



Greetings!

Now that winter weather is upon us, the following information about inclement winter weather and potential school delays and closure should be informative. Please take a moment to read this important information.

How does distance learning affect potential school delays or closures due to inclement weather?

Staff safety is a concern during distance learning and inclement weather. Although many teachers and instructional staff teach from home, this is not true for all teachers and instructional staff. Some teachers and many instructional staff need to come to school to access materials and technology. Nutrition services staff who prepare meals, transportation staff who help deliver meals via bus routes, and maintenance and custodial staff who work to keep our facilities safe and clean must all come in to perform their work on site. Please be aware that given that the majority of district staff need to report to work to perform their job, *even in distance learning*, we may still have school delays or closures due to inclement weather.

School Closures and delays due to inclement weather- How is the decision made?

School closures and delays

Our district administration and staff understand that our decision to open and close schools during inclement weather has a large impact on families. We also understand that our students are better served, both academically and socially by being in school. However, as always, our top priority is the safety of our students and staff.

How is the decision made?

When there is the potential for winter storm weather the district transportation director is out early in the morning surveying the roads. The superintendent is in contact with staff at the county and city road departments to gather current information about the roads. The decision to open, delay or close schools in bad weather is based on careful analysis of relevant information such as:

- Existing road conditions across the county and city. We must give careful consideration to the most weather-impacted roads in the district; they can be treacherous even if your street or road looks clear.
- Amount of snow and ice that has accumulated, whether it will continue, and the amount of time required for road crews to clear the county and city roads.
- Temperature and windchill.
- Weather predictions – the district prefers not making decisions based on weather predictions, which are not always accurate; however, weather predictions are considered in combination with existing weather and road conditions.
- School parking lots and sidewalk conditions.
- Will the current conditions likely improve or deteriorate based on the forecasted weather.

Who makes the decision?

The Superintendent is ultimately responsible for the final decision based on the above factors and recommendations from the director of transportation.

When is the decision made?

We work to make the decision regarding school closure and delays by 5:00 am. In some cases, we can make a decision to close or delay the night before but those are special exceptions as conditions can change or improve significantly over night. Keep in mind that unusual weather conditions may force us to make decisions about closures and delays after this time.

When is a delay decided instead of a closure?

We may utilize 2-hour delayed starts. A two-hour delayed start allows for county and city road crews to improve road conditions. We realize that this can be a burden to some families but if a delayed start of two hours allows for the roads to be more safely traveled so students can attend school then this option will be utilized. This also allows time for district maintenance and custodial staff to clear parking lots and sidewalks for the safety of students and staff. Also, please note that there will be no breakfast served on delayed start days.

How is the public notified?

North Wasco County school district will announce delays/closures will be published as below:

- Delay and/or closure information will be posted on the District's main website page and on each school's main website page.
- Flashalert will be notified (TV banners - we are listed as North Wasco County Schools).
- Schools will send out a Remind message.
- An email will be sent out to all district staff from the District Office.
- Information will be posted on the District's Twitter (@NWCS21)
- Information will be posted on the District's Facebook (www.facebook.com/northwascoschools).
- Information will be sent for announcement on local radio stations (KACI, KODL, KYT, KZAS (Radio Tierra) and KIHR).
- Communication will be sent to: school board members, law enforcement agencies, media, Columbia Gorge ESD, CG Community College, Headstart, Dufur SD, St. Mary's Academy, Mosier Community School, Riverbend Community School, District 21 Emergency Contact List & Key Communicators List.
- Voicemail messages on school building office phones will be switched by the IT Dept. to reflect the delay or closure. Messages will be in both English and Spanish.
- If students are in CDL: The closure voicemail message will include meals will not be distributed that day.

What is my responsibility during inclement weather?

- Monitor the weather conditions snow, ice or freezing rain is in the forecast.
- Monitor the notification channels (Remind, Facebook, TV News, local radio stations, etc.) to be sure to know if there is a delay/closure.
- Ensure your child is dressed for the weather for walking to school, waiting at the bus stop, etc.
- On delayed start days ensure your child has eaten breakfast at home.
- Please discourage teenagers from driving in unsafe road conditions.

Although I will do my absolute best in this process, I also know that often no perfect decision exists. If you do not feel that it is safe for your child to get to school use your best judgment whether or not he or she should attend. As per district policy, an excused absence will be accepted if a parent chooses to keep their student home. If you choose to keep your child at home, please call the school to excuse your child's absence.

Sincerely,

Theresa Peters
Interim Superintendent
North Wasco County School District #21