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 believes our community expects schools to be open each day providing educational services, supervision, and other services, such as access to breakfast to lunch, to 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 or not a child should attend school on inclement weather days.
- NACS respects the 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 determination, and the student will be counted as absent, per Indiana code. Students who are absent due to inclement weather will be given the opportunity to complete their academic work.

Communication

- On a normal 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, @NWAAllenSchoolsFW, is the most immediate means of communication for school delays and/or closings and other information and news related to the district.
- 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/about_us/delays_and_closings_information.
- Delay/Closing announcements can also be found on the district’s website at www.nacs.k12.in.us.
- Media outlets that are contacted and informed of the delay/close decision include:

  - WANE TV – Channel 15
  - WPTA TV – Channel 21
  - WISE TV – Channel 33
  - WFFT TV – Channel 55
  - WBCL Radio – 90.3 FM
  - WOWO Radio – 92.3 FM
  - WAII Radio – 95.1 FM
  - WMEE Radio – 97.3 FM
  - WBYR Radio – 98.9 FM
  - WLDE Radio – 101.7 FM
  - WKKQ Radio – 105.1 FM
  - 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 in terms of a “right” decision regarding whether or not to delay the start of school, dismiss early, or close for the entire day. However, 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 measuring about 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, please develop alternate plans for child care. Alternate child care 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.

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

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 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 early. Three-hour delays will only be considered when the winter is severe and requires an abnormal number of school closings; in this case, three-hour delays may be implemented to decrease the need for additional make-up days. As a reminder, in order to comply with state statute, three-hour delays also result in dismissal occurring one hour later than normal dismissal times.

E-Learning and Make-up Days

Indiana statute requires 180 days of instruction. Make-up days have been statutorily required since the mid-1980s. E-Learning was recently approved as a make-up option. To comply with Indiana statute, each school closing will result in a make-up or e-Learning day. For more information about e-Learning days, please visit:

https://www.nacs.k12.in.us/about_us/e_learning_day_information_for_n_a_c_s.

During the first semester, school closings implemented on or before Dec. 13 will result in an e-Learning day. If school is closed during the week of final exams (Dec. 16 – 19), then the Dec. 20 make-up day will be implemented.

During the second semester, make-up days will be implemented first and e-Learning days will not be implemented until the make-up days are exhausted. An exception to using make-up days before e-Learning days could be implemented if the long-range weather forecast indicates a likelihood that three or more consecutive school closings may need to be implemented. Despite the use of E-Learning days, the school year may be extended if we experience an unusually severe winter requiring an inordinate number of school closings, such as the winter of 2014. Philosophically, we believe instruction at school under the direction of a teacher creates far better conditions for learning than e-Learning activities. However, we recognize that e-Learning can greatly reduce the need to disrupt summer schedules by reducing the need to extend the school year.

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, fast-occurring; each begins and ends with little notice. When freezing/rain sleet are predicted or when dense fog appears, the decision regarding whether or not school is delayed/closed will occur at the latest possible time in an effort to observe the most current and local conditions.

Snowfall

Snowfall is more predictable than freezing rain/sleet. Meteorologists typically give predictions within 2-4-inch variances (i.e., predictions such as 1-3, 3-6, 4-8). Because of the variance in actual snowfall when compared to predicted snowfall, the decision regarding school status is not determined until the 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 by 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 code 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 from the NOAA and 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 2-hour delay may be considered in order to insure 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 being reported 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 buildings 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 typically denote we will remain on time or open. Wind chill temperatures clearly and consistently colder than -30 degrees Fahrenheit denote we will likely delay or close. When wind chills are between these two extremes, then the decision will be made as late as possible in order to gather as much information about local conditions as possible.
Frequently Asked Questions about School Delays, Closings and e-Learning

Q. What are the delay options that will be considered in order to prevent make-up days?

A. Two-hour delays are most common and 3-hour delays are rare. Please refer to information from your respective school in terms of starting and ending times for a 2-hour delay schedule. A 3-hour delay schedule will only be implemented if the severity of the winter warrants its use to decrease the number of make-up days and avoid the need of extending the school year beyond the established date of the high school commencement ceremony. If you have not already done so, please develop alternate plans for child care. Alternate child care 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, 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 requires a minimum number of minutes per day. A 2-hour delay complies with Indiana’s minimum minute requirement for emergency situations.

If a 3-hour delay is implemented, which is rare but possible, an additional hour also be added to the end of the instructional day. This additional hour at the end of the day is required to comply with Indiana’s daily minimum minute requirement. Because this option disrupts morning and afternoon family schedules, it will only be used during extreme winters to avoid additional make-up days.

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 safely transport students 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. Is e-Learning being considered as an option for making up days?

A. Yes, over the past two years, NACS completed implementation of 1:1 computing, and teachers converted many learning activities into a digital format; therefore, e-Learning will be implemented as described below. For more information about e-Learning days, please visit: https://www.nacs.k12.in.us/about_us/e_learning_day_information_for_n_a_c_s.

During the first semester, school closings implemented on or before Dec. 13 will result in an e-Learning day. If school is closed during the week of final exams (Dec. 16 – 19), then the Dec. 20 make-up day will be implemented.

During the second semester, make-up days will be implemented first and e-Learning days will not be implemented until the make-up days are exhausted. An exception to using make-up days before e-Learning days could be implemented if the long-range weather forecast indicates a likelihood that three or more consecutive school closings may need to be implemented.

Despite the use of e-Learning days, the school year may be extended if we experience an unusually severe winter requiring an inordinate number of school closings, such as the winter of 2014. Philosophically, we believe instruction at school under the direction of a teacher creates far better conditions for learning than e-Learning activities. However, we recognize that e-Learning can greatly reduce the need to disrupt summer schedules by reducing the need to extend the school year.

Q. Why do all of the school closings result in a make-up or e-Learning day?

A. The reason each school closing results in a make-up or e-Learning 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. According to state statute, “public schools that do not conduct at least 180 instructional days during a school year shall have the subsequent August tuition support distribution reduced to reflect the actual amount of instructional days provided.”

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

A. Yes. During the 2019-2020 school year, e-learning will be used and four make-up days have been included in the calendar. The make-up days for 2019-2020, if needed, are scheduled on Dec. 20, Feb. 17, March 13, and April 10. If these make-up days are not needed, then these days will be treated as holidays. If we experience an unusually severe winter requiring an inordinate number of school closings, then the school year could be extended beyond the originally scheduled last day of school, May 29, to comply with Indiana statutes regarding the minimum number of instructional days.
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. During the 2013-2014 school year, the State granted waivers permitting this action; however, this option is not in statute and the waiver applied only during the 2013-2014 school year.

Q. Will Saturdays be used for making up school closings?
A. No. Consideration and investigation of this option was considered a few years ago. 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. 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 school is currently scheduled on May 29, and the commencement ceremony is currently scheduled to take place on June 7.

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 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 regarding whether school will be closed or delayed is based on whether our buses can safely transport students on NACS roads. The decision on 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 them 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. 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 6:00 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. School will be in session only if our bus drivers can safely navigate buses on the NACS roads. The decision on whether it is safe enough for teenagers to drive is a family decision between each parent and teenager.