

January 10, 2008

## Countywide eSchoolnewsletter

Dear Parents/Guardians and Citizens:

I understand that the decision to open or close schools in inclement weather has a big affect on families. I also understand that our students are better served, both academically and socially, by being in school. However, my top priority is the safety of our students.

I listed below some common questions I receive during this time of year and my responses. I hope this information is helpful to you.

### **Who makes the decision?**

As Superintendent of Schools, I am responsible for the final decision based on recommendations from the Director of Transportation Services.

### **How do we make our decision?**

When we are advised by the weather service that storm conditions exist, 3 to 4 Transportation officials are sent out at 3:00 a.m. to survey the roads. Each section of the county is driven to determine if the roads are, or will be, safe for children to travel on school buses. Transportation staff is in constant contact with the weather bureau, county and state government staff, police, Transportation officials in other counties, and each other during the road and weather assessment.

While on the road, the following factors are used to develop the recommendation for closing schools:

- Existing road conditions across the entire county. Remember, even if your street or road looks clear, travel elsewhere in the county may be dangerous.
- Amount of snow and ice that has accumulated and whether it will continue.
- Temperature and wind chill.
- Weather predictions. We prefer not making our decision based on weather predictions, which are not always accurate. However, weather predictions are considered in combination with existing conditions.
- School parking lots (both student and staff).
- Other traffic (other traffic can slide into buses or make waiting at bus stops dangerous).
- Other factors specific to the current weather pattern or conditions.

### **How is the public notified?**

The school system has a list that provides parents and students with the radio and TV stations that will have up-to-date information on school closings. We will also send a notice out on eSchoolnewsletter. Parents can sign up to receive eSchoolnewsletter at [www.eschoolnewsletter.com](http://www.eschoolnewsletter.com) at no charge. You can also check the school system website at <http://www.carrollk12.org/>

### **When is the decision made?**

Normally, Transportation officials that are surveying road conditions will contact me at 5:00 a.m. to bring me up-to-date on the weather situation. I make my decision no later than 6:00 a.m.

### **Will we close schools when weather conditions worsen?**

Keep in mind that even if weather conditions change, we cannot reverse our decision during the morning run without affecting students and their parents and/or families.

Once we make the decision to open schools, many parents rely on this decision and leave for work. If we decide to send students back home, many may return to unsupervised conditions. When weather conditions change during the school day, we may need to have an early dismissal. We will strive to give adequate notice to parents first.

Please discourage teenagers from driving to and from school in adverse weather conditions.

We transport over 28,000 students to and from school every school day using more than 350 buses. I know there is no perfect decision when deciding to close schools, but I will always make my decision with the safety of each student in mind.

I hope this explanation helps everyone understand the process that we use to make the best possible decision concerning weather-related school closings.

Sincerely,

Charles I. Ecker  
Superintendent of Schools

**Emergency School Closing Information:**  
<https://www.eschoolnewsletter.com/emergency.asp>