

# Inclement Weather Procedures

## Administrative Procedure

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<b>Topic:</b>	<b>Inclement Weather Procedures</b>
<b>Status:</b>	<b>Active</b>
<b>Effective:</b>	March 2014
<b>Revision Date:</b>	May 2017, June 2019, March 2024
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<b>Responsibility:</b>	Director of Education

### Intended Purpose

The Halton District School Board:

- recognizes its responsibility for the safety and welfare of students during school hours, and while commuting to/from school via school board-provided transportation;
- understands parents/guardians share in the responsibility for the safety and welfare of their children;
- realizes occasionally situations of severe inclement weather exist or are predicted during the school day; and
- recognizes that, on certain occasions, the HDSB may have to alter or introduce additional safety measures or close schools and that Halton Student Transportation Services (HSTS) may cancel transportation.

### Procedures

The Director or the Director's designate shall have the authority to communicate additional measures to be taken to respond to weather conditions, determine school closures and/or cancel transportation subject to the advice of the General Manager, HSTS.

Regardless of decisions relating to transportation cancellations, it is a parent/guardian decision to determine whether it is safe for their children to travel to school.

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### Cold Weather/Winter Weather Procedures

1. Additional information about preventative measures to manage cold weather conditions can be found on the Halton Region [Cold Warnings webpage](#).
2. The decision to close Halton District School Board schools and/or cancel transportation shall be communicated by 6:30 a.m.
3. The HSTS General Manager is responsible for communicating the decision to cancel transportation, including transportation for students with special education needs, to designated radio and television stations.
4. The HDSB Communications & Engagement Department and Director's Office will communicate transportation cancellations and/or school closures through SchoolMessenger, social media, website, mobile app and Board office voicemail.
5. Students and staff are excused from attendance at any Halton District School Board school, education centre or Board office closed due to inclement weather.

### Transportation Cancellations before the Beginning of the School Day

1. The HSTS General Manager shall determine the viability of bus transportation on inclement weather days.
2. By 5:45 a.m., the HSTS General Manager will inform the Director of Education of the viability of transportation. The HSTS General Manager will also report the following information to the Director:
  - 2.1. Local vicinity weather report
  - 2.2. Present weather report as stated by Environment Canada – Toronto
  - 2.3. Anticipated 12-hour weather report as predicted by Environment Canada – Toronto, and modified by local conditions.
  - 2.4. Road conditions and/or local transit
3. The Director of Education will decide on the cancellation of buses throughout the

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district or in [prescribed zones](#).

4. Bus transportation cancelled in the morning is cancelled for the entire day.

### Communication of Transportation Cancellations

1. By 6:30 a.m., the HSTS General Manager will notify the media of transportation cancellations, in accordance with [HSTS policies and procedures](#).
2. By 6:30 a.m., a message will be sent to all parents/guardians via SchoolMessenger by the HDSB. Due to the volume of emails, some families may not receive the message right away. For this reason, SchoolMessenger is supplementary to social media, the HDSB website ([hdsb.ca](http://hdsb.ca)), TV, radio, HDSB switchboard telephone recording. A message will be posted to the HDSB website and HDSB social media (Facebook @HaltonDistrictSchoolBoard, Instagram @HDSBschoools and Twitter/X @HaltonDSB), as well as the HDSB Mobile App and Board office voicemail.
3. Any delays of school board-provided transportation services will be communicated via the HSTS website ([haltonbus.ca](http://haltonbus.ca)). Parents/guardians may subscribe to [HSTS Bus Planner Web Parent Portal](#) to receive email notifications.
4. On the day(s) following transportation cancellations or school closures, when the Director of Education is concerned forecasted weather conditions may cause doubt or concern about whether transportation is operating and/or schools are open, confirmation will be communicated via the HDSB website and social media.
5. It is the responsibility of students, parents/guardians and staff to refer to the HDSB's communications methods for transportation cancellations or school closures for the day.

### School Closures

1. In rare circumstances, the Director of Education may order schools closed due to

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extreme weather conditions, presenting hazardous conditions for transportation to/from school by any means.

2. On such rare occasions when closures are considered, in general, this decision may be made either system-wide or by established transportation zones, and include all HDSB workplaces within the designated area.
3. School closures will be communicated by 6:30 a.m.
4. Communication of school closures will be the responsibility of the HDSB Communications & Engagement Department and Director's Office and will occur in the same manner as transportation cancellations, as outlined above.
5. In the event where school(s) closures may be possible or predicted, and in alignment with Special Weather Statements/Alerts, messaging will be shared on HDSB social media via the Communications & Engagement Dept to remind families and staff of inclement weather procedures, given the forecast. This message will stress that a final decision regarding closure will be communicated by 6:30 a.m. on the day of the potential closure, consistent with the HDSB's procedures.

