

**TOPIC:** Inclement Weather Procedures  
**EFFECTIVE:** March 2014  
**CROSS-REFERENCE:** Environmental Factors and Physical Activity  
Administrative Procedure  
**REVIEWED:** May 2017  
**REVISION DATE:** June 2019  
**RESPONSIBILITY:** 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 Board provided transportation;

- understands parents 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 the Halton District School Board on certain occasions may have to alter or introduce additional safety measures, close schools and/or 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, Halton Student Transportation Services (HSTS).

**COLD WEATHER /WINTER WEATHER PROCEDURES**

1. Additional information about preventative measures to manage cold weather conditions can be found on the Region of Halton website at <http://www.halton.ca/cms/One.aspx?portalId=8310&pageId=13696>.
2. The decision to close Halton schools and/or cancel transportation shall be made by 6 a.m.
3. The HSTS General Manager shall implement the decision for school closure and/or cancel transportation, including special transportation, and shall be responsible for its communication to designated radio and television stations.
4. Radio/television stations will be informed of the decision to close schools and/or cancel transportation by 6:30 a.m.
5. Supplemental communication regarding transportation cancellations and/or school closures shall be implemented by the Halton District School Board Communications Department, and include messages through the Board's Home Notification system (email), social media, website and switchboard.
6. Students and staff are excused from attendance at any Halton school, education centre or central office designated closed due to inclement weather.
7. 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.  
<http://www.halton.ca/cms/One.aspx?portalId=8310&pageId=13692>

8. School bus drivers have the authority to curtail, modify or cancel service if road conditions deteriorate after a route is started. Drivers must notify their dispatcher if routes are altered. Operators will endeavour to contact families and the HSTS General Manager if routes are curtailed or modified.

### **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:

- Local vicinity weather report
  - Present weather report as stated by Environment Canada – Toronto
  - Anticipated 12 hour weather report as predicted by Environment Canada – Toronto, and modified by local conditions – (e.g., Guelph predictions for Acton weather)
  - Road conditions and/or local transit
3. The Director of Education will decide on the cancellation of buses throughout the district or in prescribed zones (as outlined on the attached map).
  4. Bus transportation cancelled at 6 a.m. is cancelled for the entire day.

### **COMMUNICATION OF TRANSPORTATION CANCELLATIONS**

1. It is the responsibility of the student, staff and parents to reference the Board's communications methods to determine transportation cancellations/school closures for the day.
2. By 6:30 a.m., the HSTS General Manager will notify the following radio/television stations of any transportation cancellations:

<b>AM Radio</b>	CHML 900	CFRB 1010	CKOC 1150	CHWO 740	CJOY 1460
	CFTR 680				
<b>FM Radio</b>	CHFI 98.1	CING 95.3	CKFM 99.9	K-LITE 102.9	Y108 (107.9)
	CBC 99.1	WAVE 94.7	CIMJ 106		
<b>TV</b>	CHCH		CITY-TV	CP 24	

3. By 6:30 a.m., a Home Notification System email message will be initiated by the Halton District School Board supplementing the cancellation(s) message sent to media outlets. Due to the volume of emails, some families may not receive the message until 7:30 a.m. For this reason, the Home Notification System is supplementary to TV, radio, switchboard telephone message and website ([www.hdsb.ca](http://www.hdsb.ca)) communication. Additionally, a similar message will be sent out to followers via social media (Facebook and Twitter @HaltonDSB).
4. Any delays of Board provided transportation services will be provided via [haltonbus.ca](http://haltonbus.ca) to the Halton Student Transportation System website. Parents must subscribe to this service from the HSTS website ([www.haltonbus.ca](http://www.haltonbus.ca))
5. 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 Board's website and social media.

## **SCHOOL CLOSURES**

1. In rare circumstances, the Director of Education may order schools closed due to 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 Halton District School Board workplaces within the designated area.
3. School closures will be announced by 6:30 a.m.
4. Communication of school closures will occur in the same manner as transportation cancellations. Primary communication will be through local media as outlined in 2.1, a message on the Halton District School Board website and switchboard. Supplementary communications will be via Home Notification System message and through social media (Facebook and Twitter), as outlined in 2.2.
5. In the event where school(s) closures may be possible or predicted, advance notification may be sent to parents via the Board's Home Notification System. This message will stress that a final decision regarding closure will be made by 6:00 a.m. on the day of the potential closure, consistent with the Board's procedures.

## **SCHOOL ACTIVITIES DURING INCLEMENT WINTER WEATHER**

1. Field trips (including trips for inter-school athletics) are cancelled for students in schools located within zones where transportation has been cancelled. In extenuating circumstances, special permission may be sought from the Director of Education or designate.
2. When schools are declared closed due to inclement weather, all programs and activities offered at Board locations will also be cancelled.
3. 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. A summary of secondary school information can be found at [this link](#) to the Halton District School Board website.
4. The principal is responsible to determine the appropriateness of outdoor activities during inclement weather.
5. Parents are responsible for considering weather conditions in preparing students for travel to/from school and any outdoor activities.
6. When the temperature or wind chill reaches -20°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.

## **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 as understood by the Halton District School Board and Principals.
2. Principals will send home, by October 15th of each school year, an information bulletin to parents/guardians informing them of the Board's Inclement Weather Procedures and the

communication of school closures during inclement weather. It shall be the Principal's responsibility to inform each parent of the Board's procedures for school closure.

