**Wattsburg Area School District**

**Guidelines for School Cancellations and Delays**

**Who Decides?**

The Superintendent is required by law to ensure that the schools are open on all scheduled days unless conditions are unsafe for students. Consequently, the Superintendent must decide if conditions warrant a change in the normal schedule.

**When is the Decision Made?**

When extreme weather conditions are forecast, the decision is often made the preceding evening in order to give parents additional time to make necessary arrangements for their children. Under normal circumstances, the process of gathering relevant information begins at approximately 3:30 a.m. Every effort is made to make decisions regarding delays and cancellations by 5:30 a.m.

**Who Provides Relevant Information?**

- District's Transportation Director
- Local and National Weather Service
- Township and Borough personnel, when appropriate
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: www.noaa.gov
- School personnel in surrounding school districts, when appropriate

**What are the Primary Reasons for a Delay or Cancellation?**

- Extreme cold temperatures that could be unsafe for students.
- Road conditions that are too dangerous for the school buses to travel.

**What are the Guidelines Regarding Extreme Cold?**

- According to the National Weather Service, no specific rules exist for determining when wind chill becomes dangerous. However, the threshold for potentially dangerous wind chill conditions is about -20°F.
- If the National Weather Service has issued a *Wind Chill Advisory* and wind chill predictions are for temperatures of -20° or colder at 6:30 a.m., a delay *may* be called.
- Note that there may be warmer or cooler areas within the District. The -20°F wind chill guideline is a threshold at which point a delay will be *considered.* The District relies on the *available* temperature reports which may not reflect the conditions at your location.
- If the National Weather service issues a *Wind Chill Warning*, a delay *will* be called. School cancellation is *possible*.

**What is the Critical Question Regarding the Safety of the Roads?**

The critical question is: Can school buses traveling at safe speeds get students to school safely and reasonably "on time?" The question is not: Is it snowing or are some roads slippery? That answer could be yes, but that does not always mean that buses cannot travel safely.

- If the conditions are drivable at 5:30 a.m. when the bus drivers arrive to start bus preparations and there is not an impending forecast of snow corroborated with weather radar, transportation operations will begin.
- School will be delayed or cancelled if road conditions are such that travel is too hazardous for vehicles.
- School cancellation will be considered if travel delays are expected to be so great that staff cannot reach the buildings in order to teach students or students will be out at bus stops for an excessive amount of time.

**Note**: If an unexpected squall or lake effect snow band arises once transportation of students begins, it is usually not possible to cancel or delay bus runs in progress. In this instance, the buses will travel slowly or even stop temporarily if necessary until conditions improve.

**Why Wattsburg Area School District Should not be Compared with Other School Districts:**
Our District is composed of four unique climatological areas, with potential for weather differences among Greene, Greenfield, Venango, and Amity Townships. Subsequently, if *available* information regarding conditions or forecast conditions indicate weather safety concerns in any of these areas, decisions will apply towards the entire district as well as all out-of-district programs serviced by the transportation department.

**How Does the School District Communicate the Delay or Cancellation?**
Each time a decision to delay or cancel school is made, the following stations are notified: WICU, WJET, WSEE. The District website (www.wattsburg.org) will also display the status of the delay or cancellation. Please obtain information from these sources. Additionally, the District utilizes a rapid phone notification system, which will call a home and cellular telephones in order to notify families of a delay or cancellation.

**Aren't the Buses Cold in the Morning During Extreme Weather?**
No. When the temperatures are extreme, the school district mechanics report to work as early as 3:30 a.m. to start the buses and warm them up to a safe operational temperature before departure.

**I have heard that the Airbrakes on the Buses do not work in Extreme Weather. Is that true?**
By law, all bus drivers are required to do a pre-trip inspection, which includes testing the brake system of the bus before departing to pick up students. In extreme cold weather, airbrakes that are not properly maintained or equipped may freeze or lock-up overnight. All of the buses in our district are carefully maintained and are equipped with heated air dryers and auto-bleeders to reduce the moisture in the airbrake system to prevent failure. In the rare event that this would occur, the bus would not be used to transport students.

**What about an Unscheduled Early Dismissal?**
In the event of a rare early dismissal, high school and middle school students will be sent home first, followed by elementary students. This is designed to help parents/ guardians in their planning so that an adult or older child may be in the home before the elementary child arrives home.

**What about Students Who Attend Non-Public Schools Requiring Transportation?**
In the case of a weather delay or cancellation, transportation for non-public school students will follow the Wattsburg Area School District schedule.

**What Decision Should Parents Make?**
Parents always have the responsibility for making decisions that are in the best interest of the health and safety of their own children. This includes decisions about sending a child to school when conditions are questionable.

The Superintendent will make a decision in the best interest of the District at large. Parents may decide to make a different decision for their own child based upon other factors such as age, health, attendance, academics, distance from the bus stop, road conditions unique to their area, bus stop waiting area, length of the bus ride, etc. In those situations, the School District will honor the decision of the parent who assesses the individual circumstance and acts accordingly.

While it is important to have students in school, on time, every scheduled day, the safety of each child is paramount. As the District makes every effort to preserve instructional time for its students, parents are urged to make the appropriate decision based on their own situation in order to preserve the health, safety, and welfare of their child.

**What is the Recommendation for Winter Dress?**
Our school District is located in a Snow Belt area. Frequent heavy snow and cold temperatures are normal during the winter season. Students should always wear an appropriate coat, hat, gloves, and boots during winter weather.

**If I Transport my Child to School during Extreme Weather, at what Time can Students Enter the Building?**

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| SENECA: | 7:15 a.m. |
| WAMS: | 7:20 a.m. |
| WAEC: | 8:30 a.m. |