

SCHOOL EMERGENCIES and/or TEMPORARY CLOSURES

- POLICY -

The district has a responsibility to ensure the safety of students and staff in emergency situations. The district has a well-defined set of guidelines for responding to emergency situations in schools and for determining procedures should an emergency necessitate the temporary closure of a school. The primary consideration in all decisions related to school emergencies shall be the safety of students and staff. One or more schools may be temporarily closed because of lengthy power outages, water supply problems, building issues, unusual weather that make transportation unsafe, and other, unforeseen reasons.

- REGULATION -

1. The Superintendent of Schools (or designate) is responsible for all decisions relating to temporary school closures. Such decisions will be made in consultation with the school principal and other staff as appropriate.
2. The school principal is responsible for ensuring that appropriate procedures, as outlined in this policy and in the district's Emergency Preparedness Quick Reference Guide, are implemented in the event of an emergency. Additional procedures related to lockdowns can be found in the Critical Incident Protocols.
3. The school principal will include a summary of all emergency procedures in the school's staff handbook. Such procedures include, but are not limited to, what to do in the event of fire, earthquakes, lockdowns and other emergencies.
4. The school principal will review safety procedures and update staff with respect to such procedures at the start of each school year and as part of the completion of the new employee checklist.

5. Temporary Closure of Schools

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- 5.1 Decision made prior to school opening:
- a. The Superintendent or designate will post on the district’s website and contact local media in order to inform parents as soon as possible about the closure. Contact will also be made with the school principal and the Manager of Operations and Maintenance.
 - b. The school principal will ensure that staff are informed of the closure as early as possible. Staff will also be notified of whether they should report to work at an alternate location.
 - c. The Manager of Operations and Maintenance will contact the district’s bus drivers to inform them of the closure. Buses will, however, continue to run in order to pick up students who may not be able to return home safely.
 - d. The principal will ensure the safety of students who do arrive at school. For elementary students and for students with special needs, parents must be contacted and arrangements made before students are released.
- 5.2 Decision made after school opening:
- a. The principal will ensure the safety of students and will evacuate the school building as necessary. In the event of an evacuation, school staff will not leave the building until all students have safely left or until authorized to do so by the principal.
 - b. Arrangements will be made to have students return home wherever possible. For elementary students and for students with special needs, parents must be contacted and arrangements made before students are released.
 - c. The Manager of Operations and Maintenance will contact the district’s bus drivers to inform them of the closure. A decision will be made in consultation with the principal with respect to when buses will return students home.

5.3 Anonymous Threats

In the case of possible arson or bomb threats by phone, the person receiving the call should:

- a. Attempt to keep the caller on the line;
- b. Get the attention of a nearby person and inform them of the nature of the call so that they may notify the school principal;
- c. Speak calmly, not upsetting the caller;
- d. Attempt to determine the nature and location of the device involved;
- e. Try to obtain a reason for the actions being taken and listen carefully to the type of voice, any speech peculiarities, etc.

The school principal (or designate) should remain calm and notify the police and fire departments immediately. A determination of whether to evacuate or go into lockdown will be made by the principal in consultation with the police.

In the event that an evacuation is required, all staff should be notified of the situation, and an orderly evacuation of the school will occur. After evacuation, the superintendent (or designate) must be notified.

If a search of the facility becomes necessary, it would be under the direct control of the police, with assistance being required from the fire department along with the principal and perhaps staff from the Maintenance department. The assistance of teachers may also be requested as they would be most able to determine any materials not normally present in a classroom. If you are assisting in this type of search, you are to LOOK BUT DON'T TOUCH. DO NOT disturb suspicious articles but DO bring them to the attention of the authorities involved.

Upon completion of the search, the superintendent, in consultation with the school principal and the police, will determine if the school day shall be resumed or concluded.

5.4 Power Outages

If a power outage is experienced, the situation shall be reported to BC Hydro and, if possible, the nature of the problem and an estimate of its duration should be obtained. This information shall then be relayed to the superintendent of schools.

The school principal (or designate) shall consult with the superintendent of schools. The superintendent shall determine if the physical conditions of the facility are suitable for school to remain in session and, in his/her discretion, decide whether or not to close the school for a period of time.

5.5 Inclement Weather

From time to time, road conditions may delay an opening or force an early closure of one or more schools in the district. Under these circumstances, the protocol for temporary closure shall follow that for power outages (above) but will also include consultation with the Manager of Operations and Maintenance.

If certain road conditions are questionable, and an announcement regarding school closure has not yet been made, school personnel unable to complete the trip to their own school shall, if possible, travel to their nearest school and prepare to work there for the day.

6. Arrangements for Staff

6.1 In the event of a school closure staff will work in the school building if conditions permit.

6.2 If conditions are such that staff cannot be in the school building, staff may be permitted to report to work at another site if there is work available. This would require agreement between the supervisor at the closed site and the supervisor at the alternate site.

6.3 As per section F.6.6 of the collective agreement, teachers will be paid for a school closure of three days or less. Beginning on the fourth day, teachers will not be paid. Teachers who are sick during a school closure will be deducted a sick day. A medical certificate may be required. If you are unsure as to the status of your duty to report to work, check with your supervising principal.

6.4 For any full day that the school is closed, regular and temporary CUPE employees in posted positions are entitled to two hours pay on the first day of such closure, whether they have reported to work or not. Employees should not attempt to travel to work if their school or work site is closed. CUPE workers may use a sick day if they were off due to illness. A medical certificate may be required. Banked time or vacation time may be used and must be reported as such on the time sheets.