

## Administrative Procedure 131

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### EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING

#### Background

The safety of students and personnel, in and on school property, when school is in session or during school sponsored activities is paramount.

Schools provide an important public service to the community. Any closure has a significant impact on tens of thousands of families. Most cannot arrange alternate childcare when schools are closed unexpectedly. Consequently, schools will rarely be closed by the Superintendent due to extreme weather conditions (e.g. snow, ice, high winds) or other emergent conditions (e.g. power outage, disruption of water or sewer services, compromised structural integrity of the building due to earthquake or fire) at a particular school that makes it impossible to operate safely.

Recognizing the importance of consistency, good public relations, and effective use of instructional time, the District will endeavour to keep schools open and in session on all regular school days throughout the school year.

#### Procedures

1. The Superintendent or designate, is authorized to close a school, delay the opening time of a school, or dismiss a school early where weather or other conditions might endanger the health or safety of students. The decision will be made in consultation with:
  - 1.1 The Director of Facilities and Planning regarding site and road conditions,
  - 1.2 The Director of Finance and Management Services regarding status of school bus operation; and
  - 1.3 Assistant Superintendents and other sources (i.e. metro District Superintendents) as applicable.
2. To the greatest extent possible, appropriate arrangements shall be made for advising parents and ensuring safety of dismissed students.
3. Trustees shall be advised of significant emergency closings or dismissals as soon as practicable.
4. It is understood that some students travel to school in ways that may not be possible or safe on an extreme weather day. Therefore, no student will be penalized for lack of attendance under such conditions.

## 5. Emergent Conditions Which Occur During the School Day

- 5.1 The Principal will contact the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent should an emergent condition develop during the school day, and the Principal is concerned about the health or safety of students and staff.
- 5.2 With the approval of the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent, the Principal may close the school early in the above circumstance.
- 5.3 The Principal is responsible for ensuring students are not released early from the school's supervision unless reasonable and age-appropriate provisions are made for their safe return home.

## 6. Emergent Conditions Which Develop Overnight

- 6.1 Should emergent conditions develop overnight, the Superintendent or designate may decide to close a school or delay its opening, or close all schools or delay their opening, after consultation with District staff and appropriate authorities.
- 6.2 Staff, students and parents are to assume that schools will be open. Should it become necessary to close schools or delay openings, that decision will be made as early as possible, by no later than 7:00 a.m. on that day.
- 6.3 District-wide school closings or delayed openings will be posted on the District website, a notice recorded on the main District telephone number, and announcement made via the following media outlets:

<b>Radio Stations</b>	<b>TV Stations</b>
C.B.C. AM 690	CTV B.C.
CKNW AM 980	C.B.C.
News AM 1130	City TV
CHQM-FM 103.5	Global B.C.

- 6.4 Once announced, decisions will not be changed except by the Superintendent or designate.
- 6.5 All elementary students and secondary students with special needs, who arrive at a closed school without parents/guardians are to be taken into the school as they arrive and are to be supervised until arrangements have been made with parents/guardians for the students' return home. Secondary students and/or students accompanied by parents/guardians are to return home.

## 7. Communication of School Closure

- 7.1 Should the Communications Manager be unavailable, the following personnel are the designated back-ups (in order of call-out):
  - 7.1.1 Manager of Information Technology Services
  - 7.1.2 Office Technology Coordinator

- 7.2 In September of each year, the Communications Manager will contact media outlets to ensure procedures are in place for notification of valid school closings. Also, if possible, procedures shall be established to ensure that false reports of school closings are caught before they are reported in the media.
- 7.3 Communication with the media (television and radio) regarding emergency school closing, cancellation of buses, delayed openings, cancellation of Continuing Education classes or to advise that schools are open, will be made by the Communications Manager.
- 7.4 The Zone Superintendents or designates will initiate the Emergency Phone Fan-out.
- 7.4.1 The fan out list will be updated in October each year by the Administrative Assistants to the Assistant Superintendents. The list will include both home and cell phone numbers.
- 7.5 The Superintendent or designate will contact the Communications Manager who will:
- 7.5.1 Have the notice posted on the District website;
- 7.5.2 Have the notice recorded on the main District telephone number; and
- 7.5.3 Issue the notice via e-mail message to all staff and trustees.
- 7.6 Where the potential for emergency school closing is identified the previous day, the Superintendent or designate will contact the Communications Manager who will :
- 7.6.1 Have a notice posted on the website advising:
- 7.6.1.1 That a decision will be made by approximately 7:00 a.m. the next morning; and
- 7.6.1.2 That the decision will be posted on the website and reported on media outlets (radio and television stations); and
- 7.6.2 Have a message as per 9.5 above recorded on the main District telephone number.
- 7.7 The Director of Continuing Education will contact the Superintendent or designate for a decision regarding operation of evening/weekend classes. The Director of Continuing Education will contact:
- 7.7.1 The Communications Manager to have a notice posted on the website advising of the status of evening/weekend classes, and have the notice recorded on the main District telephone number and advise the Receptionist at the District Office;
- 7.7.2 Principals with evening/weekend classes to advise of the status of evening/weekend classes (in the event of power outages, contact will need to be by means other than e-mail); and
- 7.7.3 The Manager of Facility Services to confirm or cancel arrangements made for building access and/or custodial services.

