

December 22, 2008

Dear Parents and Guardians:

The winter season is upon us. Our district staff understands that our decision to open or close schools in bad weather has a big effect on families. We also understand that our students are better served-both academically and socially-by being in school. Our top priority is always the safety of students.

When is the decision made?

The decision is made by 5:30 a.m. or earlier so we can notify radio and TV stations and post the decision on our Web Site (www.eastpenn.k12.pa.us). If we wait longer to announce a closing, some parents will have already left for work, leaving their children unsupervised.

How is the public notified?

In the event of inclement weather, the **Emergency Call Out System (AlertNow)** will be employed to contact parents and staff. Information will also be available through regular channels (website, Information Line, WFMZ, etc.). This means that parents will receive a phone call at approximately 5:30 a.m. regarding the status of the school day. **Parents may opt out of the AlertNow System if they send a written note to their child's school office.** Please understand that removal from the system means you will not receive calls relative to an emergency situation.

Tune to **WFMZ (Soft Rock 100.7; 107.5 Alive; 99.9 The Hawk; Cat Country 96; Channel 69)** for up-to-date information or call the **East Penn Information Line at (610) 966-8480**. Do not call the school or the district office unless it is an emergency.

How do we make the decision?

The decision to open or close the schools in bad weather is based on a careful analysis of all relevant factors, such as:

- **Information on road conditions from transportation staff.** Careful consideration must be given to the most dangerous roads in the district. Even if your street looks clear, travel elsewhere in the district may be dangerous. We also consider that some high school students drive to school.
- **Amount of snow and ice accumulated.**
- **Whether precipitation is expected to continue.**
- **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.
- **Temperature and wind chill.** Please remember that some of our students walk to school and some must walk outside to the bus.
- **Weather predictions.** We prefer to not make decision based on weather predictions that may not always be accurate. However, 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.

Who makes the decision?

As Superintendent of Schools, I am responsible for the final decision, based on the above factors and recommendations from the bus transporter.

Will we close school if conditions worsen?

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. **Please have a plan in place in the event that students are dismissed during the day.**

We hope that this explanation helps everyone understand the process and how the public is notified (see above). Our district staff makes the best possible decision with the weather information available at the time.

Very truly yours,

Thomas L. Seidenberger, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools