

WASHINGTON COUNTY VIRGINIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

EMERGENCY CLOSING OF SCHOOLS



Policies, Procedures and Information



FALL 2014

EMERGENCY CLOSING OF SCHOOLS OR ALTERED SCHEDULE

Recognizing the need for parents, students, and other citizens of the community to be informed about EMERGENCY CLOSING OR ALTERED SCHEDULE of schools; the Washington County Public School system provides the following:

Under What Conditions Are Schools Closed?

The primary reason for school closings is unsafe road conditions for school buses, as well as students and employees who drive during inclement weather, caused by extreme weather such as snow, ice and flooding. However, failure of mechanical or electrical equipment in schools heating, epidemics, or other emergency situations could make it inadvisable to operate schools on certain days. Remember, the safety and health of students are the primary considerations in any action taken in the closing of schools.

Who Is Responsible For Making The Decision To Close Schools Because Of Emergency Situations?

The Washington County School Board designates the Superintendent of Schools, Assistant Superintendent or designee to make the decision to close schools. Schools are open until announced closed.

How Does The Superintendent Arrive At A Decision To Close Schools?

Every effort will be made to accurately assess the conditions of roads and school facilities. The Superintendent and appointed staff members solicit information and recommendations from sources such as the highway department, law enforcement agencies, weather service agencies, bus drivers, and/or other appropriate authorities.

What Options Do The Superintendent Of Schools Have In Closing Schools?

The Washington County Virginia School System will have five modes of operation, which are:

1. Schools Open – Regular Schedule:
All buses operate on a regular schedule; TV, radio stations, and Keep In Contact list will not be notified.
2. Schools Open – Delayed Schedule for Konnarock, Green Cove, and Taylor Valley:
The buses that operate in this area will operate on a two or three hour delay; all other buses will operate on a regular schedule. Should conditions in the Konnarock, Green Cove, and Taylor Valley area deteriorate, it is possible that the schedule could be changed from “delayed” to closed.
3. Schools Open – Two Hour Delay:
ALL Washington County buses will operate two hours later than normal in the morning.
4. Schools Open – Three Hour Delay:
ALL Washington County Buses will operate three hours later than normal in the morning.
5. School Closed:
NO Washington County, Virginia buses operate due to unsafe road conditions or other emergencies.

If condition 2, 3, 4 or 5 exists, every effort will be made to notify the media prior to 5:30 a.m. Should it be necessary to go from Condition 3 or 4 to Condition 5 due to rapidly deteriorating road conditions, media will be advised as soon as possible.

What Specifically Is “Early Dismissal”?

After students arrive at school, conditions may arise or conditions may be forecast that make it necessary to send students home before the end of the regular school day.

What Specifically Is Meant By “Delayed Opening Of School”?

The Superintendent has the authority to open schools two or three hours later than regular school opening time. This means that school buses will run their routes and individual schools will start the school day two or three hours late.

How Are Parents, Students, And The Community Notified When Schools Are Closed, Have Delayed Openings, Or Have Early Dismissals?

When the decision is made to close schools, delay the opening of schools, or to dismiss students early, the Superintendent or designated members of his staff will make the appropriate announcement to local radio and TV stations as well as the School Closings Emergency/ Weather Hotline, Keep in Contact email, Emergency Text line and Washington County webpage.

Schools will operate on a regular schedule until announced otherwise.

Must All Schools In The County Public System Be Closed For An Emergency Situation?

Schools may be closed individually, by high school attendance areas, or on a county-wide basis due to unforeseen emergency situations such as utility problems and/or heating issues. Emergencies caused by extreme weather conditions affect most of the county.

How Do Emergency Situations Affect School Bus Routes?

Each bus driver has a designated route with specific stops for loading/unloading students. However, bus drivers are given the authority to make the decision not to travel any portion of a route that he/she considers to be unsafe. The regular driver is familiar with his/her route and is qualified to make that determination.

School Board policy prohibits a bus driver from discharging a student from the bus at any stop other than the student's regular bus stop or the student's school unless prior specific permission is given by the parents/guardians in writing to do otherwise. If no specific permission is given, the student(s) will be returned to his/her home school.

What Specific Things Should Parents Do To Assist School Authorities In Emergency Situations?

It is requested that parents assist school authorities by doing the following:

1. Stay informed of schedule changes by local radio/TV stations, the School Closings Emergency/Weather Hotline, Keep in Contact email, Emergency Text line and Washington County webpage.
2. Instead of calling the School Board Office or your child/children's school, information may be obtained through the **School Closings Emergency/Weather Hotline: (276) 676-9669 or (276) 466-4110.**
3. Make plans with your child(ren) and inform school officials as to specific procedures your child(ren) is/are to follow when school schedules are altered. Unless school officials are properly notified in advance, each child will be released from school to return home in the regular manner.

Notification to the school of special procedures for a child to follow should be in writing and signed by a parent/guardian. Only in emergency situations when school officials can verify the identity of the calls will phone calls be accepted as a means to notify the school of special instructions for a child. School Board policy prohibits releasing a child from school to anyone except the child's parent or guardian unless specific permission is given by the parent or guardian to school authorities.

If On Any Given School Day, A School Bus Cannot Deliver A Child To His/Her Home Bus Stop Because Of Road Conditions, How Will Parents Know The Status Of Their Child?

If a bus cannot safely transport a child to his/her home bus stop, each bus driver has been instructed to return the child to the custody of school personnel at the child's school in order to contact the parents/guardians to make other transportation arrangements. If the bus cannot safely return to the child's school, bus drivers have been instructed to go to the nearest school and return the child to the custody of school personnel, who will contact the parents/guardians to make other mutually agreed upon arrangements.

How Will Days Be Made Up That Are Lost Because Of School Closings?

No make-up is required for delayed openings or early dismissals of schools. The Washington County Public School calendar provides for make-up days for full-day closings of schools.

**Should you desire additional information about the emergency closing of schools or bus transportation, please call the school principal or Manager of Transportation Services.
TELEPHONE DIRECTORY**

Abingdon High School - 739-3200
John S. Battle High School - 642-5300
Holston High School - 739-4000
Patrick Henry High School - 739-3700

Damascus Middle School - 739-4100
E.B. Stanley Middle School - 739-3300
Glade Spring Middle School - 739-3800
Wallace Middle School - 642-5400

Abingdon Elementary School - 739-3400
Greendale Elementary School - 739-3500
High Point Elementary School - 642-5600
Meadowview Elementary School - 739-3900
Rhea Valley Elementary School - 739-4200
Valley Institute Elementary School - 642-5500
Watauga Elementary School - 739-3600

Transportation Office - 739-3054

School Board Office - 739-3000
669-7213

**School Closings Hotline - 676-9669
466-4110**

www.wcs.k12.va.us