



# Weather Safety – School Cancellations, Delays, and Early Dismissals

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## Pre-Decision Process

When the threat of inclement weather exists, the Huntsville City Schools Preventive Measures Team (PMT) begins the process of making critical decisions for determining school activities and employee work schedules. The lead facilitator of the PMT is the Director of Operations. Other permanent PMT members include the Deputy Superintendent, the Chief of Staff, the Chief Communications Officer, the Health Services Coordinator, and Chief Information Officer. Other HCS personnel, such as the Transportation Coordinator, may be added to the PMT as required. To the extent possible, HCS will coordinate weather decisions with other local school districts.

Between 72 and 24 hours before a severe weather event, the Huntsville-Madison County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) officials will typically call a meeting (in-person, via webinar, or both), sharing the latest information from the National Weather Service (NWS). HCS representation at the EMA meeting or call will include, at a minimum, one of the following three key personnel: The Operations Director, the Transportation Coordinator, or the Chief Communications Officer.

## Decision Process

At the EMA meeting, the HCS team will confer with local government officials and representatives from other local school districts. After the EMA meeting, the HCS representative who have attended the meeting will call the Superintendent and recommend a course of action based on the data received and discussion held. Once the Superintendent has approved a course of action, the Chief Communications Officer will share the information on all District communications platforms (web site, school cast, social media) and to local media outlets, with the caveat that the Superintendent and District Staff will evaluate the situation again the day of the expected weather event and issue an updated decision based on any new information obtained between the last EMA meeting and the day of the expected weather event.

On the day of the weather event, if the Superintendent has decided the day before to begin school at the regularly scheduled time, the Operations Director or designated representative of the Preventive Measures Team will convene a full PMT meeting via conference call or in-person at a time early enough

to facilitate decisions before regular route buses begin running at 5:30 a.m. The team will consider hazardous travel and hazardous exposure impacts of the weather. Once the Superintendent either affirms the course of action agreed upon after the last EMA meeting or directs a new course of action based on new information, the PMT will coordinate with the Chief Communications Officer for sharing of information on all District communications platforms (web site, school cast, social media) and to local media outlets no later than 6:00 a.m.

## **School Cancellations/Delays Due to Hazardous Weather Conditions**

If conditions are deemed hazardous for travel, HCS will close or delay opening, so that weather conditions can improve, and weather impacts can be remediated. Buses will run on a delayed schedule. The official school day for students will begin in accordance with the delayed bus schedule. In a delayed opening situation, school staff and faculty will report to work 15 minutes before the delayed school start time. District Staff and support personnel will also report to work 15 minutes before the delayed school start time unless specific exceptions have been authorized by the Superintendent. Safety is the number one priority for students, staff, and faculty. Principals may work on a case-by-case basis with employees who have children to determine appropriate arrangements that do not create undue hardship at the school. School meals may be delayed or cancelled, depending on the circumstances.

## **Early Dismissals**

If inclement weather becomes imminent during the regularly scheduled school day and/or normal operations hours, the PMT will review all available information from the EMA and the NWS on the impending weather event. After the EMA meeting, the HCS representative who have attended the meeting will call the Superintendent and recommend a course of action based on the data received and discussion held. If the Superintendent desires a full PMT meeting via conference call or in-person, the Operations Director or other District representative will lead the meeting coordination. Considerations for early dismissal include but are not limited to: bus route completion times, bus mobilization timespan, dangerous road conditions, severity of threat, field trips, special events, after-school extracurricular activities, and community events scheduled for the day. If the decision for an early dismissal is made, the dismissal order will be in three tiers in a standard sequence: all elementary (P5 and P6) schools will dismiss first, followed 30 minutes later by all middle schools and junior high schools (along with AAA and ASFL, all grades), followed 30 minutes later by all high schools.

## **Extracurricular Activities**

If schools are dismissed early or cancelled due to inclement weather, all HCS after-school activities (including extended day programs) and events will be cancelled.

## **Method of Notification**

Decisions for cancellation, delay, or early dismissal will be communicated immediately and widely to the public and school employees through all available communication methods (including, but not limited to the following: Blackboard, media release, email, and social media. HCS Staff who are responsible for managing contract personnel will contact the contractor's office as soon as possible after they are notified of the decision regarding the school day (for example, the Transportation Coordinator will contact the contracted bus company).

## **Post-Early Dismissal Actions**

Principals or their designated representatives will remain on campuses until the last student and all non-essential staff have left the building. Principals will submit a closure report to their instructional leader via email, text message, or phone, confirming that the campus is clear of students and non-essential staff. Instructional leaders will, in turn, notify the Chief of Staff and the Operations Director once all schools within their area of responsibility have submitted their closure reports. Campus Security personnel will remain on campuses until all students and non-essential staff have departed and submit closure reports to the Security Control Room. The Security Control Room will report to the Security Operations Coordinator and the Operations Director when campuses are completely empty.

# Decision Tree

