

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Emergency closings of the Glen Ridge Public Schools will be based on the health and safety of students and staff and, in the case of winter or other severe storm conditions, on the reasonable ability of the staff to travel. Any decision for an emergency school closing will be made by the Superintendent of Schools or in his absence, by his designee.

Closings will fall into three major categories:

I. Winter, other severe storm conditions, or other emergencies:

- a. **FULL DAY SHUTDOWN** - As soon as practical, administration will determine if most staff can reach school and if parking areas will be reasonably clear. The process also requires a determination on how safe walking will be for students. Road conditions, predicted length of time a storm will continue, and predicted levels of accumulation of snow will all be taken into consideration.

Various agencies will help with information:

- Glen Ridge Police/State Police
- Radio/TV information/weather service reports
- Contacts with nearby school systems - Nutley, Montclair, Bloomfield, Verona, etc.

It should be noted that school districts with major transportation systems would normally be forced to close sooner than Glen Ridge since such transportation imposes additional hazards on student travel. Similarly, special education and vocational education transportation may not operate even though the Glen Ridge Schools are in session. Closing down of this transportation will be a matter between administration and the schools receiving our students.

Please understand that we make the decision to open or close the schools in bad weather based on a careful analysis of all relevant factors such as:

- **Information on road conditions from maintenance staff and the Glen Ridge police.** We must give careful consideration to the most dangerous roads in the district. Even if your street looks clear, travel elsewhere in the district may be dangerous. Also, we must consider that some high school students drive to school.
- **Amount of ice and snow accumulated or other emergency dictates closure.**
- **Whether precipitation is continuing.**
- **Building conditions (such as whether we have electricity and heat).**
- **Parking lot conditions.** Administrators talk to maintenance and custodial staff members who are responsible for clearing and treating school parking lots and sidewalks.
- **Weather predictions.** We prefer not making our decision based on weather predictions, which are not always accurate. But sometimes this is unavoidable.
- **What other school districts are doing.** We also share information with other local districts and check whether they are opening or closing.

The decision to close schools must be made by 5:30 am or earlier so we can notify staff, post the decision on the web-site as well as on the phone system. If we wait longer to announce a closing, some parents will have already left for work, leaving their children unsupervised.

When the decision is made to close, the information will be relayed to parents and staff through **Skylert** which sends out an automated message to whatever mode chosen (home phone, cell phone, email, etc.) It is also recorded on the district **Voice Mail (429-8300)** and posted on the district web-site at www.glenridge.org. The Superintendent will notify the police of school closings. The police will notify the crossing guards.

b. **DELAYED OPENING** - Sometimes, the practical solution to bad weather may be a delayed opening because the later time means less traffic on the roads, better road preparation, particularly following an overnight storm, and an extended time to clear the school parking lots and sidewalks.

A delayed opening means that reporting time for teachers and arrival time for students will be two (2) later later than the regular reporting and starting times. A delayed opening is intended to provide extra travel time for teachers.

Delayed openings will be implemented the same way as a school closing. The police will be notified of any opening hour change to permit rescheduling of crossing guards.

c. **EARLY CLOSING** - Where storms or other emergencies indicate the need for early closing, the following procedure will be used. Early closing will be decided prior to 11:30 AM. Unless conditions dictate otherwise, an early closing would take effect four (4) hours after the regular school starting time. Once again, in making this decision, the health and safety of our students will be of primary importance as well as staff safety in traveling home. When a decision has been made all Principals will be notified by the Superintendent's Office. The Principals will in turn notify the staff of the early closing. Emails will be sent using our building email lists and the Skylert system will be utilized. Please understand that this plan will be used **only** in extreme emergencies.

II. Other Emergencies - Whenever an emergency occurs within a given building that could affect the health and safety of students and staff, the Superintendent will close that building (i.e. heating, plumbing, electrical problems). Once the decision has been made, the closing procedure will be:

- If the emergency occurs before school has opened, the emergency calling, instant alert and e-mail systems for staff and parents will be put into effect.
- If the emergency closing occurs after students and staff are in school, the instant alert and email systems will be put into effect. Staff will stay with the children until every child has been dismissed to a parent or parent designee. Police will be notified to provide crossing guard coverage.
- Keep in mind that even if weather conditions worsen, we cannot reverse our decision in the morning without endangering students. Once we make the decision to open the schools, many parents rely on it and leave for work. If we then send students right back home, many will return to unsupervised, empty houses. If conditions get worse during the school day, we may need to have an early dismissal, but we will give adequate notice to all parents first.

Although my staff and I do our absolute best in this process, we know that often no perfect decision exists. If you do not feel as though it is safe for your child to attend school, use your best judgment on whether he or she should attend. Also, discourage teenagers from driving in bad conditions and offer them alternatives if weather conditions worsen.

I hope that this explanation helps everyone understand the process used to make the best possible decision for everyone in our district.

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