

# *Kane Area School District*



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## **School Closing Guidelines**

### **School Closings**

The decision to close school can be a difficult task because of the unpredictable nature of our weather. Just as weather systems sometimes appear without warning, there are also times when weather systems do not appear as predicted. Please keep in mind that a forecast is a prediction. Even skilled meteorologists agree not all watches, warnings and advisories materialize as predicted.

No school closing decision will be universally accepted, but it is helpful to understand the decision to close school involves many factors including temperature, wind chill, visibility, road conditions, location of snow plows in the area, the ability to clear school parking lots and driveways, weather forecasts and the status of neighboring school districts. Other factors include family schedules, daycare arrangements when school closes at the last minute and, most importantly, student safety.

### **Safety**

In the end, the school district's primary goal is ensuring safe transportation of all students, parents, faculty and staff. At all times, weather conditions are monitored to ensure students can be safely transported to and from school.

### **Parent Rights**

On days when the weather is questionable and the school district is open, parents always have the right to keep their children at home. Under no circumstances should parents risk the safety of their children. If parents feel driving conditions are dangerous and unsafe, or will become worse, they are encouraged to call the school and excuse their children for the day. These absences will be treated as excused absences.

### **Parent Responsibilities**

Students need to dress for cold weather and be prepared for emergencies such as bus breakdowns or building evacuations. Whether walking, driving or riding the bus to and from school, all students need to dress appropriately for the weather conditions. It is common to see older students come to school wearing shorts, sweatshirts or light jackets, and no hats, gloves or boots. Hypothermia and frostbite can occur in minutes. Even students who drive to school should be prepared for the cold in case of breakdowns or accidents. Although popular fashion trends may not include winter hats, gloves, heavy coats and proper non-slip footwear; parents should insist their children wear such items when the temperature or wind chill factor is low.

## **Decision-Making Process**

The two most common reasons to close school are weather-related issues and building problems (e.g., power outages, leaks, etc.). Unless there are extenuating circumstances, a final decision to close school usually is made by **5:45 a.m.** It is important to note weather conditions can rapidly improve or worsen from the time a decision is made in the early hours of the morning. Again, the decision to close school is based on current weather conditions and forecasts, which are sometimes accurate and sometimes not.

## **Weather and Road Conditions**

Road conditions and temperature are two main types of inclement weather closings, which are based on the following ever-changing variables:

1. *Snow Depth*: The amount of snowfall, drifting, and its impact on roads, which includes all main, secondary and back roads.
2. *Snow Removal*: The timing of the storm and the ability of local road crews to clear roads and district personnel to clear parking lots.
3. *Icing Conditions*: Ice or freezing rain and its impact on road and parking lot conditions, as well as, downed trees and power lines.
4. *Temperature*: Frigid temperatures or wind chills that carry the risk of frostbite in a short period of time (i.e., 30 minutes or less). Generally, school will be closed when the actual temperature is between 15 and 20 degrees below zero or when the actual temperature combined with the wind chill is between 20 and 25 degrees below zero for an extended period of time.

Closing school based solely on temperature alone is the most difficult criterion to use. Factors such as length of bus routes, availability of spare buses on an immediate basis, and temperatures moderating throughout the day are all part of the decision-making process.

## **Early Dismissal**

As a general rule, once students are at school, the school district does its best to avoid early dismissal. The school district believes keeping students at school is the best way to keep them safe when bad weather occurs during the school day. Sometimes, when road conditions deteriorate during the day, a decision may be made to dismiss students up to **two hours** early to allow buses additional travel time so students arrive home at their regularly scheduled time.

## **Notification**

If school is delayed, closed, or experiences an early dismissal, parents will receive an automated phone call from the school district informing them of the decision to close. Therefore, it is important to notify school offices of accurate telephone numbers and email addresses. This same information also will be shared with local radio and TV stations. Closing information also will be available on the district's website, the district's TV Channel 18, and by calling any of the school telephone numbers and pressing #9.

## **After-school and Evening Activities**

If students cannot be transported to and from afternoon and/or evening activities safely, they will be canceled. All evening activities will be cancelled in the event of a school cancellation.