

EMERGENCY DAYS, DELAYED STARTS & USE OF SNOW ROUTES: HOW THEY ARE DECIDED AT CHARLESTON CUSD #1

The decision to close schools, delay start times or use bus snow routes because of hazardous weather or other emergency that threatens the safety of students, staff members or school property can have a big impact on families. Such decisions are made solely on the best interest, welfare, and safety of students, staff, families and visitors to our schools. School district officials acknowledge, of course, that students are best served by being in class for a full day. It may be helpful, however, to share how we carefully consider many factors when making these decisions.

FACTORS CONSIDERED WHEN DECIDING ON A STATUS FOR SCHOOLS

- Existing weather conditions, weather forecasts, and first-hand information about road conditions gathered by school district officials who drive around the Charleston area from 4:30 – 5:30a.m.
 - We consider how conditions (i.e. accumulations of snow and/or ice, drifting, flooding, wind chill, etc.) might affect the safety of students who walk to school and students at bus stops, as well as the ability of people to travel safely on the various types of roads and terrains around the district.
 - Our district has historically viewed a -20 wind chill as a threshold by which to consider closing schools. This decision is often not officially made until that morning.
- School building conditions (i.e. electricity, heat, water)
- School parking lots and walkway conditions
- School bus availability (i.e. operational, ability to safely travel all routes, potential delays)
- Consultation with nearby school districts to determine future conditions in our district

WHO MAKES THE DECISION?

The Superintendent of Schools makes the final decision, which is based on the above factors, recommendations from other school district officials and consultation with neighboring districts.

WHEN IS THE DECISION MADE?

While we would prefer to make and communicate such decisions on the day prior to anticipated weather events, we make the decisions when we are most confident in ensuring the safety of our school community, as there are often times when forecasted hazardous weather does not actually occur.

HOW ARE PEOPLE NOTIFIED OF THE DECISION?

Because our school district's school bus drivers prepare for and begin their routes very early in the morning, we need to make the decision and communicate it to our school transportation personnel by 5:30a.m. We communicate the decision to the remainder of our school community by 5:45a.m. through automated phone and email messages to parents and staff, through a message on our district's Facebook page, and through messages sent to local media outlets. To ensure that such messages are received by parents, it is important that parents provide and keep updated contact information on their child(ren)'s Skyward account.

HOW CAN PARENTS BE INVOLVED IN THE DECISION-MAKING?

While school district officials do their very best when considering all factors and making decisions about the closing/opening status of schools, there is no decision that fits best for everyone. Parents who believe that it is not safe for their children to attend school always have the option of keeping their children home that day.

DO EMERGENCY DAYS HAVE TO BE MADE UP?

Our school district plans for five "emergency days" during each school year. Emergency days that are used during the school year must be "made up" prior to the end of that school year. Our district also has an approved e-learning plan (<https://5il.co/14uqs>) that can be used in lieu of emergency day usage. e-learning days do not require to be "made up" at the end of the school year.