

Guidelines for School Delays and Closings Due to Inclement Weather

Beliefs

- Weather conditions are both variable and potentially extreme in Northeast Indiana; the safety of children will guide decisions regarding delaying or closing.
- Concrete rules do not exist in making decisions regarding variable and extreme weather; however, these guidelines will serve as a reference for Wawasee Community School Corporation (WCSC).
- WCSC believes our community expects schools to be open and provide educational services as well as supervision and other services, such as meals, to its students.
- WCSC believes all parents are committed to keeping children safe and these parents will dress their children appropriately for the existing weather conditions when sending their children to school.
- WCSC recognizes that it is first and foremost a parental decision as to whether or not a child should attend school on inclement weather days.
- WCSC respects the parent's determination regarding her/his child's attendance at school during inclement weather. If school is open, or delayed, because of inclement weather, the school will respect the parent's decision to keep their child at home. Parents are expected to contact the school and inform school officials of their determination, and the student will be counted as absent, per Indiana code. Students who are absent due to inclement weather will be given the opportunity to complete their academic work in the same manner as an excused absence from school.

Communication

- On a normal school day, a delay and/or closing will be announced no later than 6:30 a.m.
- Following a delay, if the need to close should arise, it will be announced no later than 8:30 a.m.
- Delay/Closing announcements can be found on the district's website at www.wawasee.k12.in.us.
- Media outlets that are contacted and informed of the delay/close decision include:

WSBT (22)

WPTA (21)

WRSW (107.3)

WNDU (16)

Willie (103.5)

Delaying or Closing School Is Based on Multiple Variables

The need for driving slower and allowing for additional travel time does not necessarily indicate that conditions are unsafe for travel to or from school. It is understood that varying interpretations and opinions exist in terms of a "right" decision regarding

whether or not to delay the start of school or close for the day. However, before a decision is made, as much information is gathered as possible, and it is made within the beliefs communicated earlier in this document. WCSC is comprised of about 126 square miles of Kosciusko County's Northeast corner; it is possible that one part of the district is experiencing safe conditions, while another part is not. Likewise, it is possible for other school districts to be experiencing different weather/road conditions than those within WCSC. To prepare for the possibility of delayed schedules or school closings, please develop alternate plans for child care. Alternate child care plans should accommodate the possibility of ...

- (a) school closing for the entire day;
- (b) the implementation of a delay schedule; and
- (c) the early closing of school.

The ultimate decision of whether school will be closed, delayed, or closed early is based on whether our buses can safely transport students on WCSC roads. The decision on whether it is safe enough for teenagers to drive is a family decision between each parent and teenager.

Two-Hour Delay

Delay schedules are two hours in length because a two-hour delay does not disrupt the end of the day schedule. Three-hour delays will likely not be considered unless the winter is severe and requires an abnormal number of school closings; in this case, three-hour delays may be implemented to decrease the need for additional elearning days. A three hour delay requires an additional hour being added to the end of the school day in order to comply with Indiana's emergency situation daily minimum minute requirement.

Early Dismissal

Early dismissals are rarely implemented. If weather conditions warrant closing/dismissing school early, then school could be closed as early as two hours before normal dismissal times. This option may be used only if extreme weather conditions jeopardize the ability of WCSC to safely transport students to their homes/bus stops at the end of the day. If school is closed early on the same day that began with a delay schedule, then the state does not count the day towards complying with the 180-day minimum requirement, and the entire day would need to be made up.

eLearning Days

In order to comply with Indiana statute, each school closing will result in an elearning day. The expectation from the State of Indiana is school will be in session for a minimum of 180 days of instruction.

Freezing Rain/Sleet and Dense Fog

The most unpredictable weather variables are freezing rain/sleet and dense fog. Freezing rain/sleet is temperature sensitive and, like dense fog, fast-occurring. Each begins and ends with little notice. When freezing/rain sleet are predicted or when dense fog appears, the decision regarding whether or not school is

delayed/closed will occur at the latest possible time in an effort to observe the most current and local conditions.

Snowfall

Snowfall is more predictable than freezing rain/sleet. Meteorologists typically give predictions within 2 – 4 inch variances (i.e., predictions such as 1-3, 3-6, 4-8). Because of the variance in actual snowfall when compared to predicted snowfall, the decision regarding school status is not determined until the snow accumulation indicates a need for action. Such a decision, except in extreme situations, will generally be made in the morning.

Extreme Snowfall Situations

When snow accumulates to significant levels, or is at such a level with more snowfall predicted, then a decision regarding school delay/closing **may** be made the previous evening. A significant level is one in which local city, county, or state authorities have communicated directly with us that it is unlikely for streets, roads, or highways to be passable by the following morning.

Extreme Cold (see included chart from the National Weather Service)

- Temperature prediction is increasingly more accurate. WCSC uses the hourly temperature predictions for its zip code from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (noaa.gov – we check conditions from both Warsaw Municipal Airport and Goshen Municipal Airport). WCSC also uses the Wind Chill Chart from the NOAA and the National Weather Service (included with these guidelines) showing when frostbite becomes a concern if bare skin is exposed to frigid temperatures for varying amounts of time.
- If the air temperature, as predicted by NOAA, is expected to be –10 degrees Fahrenheit or colder at 6:30 a.m., then a two-hour delay **may** be considered in order to insure that all buses start and do not experience mechanical difficulties. If the air temperature remains at –10 degrees Fahrenheit or colder at 8:30 a.m., then school **may** be closed depending on how our buses are responding mechanically. Such a determination will be made as early as possible, including the possibility of being reported the previous evening.

Extreme Wind Chill (see included chart from the National Weather Service)

- Wind chill predictions are not as accurate as temperature predictions because of the additional variable of wind speed and the variances in wind speed by time and location. While NOAA observations and predictions that we receive are based upon the open conditions at Warsaw and Goshen Municipal airports, these conditions can vary from actual conditions within the district. Wind chills in areas that are protected from the open winds, such as conditions typically seen in areas with many buildings like a subdivision, have actual wind chill temperatures less than what is reported in the open conditions present at each of

the referenced airports. Local observations will affect the decision regarding delaying or closing school.

- Using the Wind Chill Chart provided by NOAA and the National Weather Service, severe wind chill concerns or frostbite emerge at wind chill temperatures at or near -20 degrees Fahrenheit with 30 minutes or more of exposure. Since our walking zones typically are less than 30 minutes, with nearly all being less than 15 minutes, wind chills warmer than -20 degrees Fahrenheit typically mean we will remain on time or open. When wind chill temperatures are clearly and consistently colder than -30 degrees Fahrenheit, it is likely that we will delay or close. When wind chills are between these two extremes, then the decision will be made as late as possible in order to gather as much information about local conditions as possible. Regardless, the decision to delay or close is difficult because of the number of variables that account for the wind chill calculations as well as the variances observed throughout the district.



NWS Windchill Chart

