



Guidelines for School Delays and Closings Due to Inclement Weather

Beliefs

- Weather conditions are both variable and potentially extreme in northeast Indiana; the safety of children will guide decisions regarding delaying or closing.
- Concrete rules do not exist in making decisions regarding variable and extreme weather; however, these guidelines will serve as a reference for Northwest Allen County Schools (NACS).
- NACS believes in keeping our schools open whenever possible to provide educational services, supervision, and other services, such as accessing breakfast and lunch, for each of our students.
- NACS believes all parents are committed to keeping children safe, and we believe all parents will dress their children appropriately for the existing weather conditions when sending their children to school.
- NACS recognizes that it is first and foremost a parental decision as to whether a child should attend school on inclement weather days.
- NACS respects each parent's determination regarding her/his child's attendance at school during inclement weather. If school is open or delayed because of inclement weather, the school will respect the parent's decision to keep their child at home. Parents are expected to contact the school and inform school officials of their decision, and the student will be counted as absent, as required by Indiana code. Students who are absent because of inclement weather will be given the opportunity to make-up and complete their academic work.

Communication

- On a typical school day, a delay and/or closing will be announced no later than 6:30 a.m.
- Following a delay, if the need to close should arise, it will be announced no later than 8:30 a.m.
- Following the district's Twitter account, @NWAllenSchoolsFW, and the Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/NACSEDUCATION/> are the most immediate means of communication for school delays and/or closings and other information and news related to the district. You are encouraged to follow and like the page to access notices that way.
- Parents can also choose to provide a cell phone number and receive a text message about school delays and/or closings via the School Messenger service. For more information about text notifications, please visit https://www.nacs.k12.in.us/parents/parent_portal.
- Delay/Closing announcements can also be found on the NACS website at [nacs.k12.in.us](https://www.nacs.k12.in.us).
- Media outlets that are contacted and informed of the delay/close decision include:

WANE TV – Channel 15

WBCL Radio – 90.3 FM

WBVR Radio – 98.9 FM

WPTA TV – Channel 21

WOWO Radio – 92.3 FM

WLDE Radio – 101.7 FM

WISE TV – Channel 33

WAJI Radio – 95.1 FM

WKHQ Radio – 105.1 FM

WFFT TV – Channel 55

WMEE Radio – 97.3 FM

WOWO Radio – 1190 AM

Delaying or Closing School Is Based on Multiple Variables

The need for driving slower and allowing additional travel time does not necessarily indicate that conditions are unsafe for travel to or from school. It is understood that varying interpretations and opinions exist regarding “right” decisions to close, delay, or dismiss early. Before a decision is made, as much information is gathered as possible, and it is made within the beliefs communicated on the previous page of this document. NACS is comprised of three townships spanning approximately 108 square miles of northwestern Allen County; it is possible that one part of the district is experiencing safe conditions while another part is not. Likewise, it is possible for other school districts to be experiencing different weather/road conditions than those within NACS. To prepare for the possibility of delayed schedules or school closings due to poor weather/road conditions, please develop alternate plans for childcare. Alternate childcare plans should accommodate the possibility of:

- (a) school closing for the entire day;
- (b) a delay schedule being implemented; and
- (c) the early dismissal of school.

Delays and Early Dismissals

Delay schedules are typically two hours in length because a two-hour delay does not disrupt the end of the day schedule and it does not create the need for a make-up day. Likewise, the earliest school can be dismissed without creating a need to make-up the day is two hours.

eLearning and Make-up Days

Indiana statute requires 180 days of instruction. Make-up days have been statutorily required since the mid-1980s. eLearning is approved as a make-up option; however, NACS is currently limited to no more than three eLearning days during the school year. To comply with this statute, each school closing will result in a make-up or eLearning day. For more information about eLearning days, visit https://www.nacs.k12.in.us/information/elearning_day_information_for_n_a_c_s. Philosophically, we believe instruction at school under the direction of a teacher creates better learning conditions than eLearning activities, yet we appreciate how eLearning can greatly reduce the need to extend the school year and disrupt summer schedules.

- For the 2022-2023 school year, make-up days on the calendar are scheduled for Monday, Feb. 20, Friday, March 10, and Friday, April 21.
- During the first semester, school closings implemented on or before Dec. 14 will likely result in an eLearning day.
- If school is closed during first-semester final exams (Dec. 15 - 20), then Dec. 21 will be a make-up day.
- During the second semester, eLearning days will be implemented first before utilizing the make-up days.
- At this point, the above-mentioned dates are non-school days. However, we reserve the right to use these original make-up days if we use our three allotted eLearning days. (Making plans on these dates could result in disappointment if we need to use it as a make-up day.)

Freezing Rain/Sleet and Dense Fog

The most unpredictable weather variables are freezing rain/sleet and dense fog. Freezing rain/sleet is temperature sensitive and, like dense fog, may be fast occurring; typically, each begins and ends with little notice. When freezing/rain sleet are predicted or when dense fog appears, the decision regarding whether school is delayed, closed, or on a normal schedule will occur at the latest possible time to observe the most current and local conditions.