3. The Board's Administrative Procedure with accompanying zone maps will also be posted on the Board's website.
4. Principals should include in their communication to parents a reminder of the Halton Student Transportation Services website where they can monitor any 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 noon.
  - Notification of early school closure will be announced by radio prior to 12 noon.

4. No pupils in Junior Kindergarten - Grade 5, or students with special accommodations, will be sent home until parents have been notified and confirm their student's early dismissal.

Parents of Grade 6-Grade 8 pupils may designate their wishes for their child's dismissal. Parents 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 pupils 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.

Pupils must be advised to remain inside the school until they have been picked up.

5. Ensuring proper supervision, the Principal may use his/her discretion to dismiss employees once closure has been decided and announced. When all pupils are home, or dismissed as pre-planned, or at a location known by their parent, the Principal will designate the school closed and upon informing the Superintendent of Schools, 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 4 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 Region of Halton website at <http://www.halton.ca/cms/One.aspx?portalId=8310&pageId=13696>.
4. Hot Weather Action Plan
  - The plan should be activated when weather/environmental triggers occur such as:
    - the humidex reaches or exceeds 35°C;
    - Environmental Canada Humidex Advisory (air temperature exceeding 30°C and the humidex exceeds 40°C) is issued;
    - 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 and staff should be notified whenever the hot weather plan is activated.  
**Note that 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 PA announcements 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 (see chart) 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 maintaining safety. Shut off computers and projectors when not in use.
- 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 submersed 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 a 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 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.

**Heat Stress Hazards**

	<b>Cause</b>	<b>Symptoms</b>	<b>Treatment</b>	<b>Prevention</b>
<b>Heat Rash</b>	Hot humid environment; plugged sweat glands.	Red bumpy rash with severe itching.	Change into dry clothes and avoid hot environments. Rinse skin with cool water.	Wash regularly to keep skin clean and dry.
<b>Heat Cramps</b>	Heavy sweating from strenuous physical activity drains a person's body of fluid and salt, which cannot be replaced just by drinking water. Heat cramps occur from salt imbalance resulting from failure to replace salt lost from heavy sweating.	Painful cramps occur commonly in the most worked muscles (arms, legs or stomach); this can happen suddenly at school/ work or later at home.  Heat cramps are serious because they can be a warning of other more dangerous heat-induced illnesses.	Move to a cool area; loosen clothing, gently massage and stretch affected muscles and drink cool salted water (1½ to 2½ mL salt in 1 litre of water) or balanced commercial fluid electrolyte replacement beverage. If the cramps are severe or don't go away after salt and fluid replacement, seek medical aid. Salt tablets are not recommended.	Reduce activity levels and/or heat exposure. Drink fluids regularly. Adults should check on students and each other to help spot the symptoms that often precede heat stroke.
<b>Fainting</b>	Fluid loss, inadequate water intake and standing still, resulting in decreased blood flow to brain. Usually occurs in unacclimatized persons.	Sudden fainting after at least two hours of work; cool moist skin; weak pulse.	GET MEDICAL ATTENTION. Assess need for cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Move to a cool area; loosen clothing; have the person lie down; and if the person is conscious, offer sips of cool water. Fainting may also be due to other illnesses.	Reduce activity levels and/or heat exposure. Drink fluids regularly. Move around and avoid standing in one place for too long. Adults should check on students and each other to help spot the symptoms that often precede heat stroke.
<b>Heat Exhaustion</b>	Fluid loss and inadequate salt and water intake causes a person's body's cooling system to start to break down.	Heavy sweating; cool moist skin; body temperature over 38°C; weak pulse; normal or low blood pressure; person is tired and weak, and has nausea and vomiting; is very thirsty; or is panting or	GET MEDICAL ATTENTION. This condition can lead to heat stroke, which can cause death quickly. Move the person to a cool shaded area; loosen or remove excess clothing; provide cool water to drink; fan and spray with cool water.	Reduce activity levels and/or heat exposure. Drink fluids regularly. Adults should check on students and each other to help spot the symptoms that often precede heat stroke.

		breathing rapidly; vision may be blurred.	Do not leave affected person alone.	
<b>Heat Stroke</b>	<p>There are two types of heat stroke:</p> <p>Classic heat stroke may occur in older adults and in persons with chronic illnesses exposed to excessive heat. When the body has used up its water and salt reserves, it stops sweating causing a rise in body temperature.</p> <p>Exertional heat stroke generally occurs in young persons, who engage in strenuous physical activity for a prolonged period of time in a hot environment and the body's cooling mechanism cannot get rid of the excessive heat.</p> <p>Heat stroke may develop suddenly or may follow from heat exhaustion.</p>	<p>High body temperature (over 40°C) and any one of the following: the person is weak, confused, upset or acting strangely; has hot, dry, red skin (classic heat stroke) or profusely sweating (exertional heat stroke); a fast pulse; headache or dizziness. In later stages, a person may pass out and have convulsions.</p>	<p>CALL AMBULANCE. This condition can kill a person quickly. Remove excess clothing; fan and spray the person with cool water; offer sips of cool water if the person is conscious.</p>	<p>Reduce activity levels and/or heat exposure. Drink fluids regularly. Adults should check on students and each other to help spot the symptoms that often precede heat stroke.</p>