### **School Activities during Inclement Winter Weather**

1. When schools are declared closed due to inclement weather, all programs, activities and field trips (including trips for inter-school athletics) are cancelled. In extenuating circumstances, special permission may be sought from the Director of Education or designate.
2. If an inclement weather day causes transportation cancellations and/or school closures during secondary school exams, information specific to each secondary school will be posted on the school's website. [Secondary school website](#) information is available on the HDSB website.
3. The in-charge person is responsible for determining the appropriateness of outdoor activities during inclement weather, in alignment with the [Environment](#)

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### [& Physical Education Administrative Procedure.](#)

4. Parents/guardians are responsible for considering weather conditions in preparing students for travel to/from school and any outdoor activities.
5. When the temperature or wind chill reaches  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  (twenty degrees below zero, Celsius), students will be granted immediate entry to school upon arrival, and students will remain indoors during nutrition breaks. Students are also required to keep their outdoor coats/jackets with them throughout the instructional day, in case of a need to evacuate the school.

### **Cancellation of After-School/Weekend Activities/Classes**

1. In the event of inclement weather, the Principal of Gary Allan Learning Centres will contact the Associate Director and Superintendent of Education to advise what programs and sites could be impacted.
2. The Associate Director, in consultation with the Superintendent of Education, will determine whether to cancel evening/weekend activities/classes in all or specific areas.
3. Gary Allan Learning Centres will be responsible for communicating with impacted staff, students and parents/guardians. Communication will include an email through SchoolMessenger, alert on the Gary Allan Learning Centres website and impacted site (school) websites, Brightspace and Google Classroom.

### **Communication of Policy and Procedures**

1. In October, in each school, Principals will review, instruct and clarify with staff the Inclement Weather Procedures with particular attention given to establishing employee expectations and teacher responsibilities.
2. The Communications & Engagement Department will share information with parents/guardians about the HDSB's Inclement Weather Procedures by November of each year. This will include information about transportation zones.

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3. Principals should include in their regular communication to parents/guardians a reminder of the HDSB Inclement Weather procedures and the HSTS website where they can monitor potential school bus delays or changes.

### **School Closure During the School Day**

*NOTE: This will happen only when the most severe conditions are predicted or occur. When schools are dismissed early, transportation will be coordinated.*

1. The decision to close schools during the day will be made by the Director, or in the absence of the Director, the designate, on advice from the HSTS General Manager as required in school closure before the beginning of a school day. The Director will notify the Chair of this decision.
2. Elementary and secondary principal input to the decision to close is provided through the Superintendents of Education to the HSTS General Manager prior to a decision of school closure occurring.
3. Once a school opens, schools will not be closed during the school day unless:
  - The decision to implement closure is made by 11 a.m.
  - The communication to close schools is completed by 12 p.m. (noon).
  - Notification of early school closure will be announced by radio prior to 12 p.m. (noon).
4. No students in Kindergarten - Grade 5, or students with special accommodations, will be sent home until parents/guardians have been notified and have confirmed their child's early dismissal.

Parents/guardians of Grade 6-8 students may designate their wishes for their child's dismissal. Parents/guardians may designate beforehand in writing that their child will be allowed to leave the school by bus OR remain at school until picked up.

Any students whose parents, or designate, have not been contacted or previously indicated in writing their intent, will be kept inside the school until parental contact is possible. Students must be advised to remain inside the school until

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they have been picked up.

5. Ensuring proper supervision, the Principal may use their discretion to dismiss employees once closure has been decided and announced. When **all students** are home, or dismissed as pre-planned, or at a location known by their parent(s)/guardian(s), the Principal will designate the school closed and upon informing the Family of Schools Superintendent, dismiss the remaining employees.