Snowfall

Snowfall is more predictable than freezing rain/sleet. Because of the variance in actual snowfall when compared to predicted snowfall, the decision regarding school status is not determined until snow accumulation indicates a need for action. Such a decision, except in extreme situations, will generally be made in the morning.

Extreme Snowfall Situations

When snow accumulates to significant levels or is at such a level with more snowfall predicted, then a decision regarding school delay/closing **may** be made the previous evening. A significant level is one in which local city, county, or state authorities have communicated directly with us that it is unlikely for streets, roads, or highways to be cleared and passable the following morning.

Extreme Cold (see included chart from the National Weather Service)

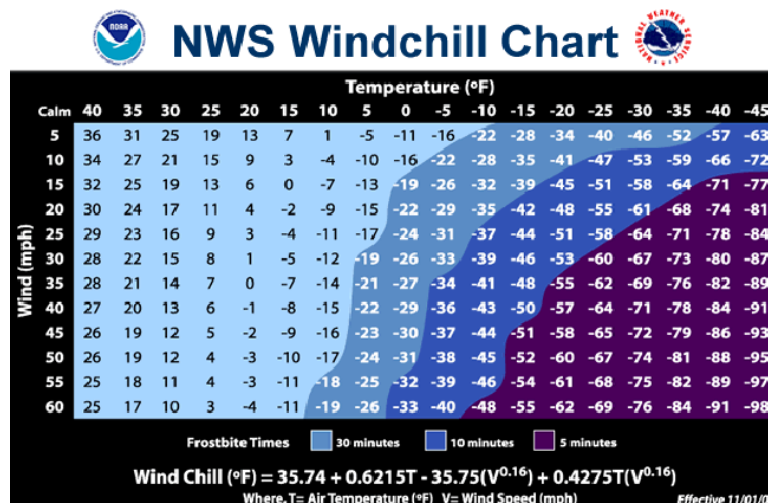
Temperature prediction is increasingly more accurate. NACS uses the hourly temperature predictions for its zip codes from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (noaa.gov – we check conditions from both Fort Wayne International and DeKalb County airports). NACS also uses the Wind Chill Chart provided by the National Weather Service (included with these guidelines) showing when frostbite becomes a concern if bare skin is exposed to frigid temperatures for varying amounts of time.

If the air temperature, as predicted by NOAA, is expected to be –10 degrees Fahrenheit or colder at 6:30 a.m., then a two-hour delay **may** be considered in order to ensure that all buses start and do not experience mechanical difficulties. If the air temperature remains at –10 degrees Fahrenheit or colder at 8:30 a.m., then school **may** be closed depending on how our buses are responding mechanically. Such a determination will be made as early as possible, including the possibility of making and reporting such a determination the previous evening.

Extreme Wind Chill (see included chart from the National Weather Service)

Wind chill predictions are not as accurate as temperature predictions because of the additional variable of wind speed and the variances in wind speed by time and location. While NOAA observations and predictions that we receive are based upon the open conditions at Fort Wayne International and DeKalb County airports, these conditions can vary from actual conditions within the district. Wind chills in areas that are protected from the open winds, such as conditions typically seen in areas with many building structures, like a subdivision, have actual wind chill temperatures less than what is reported in the open conditions present at each of the referenced airports. **Local observations will affect the decision regarding delaying or closing school.**

Based on the Wind Chill Chart provided by NOAA and the National Weather Service, concerns emerge when wind chill temperatures are at or near –20 degrees Fahrenheit with 30 minutes or more of exposure. Since our walking zones are less than 30 minutes, with nearly all being less than 15 minutes, wind chills warmer than –20 degrees Fahrenheit will typically result in remaining on time or open. Wind chill temperatures consistently colder than –30 degrees Fahrenheit we will likely result in a delay or closure. When wind chills are between these two extremes, then the decision will be made as late as possible to gather as much information as possible about local conditions.



Answers to questions frequently asked during previous school years

Q. What are the daily schedule options that will be considered to prevent make-up days?

A. Two-hour delays are the district's preferred delay option. Please refer to information from your respective school in terms of starting and ending times for a 2-hour delay schedule. If you have not already done so, please develop alternate plans for childcare. Alternate childcare plans should accommodate the possibility of:

- (a) school closing for the entire day;
- (b) the implementation of a delay schedule; and
- (c) the early dismissal of school.

The decision regarding whether school will be closed for the entire day, delayed, or closed early is based on the ability of our buses to transport students safely on NACS roads. The decision regarding whether it is safe enough for teenagers to drive is a family decision between each parent and teenager.

Two-hour delays are the most commonly used delay option because the State of Indiana also requires a minimum number of minutes per day. A 2-hour delay complies with Indiana's minimum minute requirement for emergency situations.

