

## INCLEMENT WEATHER AND OUTDOOR AIR QUALITY

### Background:

The Division is responsible for ensuring each of its students is provided with an education program consistent with the requirements of the *Education Act*. Therefore, schools shall remain open to students during the times and dates established in the Division school calendar. The Division may temporarily suspend school bus services, close a school building or direct schools to postpone outdoor activities if the health and safety of students and staff are at risk because of inclement weather or poor air quality.

### Definitions:

#### Air Quality Index:

is a tool developed by health and environmental professionals to communicate the health risk posed by air pollution.

#### Humidex:

is a measure of how hot we feel. It's a parameter intended for the public to express how the combined effects of warm temperatures and humidity are perceived.

#### Regions:

Strathcona Region (excluding the Hamlet of Sherwood Park and the City of Fort Saskatchewan)

Urban Region – Hamlet of Sherwood Park and City of Fort Saskatchewan

Lamont Region

Minburn Region

#### Wind Chill Index:

is a cold injury prevention tool that equates outdoor conditions to an equivalent temperature with no wind, representing the degree of "chill" our skin senses.

### Procedures:

#### 1. Student Transportation

- 1.1. School bus service may be suspended by the Superintendent, in consultation with the Director of Student Transportation, when there is a forecast or current temperature of -40 degrees centigrade (-40 C), including wind chill factor, in one or more regions.
- 1.2. School bus service may also be suspended or delayed by the Superintendent, in consultation with the Director of Student Transportation, because of adverse weather or road conditions.
- 1.3. The Director of Student Transportation shall consider information provided by Lamont County, Strathcona County and the County of Minburn; Environment

- Canada; or the Weather Network when making a recommendation to the Superintendent regarding the suspension of school bus service.
- 1.4. Suspension of school bus service may be limited to a specific region of the Division.
  - 1.5. Suspension of school bus service may be done on a route-by-route basis.
  - 1.6. The Superintendent, in consultation with the Director of Student Transportation, shall make a decision regarding school bus suspension by 5:30 a.m.—or the previous night if conditions make it obvious that service will be suspended the following day.
  - 1.7. When school bus service is suspended by the Superintendent, schools shall remain open to students.
  - 1.8. When regular school bus service is suspended by the Superintendent, all school field and athletic trips shall be cancelled.
  - 1.9. If unsafe road conditions occur, the Director of Student Transportation, in consultation with the bus operator, has the discretionary power to decide not to operate or to abandon completion of the morning route by returning students to their homes. Student Transportation staff must ensure students have adequate access to residences.
  - 1.10. When weather or road conditions deteriorate during the day, the Director of Student Transportation may authorize individual or all buses to leave school prior to regular dismissal time.
  - 1.11. Should weather conditions be extreme or deteriorate during the day in a particular region/area, the Principal, in consultation with the Superintendent, may close the school to all students and staff.
  - 1.12. The Principal, staff and school bus operators shall take steps to ensure students arrive home safely when they are dismissed earlier than normal. This includes attempts to contact parents/guardians and emergency contacts to ensure students have adequate access to residences. In remote areas or where parents/guardians cannot be contacted, students shall be kept at the school.
  - 1.13. Bus operators are to hold themselves in readiness for service in cases of pending extreme conditions.
  - 1.14. Parents/guardians and school bus operators shall be advised annually of the procedures used for the suspension of school bus service.
  - 1.15. Communication
    - 1.15.1. The Director of Student Transportation shall contact all parents/guardians, principals and bus contractors by an automated message (phone, email, SMS) to announce any suspension of bus service.
    - 1.15.2. The Director of Student Transportation shall update the bus status notice on all school websites and the Division website.
    - 1.15.3. The Director of Communication Services shall advise the media of the Superintendent's decision.
    - 1.15.4. The Director of Communication Services shall compose an appropriate message for the:
      - 1.15.4.1. Central Services switchboard (780-464-3477);
      - 1.15.4.2. Division website; and

1.15.4.3. Division social media channels.

1.15.5. All such messages shall be posted by 6:30 a.m.

## 2. Schools

- 2.1. Using a weather information source(s) that is the most accurate for the school/community, school staff shall monitor local weather for adverse conditions.
- 2.2. When the temperature including wind chill is -15 C or colder, at the discretion of the Principal the school may choose to:
  - 2.2.1. Make announcements to remind students about the appropriate cold-weather dress.
  - 2.2.2. Shorten the length of time students are outdoors, particularly over the lunch hour.
  - 2.2.3. Monitor students as they are getting ready to go outside to ensure they are wearing appropriate clothing.
  - 2.2.4. Monitor students for signs of frostnip, frostbite or breathing difficulties.
- 2.3. If the temperature including wind chill is -22 C or colder, staff and students shall remain indoors for recess and activities. Refer to the [wind chill calculator](#).
- 2.4. When outdoor temperatures approach or exceed 30 C or a humidex of 40 and above, the Principal shall follow the [Hot Weather Guidelines for Schools](#) (Appendix 131-A). Outdoor activities shall be postponed when the humidex exceeds 45.
- 2.5. The Principal may also restrict outdoor activities at any time conditions make it prudent to do so, such as rain, thunderstorms, high winds, icy conditions, smoke or poor air quality.
  - 2.5.1. When the [Air Quality Health Index](#) (AQHI) value reaches 7 or more, the Principal shall follow the [AQHI messages](#) regarding outdoor activities.
    - 2.5.1.1. When the air quality index is between 7-10 (high risk), the Principal shall consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous and/or long-duration outdoor activities.
    - 2.5.1.2. When the air quality index is above 10 (very high risk), the Principal shall cancel strenuous and/or long-duration outdoor activities.
  - 2.5.2. Decisions to cancel outdoor field trips or events shall be based on the nature and duration of activity, age and health status of the participants and availability of indoor shelter to reduce exposure time.
- 2.6. Students
  - 2.6.1. For the safety of students, it's the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure:
    - 2.6.1.1. their children are suitably dressed for weather conditions;
    - 2.6.1.2. arrangements have been made for alternate shelter for their child if no one is home; and
    - 2.6.1.3. the school is advised of any health conditions that might be impacted by inclement weather or poor air quality.
  - 2.6.2. On days when school bus services are suspended because of inclement weather or hazardous road conditions, parents/guardians who have brought their children to school shall be responsible for their pick up.

- 2.6.3. On scheduled diploma examination dates, students who arrive at school late shall be allowed to write the examination.
- 2.7. Staff
  - 2.7.1. Staff members are expected to report to work, even if bus service is suspended.
  - 2.7.2. In the event road or weather conditions are extreme, the Superintendent, in consultation with the Principal or Director, may authorize that staff members are not to report to work, to postpone their journey to work or to work online from an alternate location. For safety purposes, the Principal shall ensure some staff members are at the school to temporarily accommodate students who report to school.

**Reference:**

Section 11, 52, 53, 60, 62, 196, 197, 222 *Education Act*

[Air Quality Health Index \(AQHI\)](#)

[Alberta Emergency Alerts](#)

[Humidex Chart](#)

[Humidex and Wind Chill Calculator](#)

[Wind Chill Index](#)

[Appendix 131-A: Hot Weather Guidelines for Schools](#)