### Hot/Humid Weather Procedures

1. When the heat or high humidity is combined with other stresses such as hard physical work, physical activity/play, loss of fluids, fatigue or some medical conditions, it may lead to heat-related illness, disability and even death. Some individuals are more susceptible to heat related illness: children less than 15 years old, seniors 65 years and older, children playing sports or prolonged physical exertion, children wearing excessive/heavy clothing, children on certain medications.
2. Therefore, it is very important to have a Hot Weather Action Plan to deal with these occurrences and to provide precautions on very hot days to protect both students and staff from heat related illnesses and heat stress. Heat stress is affected by four environmental factors: air temperature, humidity, air movement and radiant heat. Individual factors such as age, existing medical and physical conditions also play a part in how an individual copes during times of extremely hot weather.
3. Additional information about preventative measures to manage hot weather conditions can be found on the [Halton Region website](#).
4. Hot Weather Action Plan - The plan should be activated when weather/environmental triggers occur such as:
  - the humidex reaches or exceeds 35°C;

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- Environment Canada issues a heat warning
- there is a smog alert and higher temperatures (27-30°C); or
- a heat wave occurs (3 or more days of 32°C or higher temperatures).

Parents/guardians and staff should be notified whenever the hot weather plan is activated.

*Note: There is no specific temperature or humidex value that would trigger schools to close.*

A **Hot Weather Action Plan** includes the following general prevention and control measures:

### 1.1 Communication

- When hot weather conditions described above (item 1) exist in the Halton Region, the Director or designate will communicate to schools that they are to initiate their Hot Weather Action Plan.

### 1.2 General Prevention and Controls

- Use announcement system to advise students not to overexert themselves during nutrition breaks
- Make use of shady areas in the schoolyard.
- Consider indoor or modified recesses and lunch hours. Limit time outdoors when temperatures and UV radiation are most intense, between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Make available and encourage students to drink plenty of cool water throughout the day.
- Inform staff on [how to recognize the signs and symptoms of heat stress](#) and monitor students for these signs.
- Recognize that students who have been on vacation or absent from school need to be acclimatized to working in heat.
- Keep as many heat-generating appliances and fixtures off while



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maintaining safety.

- If there is a breeze outside and the humidex levels are not excessive, consider opening operable windows.
- Increase air movement with the use of fans if temperature is less than 35°C and the relative humidity is below 70%.
- Keep blinds/curtains closed in classrooms/offices directly exposed to sunlight. Turn off any unnecessary lights.
- If air conditioning is present in some areas of the building, consider cycling classes through these areas.
- If possible, reschedule physical activities and slow down the pace of physical activities as appropriate.
- Avoid activities in direct sunlight.
- Increase the frequency and length of rest breaks, if necessary.
- Cool the body by placing cool, wet paper towels or cloths on the head, forehead or neck. Forearms may also be submerged in cool water.
- When in doubt, seek assistance for the school's qualified First Aiders for the identification and treatment of heat related disorders.
- Monitor local radio stations for announcements regarding humidex readings.

### 1.3 Personal Protective Equipment

- Light summer weight clothing made from natural fibers should be worn (whenever possible) to allow free air movement and sweat evaporation. Avoid wearing synthetic fabrics.
- If participating in outdoor activities, wear light coloured clothing.
- Students are encouraged to wear sunscreen containing a minimum SPF of 15 when outdoors. Other protective measures include a brimmed hat and sunglasses with ultraviolet radiation protection.

### 1.4 Heat-Related Illnesses

- People suffer heat-related illnesses when their body temperature rises

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rapidly and they are unable to properly cool themselves.

- Very high body temperatures may damage the brain or other vital organs.
- People are generally unable to notice their own heat stress related symptoms. Their survival depends on the ability of others, especially adults, to recognize these symptoms and seek timely first aid and medical help.
- Staff should be aware of signs and symptoms of heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. When in doubt, seek assistance for the school's qualified First Aiders for the identification and treatment of heat related disorders.

### **Stop activity and seek medical help immediately if someone:**

- has difficulty breathing,
  - experiences weakness or fainting,
  - is feeling more tired than usual,
  - is feeling sick,
  - has a headache, and/or
  - is experiencing confusion.
- 
- Move the person to a shaded area or indoors to a cooler place. Give the person sips of cool water, not ice water, or a sports drink. **Do not** provide salt tablets. Although the body will lose a lot of water during times of heavy perspiration, not a lot of salt is lost. Adding extra salt can raise the sodium levels in the body to hazardous levels. Only a doctor should advise on using salt additives.

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**Reference number: Pending**

**Cross Reference:**

**Board Policies, Procedures & Protocols**

[Environmental Conditions & Physical Activity \(Lightning, Temperatures, Winds, Tornadoes and Inclement Weather and Transportation\) Administrative Procedure](#)

[HSTS Operating Procedure: HS-4-006 – Inclement Weather Transportation Cancellations](#)

**Revision History**

- April 3, 2024: Administrative Procedure Update Report 24049.