## 7.8 Return to Regular Operations

- 7.8.1 Once the Superintendent or designate lifts the emergency school closing, the Communications Manager will remove the notice on the website and restore the message on the main District telephone number.

## 8. Busing

- 8.1 Special needs school buses will attempt to operate on their normal schedule during extreme weather days.
- 8.2 Significant changes to the regular bus schedule as a result of weather conditions will be reported on the District website.
- 8.3 Should the condition of side streets require a change to the operation of special needs school buses or any cancellation of service, media outlets will be notified and affected families will be informed by the bus operator.

## 9. Expectations of Staff

- 9.1 At a minimum, this administrative procedure will be reviewed by the Principal at the first staff meeting each school year.
- 9.2 Supervisors at District work sites such as the District Office, Delta Manor Education Centre and Maintenance Office will review the procedures at least once per school year by the end of October
- 9.3 All employees are expected to report for and/or remain at work during a temporary emergency closing unless otherwise instructed.
- 9.4 If the workplace is deemed unsafe or unhealthy, the Superintendent or designate may close the facility and reassign employees to an alternate location.
- 9.5 If the school remains closed the following day, District officials will develop a plan to address the problem.
- 9.6 Recognizing that individual staff members will have differing views as to when it is safe or not safe to travel to work, to a large extent based on place of residence, the District does not expect staff to report to work when they believe it is unsafe for them to do so. Staff members who do not report to work will need to access any entitlement they may have to paid leave (vacation time, banked time, discretionary days) in order to be paid for the day.
- 9.7 If a staff member is prevented from reporting to work due to a police road closure, they are to report the situation to their principal/supervisor or designate. In this situation, the staff member will be paid for the day.
- 9.8 Staff who do not report to work and who believe they have extenuating circumstances may make written application to the Director of Human Resources explaining those extenuating circumstances and requesting pay for the day.
- 9.9 All teachers, education assistants and school clerical staff who do not report for work must report their absence to the SEMS system as soon as possible.

