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**HORIZON SCHOOL DIVISION****POLICY HANDBOOK**

**Policy Code:** EBCD  
**Policy Title:** Emergency School Closure  
**Cross Reference:** Collective Agreements  
**Legal Reference:**  
**Adoption Date:** Nov. 27, 1996,  
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**POLICY**

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF HORIZON SCHOOL DIVISION BELIEVES THAT SCHOOLS SHOULD REMAIN OPEN WHENEVER POSSIBLE; HOWEVER, GIVEN EMERGENCY, DISASTER OR SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS WHERE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF STUDENTS MAY BE JEOPARDIZED, THE CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS SHALL BE AUTHORIZED UNDER THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES AND REGULATIONS.

**GUIDELINES**

At all times the health and safety of students shall be the primary consideration in all decisions or actions taken in times of emergency, disaster or severe weather conditions.

Even though a school may remain open or a bus route operates, individual parents may decide not to send their children to school or on the bus if emergency, disaster or severe weather conditions necessitate that decision in their view. The parent shall contact the bus driver ahead of time if possible.

**REGULATIONS**

1. Where emergency, disaster or severe weather conditions appear to be hazardous and a school bus driver, after consultation with the Transportation Contractor's Fleet Manager, feels it is unsafe to operate in their specific area, individual bus routes may be cancelled or altered. Parents will be advised through a telephone message from the individual bus driver, Transportation Contractor Fleet Manager, or through an established telephone fan out.
2. Should an emergency, disaster or severe weather conditions exist that appear to affect the health and safety of students at all schools in the Division, the Superintendent or designate may close all schools in the Division for the day. The Superintendent or designate shall, as soon as possible and preferably before 6:30 a.m., declare all schools closed for the day under such circumstances. Assigned Division Office staff will contact each school cluster's Designate of the decision to close all schools.

The Designate will immediately upon receipt of this notice contact the remaining principals in their cluster.

Principals will ensure that there is an appropriate mechanism in place to communicate this decision to the staff, students and parents at each school as deemed necessary.

3. Should some other emergency or disaster (water line break, power outage, etc.) at a specific school become evident, the Principal shall make the determination on school closure for that day and will immediately contact the Superintendent or designate (who will immediately contact the Transportation Coordinator), the selected radio stations for public announcements and the staff, parents and students as deemed necessary.

## **Policy EBCD - Emergency School Closure, Cont'd.**

4. Once at school, students shall remain for the day unless an emergency, disaster or severe weather condition requires early closure of school. In such cases, students shall be sent to prearranged billets, directly picked up by parents, or other appropriate action taken to assure the absolute safety of the student.
5. On days when schools are closed under this policy, staff will follow whatever guidelines are in the appropriate collective agreement or staff handbook in regards to reporting to work. The Principals shall make every effort to ensure, however, that there is someone at the school to handle any situations that may arise. Division Office staff shall make every effort to ensure that there is someone at the Division Office to handle or assist with any situations that may arise.
6. School Safety Plans shall include procedures pertaining to emergencies, disasters and severe weather conditions at the school. Procedures will include a communication system for contacting staff, students and parents.

### **PROCEDURES**

1. Due to the wide-spread geographical area for the Division's schools, and knowing that emergencies, disasters or severe weather conditions may be different in the various school locations, collaborative clusters serve as a structure in making school closure decisions. Listed below are the clusters that have been established to which a Designate will be assigned:

- Lomond School
- Vauxhall High, Vauxhall Elementary, Horizon MAP, Hays and Enchant Schools
- Chamberlain School, Arden T. Litt Centre for Learning
- Warner School
- Milk River Elementary and Erle Rivers Schools
- Barnwell, W.R. Myers, D.A. Ferguson, Central, L.T. Westlake, Dr. Hamman Schools and ACE Place, Taber Christian School
- Colony Schools,

A fan out system will be established for the Division Office and a staff member will be assigned as the Fan Out 'Lead' to notify Division Office staff of pertinent school closure information.

2. Where an emergency, disaster or severe weather conditions appear hazardous to the health and safety of students the following action may be taken:

#### **A. CANCELLATION OF AN INDIVIDUAL BUS ROUTE**

When a school bus driver or the Transportation Contractor feels it is unsafe to operate, or when it is felt that it is necessary to alter a bus route due to an emergency, disaster severe weather or road conditions, it is the Transportation Contractor's responsibility to:

- (a) inform the Principal for each of the schools affected.
- (b) attempt to contact all rural parents on the affected route with the help of an established telephone fan-out system.
- (c) contact the Transportation Coordinator or designate.

## Policy EBCD - Emergency School Closure, Cont'd.

### **B. SCHOOL CLOSURE**

Where an emergency, disaster or severe weather conditions appear hazardous to the health and safety of students, the Designated Principal shall contact the others in the collaborative clusters to make the determination in regards to school closure and take the following action:

#### **Severe Weather Conditions**

When a possible school closure is due to severe weather conditions, the Designate shall consult with one or more of the following: the Superintendent or designate, Transportation Coordinator, Transportation Contractor, local bus drivers, parents, and other appropriate individuals (see list of contacts in the Policy Addendum).

The Transportation Coordinator and Transportation Contractor will be informed immediately when the school closure is decided.

#### **Emergencies and Disasters**

- (a) The school Principal shall notify the Superintendent, Transportation Contractor and Transportation Coordinator immediately.
  - (b) Division Office is responsible to ensure that the selected radio stations are notified if a school is closed.
3. Actions outlined in #1 and #2 above should be taken, if possible, between 6:30 a.m. and 7:00 a.m.
4. **Extreme Cold Weather**  
Buses will not run when temperatures in a bus cluster geographic region are  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  (with windchill) or colder as of 6:00am that morning. Schools may remain open depending on circumstances
5. Any school closure or cancellation of bus routes will be updated on the Horizon School Division website - [www.horizon.ab.ca](http://www.horizon.ab.ca), Horizon School Division Facebook Page, on Twitter @Horizonsd67, and announced on the radio stations as listed below:
- The RIVER 107.7 FM
  - ROCK 106.7 FM
  - COUNTRY 95.5 FM
  - B93.3 FM
  - CKVN 98.1 FM
  - CJOC 94.1 FM
- The Transportation Coordinator will notify, if necessary, the Principals at St. Mary's School and St. Patrick's School.
6. It shall be the responsibility of the Principal to appropriately notify all staff members in their school(s) as early as possible of school closure and/or cancellation of bus routes.
7. Should emergency, disaster or severe weather conditions take place during school hours, the Principal shall ensure the safety of the students and then follow the procedures provided in the School Safety Plan