

School Closing, Delay, and Early Dismissal Procedure

The decision to close school, delay start, or dismiss early due to inclement weather conditions is often one of the most difficult decisions the administrative staff has to make. Pendleton County is a large county in area, with varied elevations. This leads to temperature changes throughout the county, which often leads to differing types of precipitation. Weather and road conditions can change between the evening hours and time buses begin travelling their daily routes. Decisions to delay or close must be made before 5:00 AM since bus drivers and cooks are often heading out to begin their morning activities. It is also important to alert parents early so that arrangements for supervision and childcare can be made.

In order to make the most informed decisions, certain procedures are in place. County staff monitors the temperatures and local radar/forecast into the evening hours and early in the morning, contact is made with the Department of Highways, and local bus drivers and volunteers from around the county provide necessary weather information. This information is used to determine whether there is a need for a two-hour delay, three-hour delay, or closure of schools. In some instances, a two or three hour delay may later become a closure if conditions do not improve as predicted.

If a decision is made to delay, close, or dismiss early, an announcement will be made as soon as possible on School Messenger, local radio and television stations, and on the West Virginia Department of Education website (<http://wvde.state.wv.us>). When possible, the decision will be made the night before and information sent out at that time.

All buses are equipped with chains and bus drivers are instructed to “chain up” when road conditions are questionable. Drivers also have the option to avoid making all, or parts of their runs, if they deem that it is too dangerous to do so. In such cases, bus drivers are instructed to contact the transportation supervisor or director and report the conditions and their decision. Efforts are then made to try to contact families along the route. If the bus fails to run, the absence is considered an excused one, and schools shall provide the opportunity for the students to make up work that is missed.

Finally, it is important to note that the parent has a part in the decision making process. If a parent feels that the conditions in his/her part of the county are too dangerous for travel, he/she may choose not to send his/her child. Consideration can also include the amount of time the child waits at the bus stop. Absences due to parental discretion regarding inclement weather conditions shall be considered excused absences if a note is sent in with the explanation of the absence.