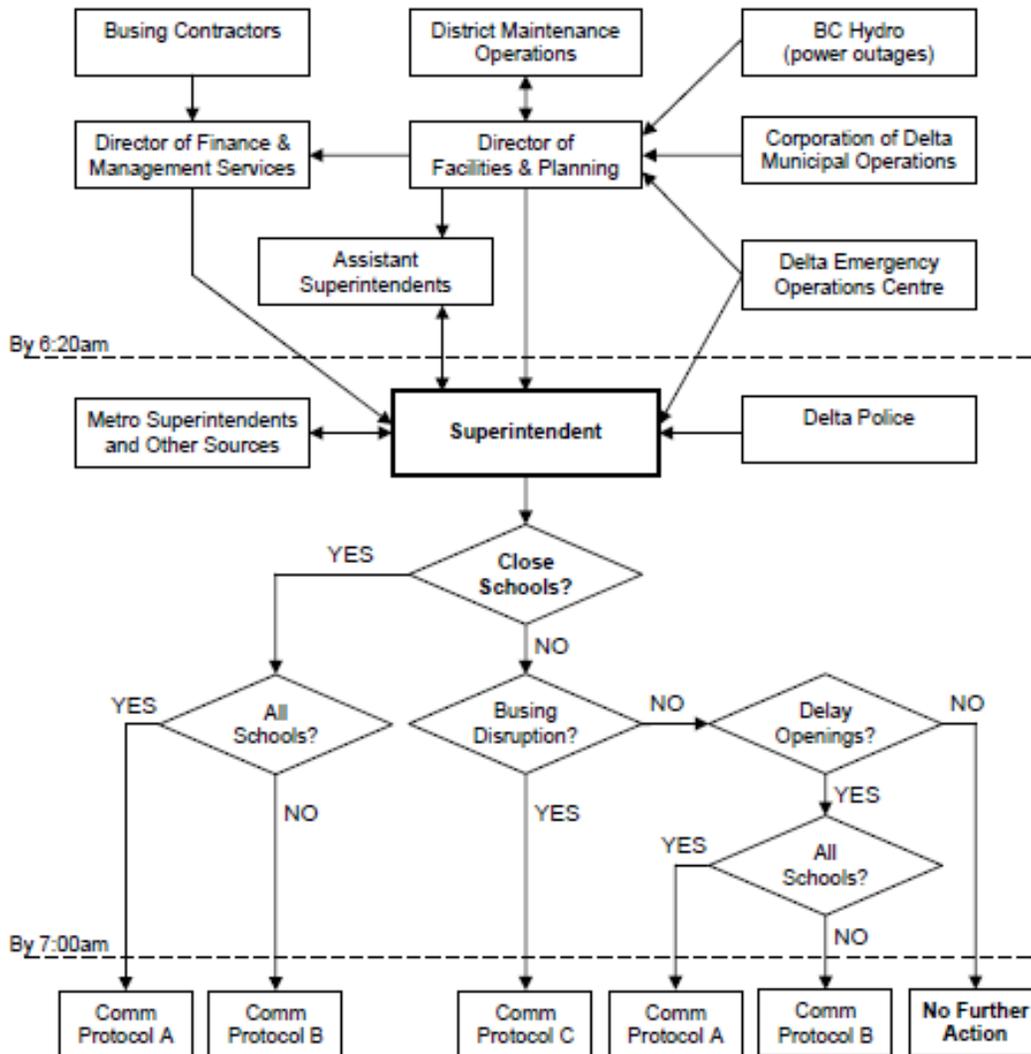
- 9.10 If staff at one (1) or more schools/worksites are advised by the District not to report for work or are sent home, those staff will be paid for the day.
- 9.11 TOC's who have been previously assigned and not cancelled for reasons unrelated to the emergency condition are expected to report to work and will be the first to be re-assigned.
- 9.12 Administrators are expected to report to their buildings in the event of a closure in anticipation that some students will arrive and they will need to be allowed into the building while attempts are made to locate their parents.
- 9.13 Because of the differing nature of custodial staff hours of work, custodial staff unable to attend work must call the Maintenance Office and confirm their absence and the reason for it. If the usual work location is not accessible, custodial staff are to contact the Maintenance Office for instructions. If phone service is unavailable, custodial staff are to report to the nearest work site or refer to the District website if possible, for instruction.
- 9.14 Unless evening Continuing Education classes and user groups are cancelled, custodial staff are to work their regular shifts.