Early dismissals are rarely implemented. If weather conditions warrant closing/dismissing school early, then school could be closed as early as two hours before normal dismissal times. This option may be used only if extreme weather conditions jeopardize the ability of NACS to transport students safely to their homes/bus stops at the end of the day. If school is closed early on the same day that began with a delay schedule, then the state will require us to make up the entire day.

Q. Why do all school closings result in a make-up or eLearning day?

A. The reason each school closing results in a make-up or eLearning day is to comply with Indiana statute. Since the mid-1980s, the statutory requirement established by the Indiana General Assembly is that school must be in session for a minimum of 180 days.

Q. Will the high school commencement ceremony be rescheduled?

A. If the number of make-up days required by the State of Indiana extends beyond the current date, then yes, the commencement ceremony will be rescheduled so that all students can meet Indiana's attendance requirements and graduation requirements before the ceremony. The last day of the 2022-2023 school year is currently scheduled on May 26, and the commencement ceremony is currently scheduled to take place on June 4.

Q. Can we extend each day a few minutes in order to make-up school closings?

A. No. In addition to being open a minimum number of minutes each day, Indiana statute requires schools to be open for student instruction a minimum of 180 days. To allow the lengthening of school days to serve as an option for making up school closings or reducing the number of instructional days, a change in state statute is required.

Q. Will Saturdays be used for making up school closings?

A. No. The option of using Saturdays to make up school closings has been previously considered. However, because of SAT and ACT test administrations, LEGO League/robotics team competitions, academic team competitions, speech and debate team competitions, band and choir contests, FFA and 4-H participation and competitions, culinary arts competitions, little league participation, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts activities, IHSAA tournament games, track meets, tennis and golf matches, baseball and softball games, and numerous other school and personal family activities scheduled on Saturdays throughout February, March, April, May, and June, NACS will not recommend the implementation of Saturday school for the purposes of making up emergency/weather related school closings.

Q. Have steps been taken to reduce the need for extending the school year beyond the currently scheduled last day of school?

A. Yes. eLearning will be used to avoid needing to extend the school year beyond currently scheduled last day of the school year.

During the first semester, school closings implemented on or before Dec. 14 will likely result in an eLearning day. If school is closed during first-semester final exams (Dec. 15 – 20), then the Dec. 21 make-up day will be implemented.

During the second semester, eLearning days will be implemented first before utilizing the make-up days. For the 2022-2023 school year, make-up days on the calendar are scheduled for Monday, Feb. 20, Friday, March 10, and Friday, April 21.

Q. On some days when school is delayed or closed, my roads are fine, so why the delay or closing?

- A. NACS is comprised of about 108 square miles within Eel River, Lake, and Perry townships in Allen County. Although conditions may be fine in one geographic part of the district, another part may be experiencing unsafe conditions. Many times, conditions in the rural sections of the district are different than the conditions within the subdivisions. Weather forecasts and road conditions throughout the entire school district are evaluated before making a decision to delay or close school.

Q. How are decisions about delaying and/or closing determined?

- A. The decision about school being closed or delayed is based on whether our buses can safely transport students on NACS roads and whether students residing in walk-to-school-zones can do so within a timeframe that minimizes the likelihood of potential frostbite. The decision regarding whether it is safe enough for teenagers to drive is a family decision between each parent and teenager.

The buses purchased by our school corporation maximize safety features to insure the safest possible transporting of our students. Likewise, our bus drivers participate in ongoing training opportunities to increase the likelihood of safe driving in various road conditions. Our buses and bus drivers must annually demonstrate proficiency by meeting statutory requirements as audited and measured by the Indiana State Police. Despite the safety features of our buses and the training that our drivers receive, there are some road conditions that are not conducive for safe transporting of students. Typically, ice, drifting snow, and reduced visibility are the primary reasons for delays and closings.

Each morning between 4:30 a.m. and 6:30 a.m., road and weather conditions are monitored. Several NACS employees monitor the actual road and weather conditions. Each of the employees drives on roads in different parts of the district so that a picture of the entire district is developed. We also obtain road condition reports from bus drivers as they travel to the transportation facility and first student pick-up location to determine how conditions might be changing. Weather reports from multiple sources are monitored, and information from city, county, and state road crews is obtained. Our primary resource for weather conditions and forecasts is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (noaa.gov – we check conditions from both Fort Wayne International and DeKalb County airports).

Our goal is to make a decision regarding delays and closings by 6 a.m. each day; however, with changing road and weather conditions, the decision may be delayed until as late as 6:30 a.m. In some instances, a delay may be announced to afford more time to monitor changing road and weather conditions. In these instances, a decision to close may be determined as late as 8:30 a.m. On days that a delay schedule is implemented and later changed to a closing, road conditions either worsened, or despite the best efforts of county, city, or state road crews, roadways were not adequately cleared or treated. Schools will be open **only** if our bus drivers can safely navigate buses on roads within NACS. The decision on whether it is safe enough for teenagers to drive is a family decision between each parent and her/his teenager.