

Inclement Weather Decisions

Dear Parents and Guardians:

As school superintendents, we find it challenging to decide whether to close schools for the day, especially when it must be based on the best information we have around 5:00 a.m. Based upon the calls generated after making the decision, we are seldom right (routinely, about half believe we have made the right decision; the other half believe we did not). However, despite this, Wisconsin weather will provide us with difficult school closing decisions soon.

So, how is the decision made prior to 5:00 a.m.? How do we inform more than 4,500 people, as early as possible, through Alert Now, television, radio, and our website, that school is cancelled? First, prior to going to bed for a few hours sleep on a night prior to a prediction of a bad weather day, we gather as much weather-related information as possible. Next, both the Waukesha and Washington County school superintendents are contacted to ensure all of us can have a 4:00 a.m. conversation to compare information gained through contacts in the individual school districts. The following information is considered in all decisions relative to closing school because of weather:

1. Information from the state, county, and city officials - especially the public works staff who serve the many communities that are a part of Germantown School District. We focus on road conditions along with both the short- and long-term weather forecasts.
2. Information from our bus transportation company regarding their recommendations.
3. A conversation with our individual supervisor of building and grounds to ensure the parking lots can be plowed in a timely fashion for safety.

As the superintendents share the information gained with one another, we also look at our own unique circumstances. For example, a predominantly urban area is more likely to have roads in better condition while a partially rural area (like ours) will have roads that may be in a less safe condition. Ultimately, armed with the information above, we also base our decision on the following extremely important factors that can also be unique to each district and its geographic area:

- Wind velocity impacting the blowing and drifting of snow in more rural areas of our district.
- Buses running routes on a slower pace having an impact on the length of time students may be waiting at bus stops, especially younger students.
- Parents driving their sons/daughters to school in poor driving conditions and high school age students with little driving experience being on the roads.
- Number of inches of projected snowfall.
- If we will have enough bus drivers (their ability to get to work safely is a factor).

If you believe your child would be safer at home in poor weather conditions, your learner's absence will be marked as excused with a phone call to us stating "inclement weather conditions." Likewise, if you are uncomfortable with the weather conditions throughout a poor weather day as you access the weather conditions, we would encourage you to use your best judgment, communicate with your school's principal and make the necessary arrangements to pick up your student.

What may appear to be a simple decision, as you can tell, includes many components: transportation, communications, before/after school child care in our elementary schools, the timing of the decision involving several decision makers in neighboring school districts, road crews, bus drivers, young drivers, wind and weather. One of these factors - or many of these factors may impact you.

Ultimately, the decision lies with the superintendents and it is, indeed, a difficult one, but like you, our first priority is to ensure the safety of our students. Although some may disagree, we will never compromise that basic principle when making the decision.

To acquire up-to-date school closing information, please utilize the following resources:

1. Listen to the Alert Now message that is comes to your phone in its entirety.
2. WTMJ - TV4 - www.todaystmj4.com; WTKM - 1540 AM & 104.9 FM; WTMJ - 620 AM - www.620wtmj.com and 94.5 Lake FM - www.945lakefm.com; and review our homepage - www.germantownschoools.org

Sincerely,

Susan Borden, Ph.D.
District Administrator