Reference: Section 20, 22, 65, 73, 85, 90 School Act  
School Regulation 265/89

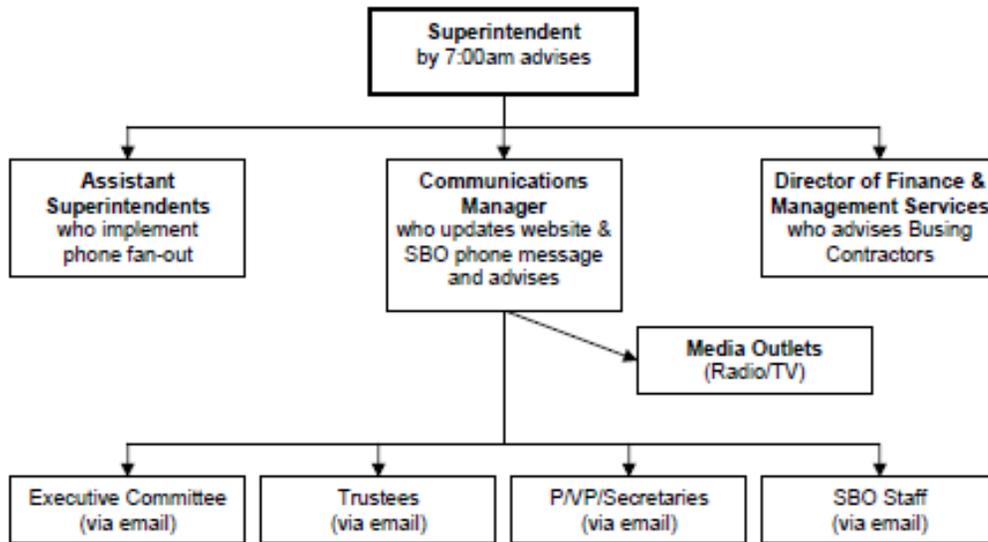
Administrative Procedure 131 – Appendix

**DECISION MATRICES FOR SCHOOL CLOSING**

1. Emergent Conditions Overnight



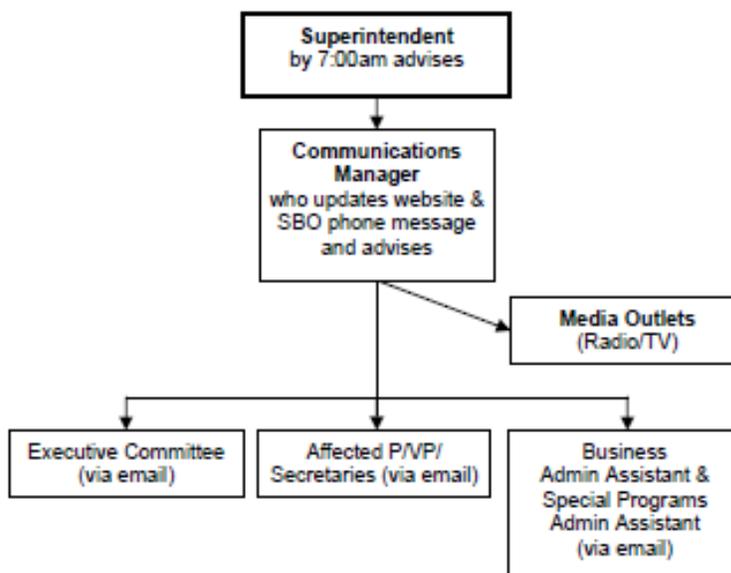
**Communication Protocol A – District School Closing/Delayed Opening**



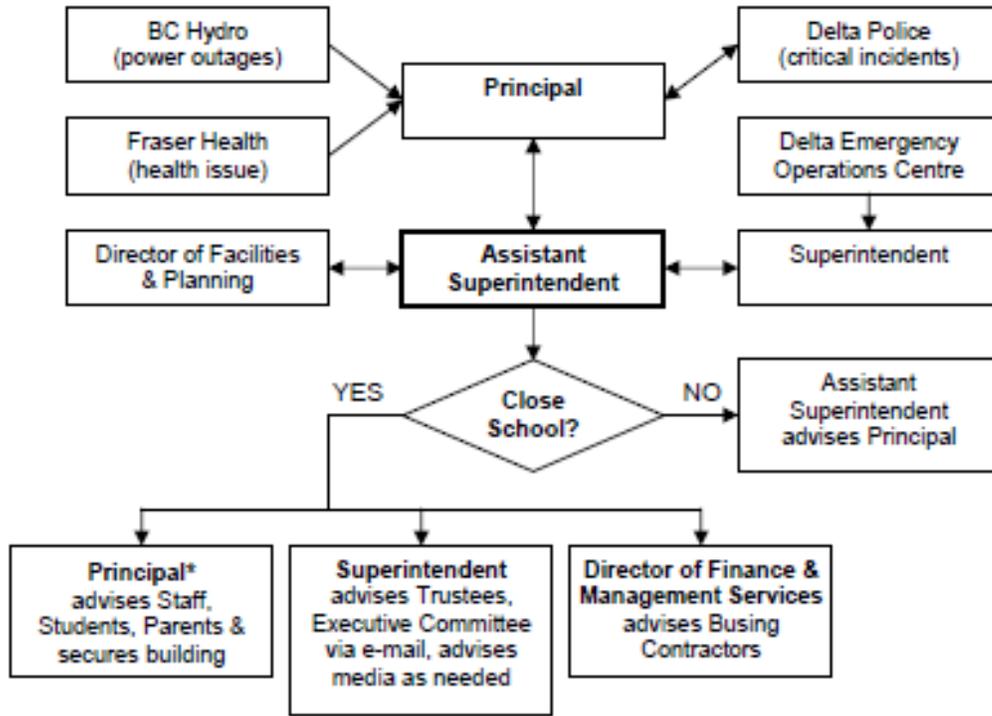
**Communication Protocol B – Individual School Closing/Delayed Opening**

Same as Protocol A, except only specific schools are identified in communications and Assistant Superintendents only contact affected Principals.

**Communication Protocol C – Limited Bus Service**



2. Emergent Conditions During the School Day



The Principal is also responsible for ensuring students are not released early from the school's supervision unless reasonable and age-appropriate provisions are made for their safe return home

Reference: Section 20, 22, 65, 73, 85, 90 School Act  
School Regulation 265/89