



# 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 Weather Safety Team (WST) begins the process of making critical decisions for determining school activities and employee work schedules. The permanent WST members are the Deputy Superintendent, Chief of Staff, Director of Athletics and Extracurricular Activities, Director of Child Nutrition Programs, Director of Communications, Director of Community Engagement, Director of Operations, Risk/Safety Manager, Transportation Coordinator, Security Coordinator, and one Director of Instruction (designated by the Deputy Superintendent). Other HCS personnel may be added to the WST as required. HCS will coordinate weather decisions with other local school districts, to the extent possible.

Between 72 and 24 hours before a severe weather event, the Huntsville-Madison County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) officials will call a meeting in order to share the latest information from the National Weather Service (NWS). HCS representation at the EMA meeting will include, at a minimum, the following directors or their designee: Director of Operations, the Director of Communications, the Risk/Safety Manager, and the Transportation Coordinator. After the EMA meeting, the HCS Operations Director will convene the Weather Safety Team via conference call in order to formulate and provide the Deputy Superintendent with a recommendation for a course of action to forward to the Superintendent for decision.

## **Decision Process**

At the EMA meeting, the HCS team will confer with city officials and representatives from Madison County and Madison City schools. After the EMA meeting, The WST will review the EMA/NWS data and consider courses of action using the HCS Risk Assessment Template. The Risk Assessment Template provides a framework for assessing probability and impact of the impending weather event. Impacts are considered in light of hazardous travel and hazardous exposure conditions.

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

If conditions are deemed hazardous for travel, HCS will close or delay opening in order to allow weather conditions to improve or be remediated. School meals may be delayed or cancelled, depending on the circumstances.

## **School Delays Due to Hazardous Exposure Conditions**

If conditions are deemed safe for travel, but unsafe for students (e.g., due to extended exposure to the elements for students who walk or ride the bus), employees will report to work at their regularly scheduled time. However, buses will run on a delayed schedule to allow time for inclement weather conditions to improve. The official school day for students will begin in accordance with the delayed bus schedule. Students who drive or who are dropped off by their parents may still report to school at the regularly scheduled time, but they are not required to be there until the official start of classes in conjunction with the delayed bus schedules. 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. Meals will be served at their regularly scheduled times.

## **Early Dismissals**

If inclement weather becomes imminent during the regularly scheduled school day and/or normal operations hours, the WST will review all available information from the EMA and the NWS on the impending weather event along with the history of the last 12 hours of weather conditions. The WST will confer to discuss conditions and options for a possible early dismissal. 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 as follows: elementary, P8, and high schools will be dismissed first, followed by middle and junior high schools, 30 minutes later. This will allow the buses that service elementary and middle schools to run their normal afternoon routes.

## **Extracurricular Activities**

If schools are dismissed early or cancelled for inclement weather, all HCS after-school activities and events will be cancelled.

## **Method of Notification**

Once a decision for cancellation, delay, or early dismissal is made, it will be communicated widely to the public and school employees through all available communication methods. This may include, but is not limited to the following: SchoolCast, media release, email, social media, and Nixle (EMA notification system).

## Post-Early Dismissal Actions

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

## Decision Tree

