature, and wind and wind chill. Depending on a host of circumstances and factors, the District may elect to delay the start of school by two hours until 10:00 a.m., close for the day, dismiss early at 12:30 p.m., or cancel all after-school events at the end of the day.

Communications Plan

In general, the decision to delay the start of school or to close for the day is made no later than 5:30 a.m. and is subsequently communicated to all stakeholders via the following media no later than 6:00 a.m.:

Television

WBNG, WNEP, WYOU, WICZ, YNN, WBRE

Radio

WAAL, WHWK, WDLA, WDNH, WNBF, WWYL, WYOS, WINR, WENE, Magic 101.7, STAR 105.7

Website

www.hancock.stier.org

Cell/Telephone

Global Connect automatic notification system, 637-8000

Decisions to dismiss school early or to cancel after-school activities will be similarly disseminated using the communications venues listed above.

FAQS

Q: When is the decision made to close or delay school?

A: In general, the following timeline is used to frame school closing and delay decisions:

5:30 a.m.—Preliminary decision is made to close or delay school

5:45 a.m.—Media outlets are notified of school closing or delay

6:00 a.m.—School closing/delay decision is communicated to all district stakeholders

10:00 a.m.—On days when school is in session and weather conditions deteriorate, the decision to dismiss early is made and communicated at this time

12:30 p.m.—Early dismissal time for inclement weather

1:00 p.m.—On days when school is in session and weather conditions deteriorate, the decision to cancel after-school activities is made and communicated at this time

Q: Who makes the decision to delay or close school?

A: The superintendent of schools makes the decision to close school in concert with the district transportation director, NYS and county officials, and Village and Town of Hancock officials. In addition, select television and computer weather forecasts weigh in the final decision-making process.

Q: If school is closed, are evening and weekend activities cancelled?

A: If the Hancock Central School District is closed due to inclement weather, then all evening activities are cancelled as well. On days when school is in session but conditions deteriorate over the course of the day, a decision to continue after-school activities will be made no later than 1:00 p.m.

Q: As a parent/caretaker, can I keep my child home on inclement weather days?

A: Parents/caretakers are encouraged to use their best judgment to determine what is best for their children. Parents/caretakers are expected to notify the school district of their child's excused absence.

Q: Are we going to have to make up snow days?

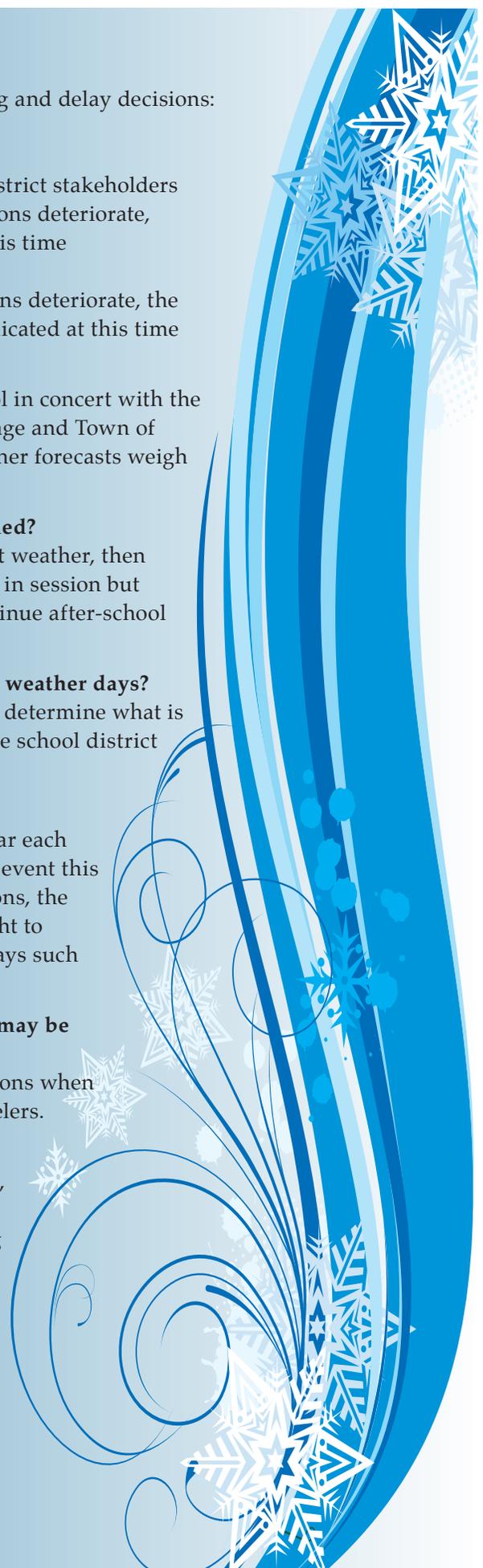
A: The school district builds additional days into the school calendar each year to account for time lost to inclement weather. However, in the event this additional time is exhausted due to extraordinary weather conditions, the Hancock Central School District Board of Education retains the right to extend the school year by scheduling school during vacation holidays such as the mid-winter break in February or the annual spring recess.

Q: What are the various states of winter weather awareness that may be declared by the National Weather Service?

A: The National Weather Service may make the following declarations when severe winter weather is forecast to present a potential risk to travelers.

Winter Storm Watch

Conditions are favorable for a winter storm event (heavy sleet, heavy snow, ice storm, heavy snow and blowing snow or a combination of events) to meet or exceed local winter storm warning criteria in the next 24 to 72 hours. Criteria for snow is 7 inches or more in 12 hours or less; or 9 inches or more in 24 hours covering at least 50 percent of the zone or encompassing most of the population. Use "mid-point" of snowfall range to trigger a watch (i.e., 5-8 inches of snow = watch).



Winter Storm Warning

A winter storm event (heavy sleet, heavy snow, ice storm, heavy snow and blowing snow or a combination of events) is expected to meet or exceed local winter storm warning criteria in the next 12 to 36 hours. Criteria for snow is 7 inches or more in 12 hours or less; or 9 inches or more in 24 hours covering at least 50 percent of the zone or encompassing most of the population. Use “mid-point” of snowfall range to trigger warning (i.e., 5-8 inches of snow = warning).

Winter Weather Advisory

A winter storm event (sleet, snow, freezing rain, snow and blowing snow, or a combination of events) is expected to meet or exceed local winter weather advisory criteria in the next 12 to 36 hours but stay below warning criteria. Criteria for snow is 4 inches or more in 12 hours or less covering at least 50 percent of the zone or encompassing most of the population. Use “mid-point” of snowfall range to trigger advisory (i.e., 2-5 inches of snow = advisory).

Q: What are the various states of winter weather awareness that may be declared by Delaware County?

A: Delaware County may declare the following:

State of Emergency

This declaration may be made by the County Chief Executive in the event that conditions are so severe as to require additional resources by the county. Included in the declaration of a state of emergency may be various “orders.” These orders could include road closures for the entire county or for specific roads within the county. Road closure orders are meant to keep non-essential persons off the roads and to help keep the roads clear of motorists so that highway departments can more effectively clear them. The superintendent of schools is charged with determining which district personnel are considered essential and thus authorized to travel on roads that have been ordered closed.

Travel Advisory

The County may also issue a travel advisory either in conjunction with the State of Emergency declaration or as a stand-alone “order.” A travel advisory is just that—an advisory to motorists to alert them that some road conditions may be deteriorated in the area and that persons travelling should use caution.

Unless otherwise stated by Delaware County, the decision to delay or close school remains at the discretion of the Superintendent of Schools.

If you have any questions/concerns, please contact:

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