



**Office of the Superintendent**  
Billings Public Schools  
415 North 30<sup>th</sup> Street  
Billings, Montana 59101-1298  
Phone: (406) 281-5065 Fax: (406) 281-6187

## **Weather-Related School FAQs**

When schools are affected by weather, parents often have many questions. Below are some frequently asked questions and answers to help guide families during inclement weather:

### **1. How will we be notified if school is canceled or delayed?**

Parents will receive notifications through ParentSquare and the district's Facebook page. If you are not receiving updates, please ensure your contact information is updated in PowerSchool, and that you have a ParentSquare account.

### **2. What factors determine whether school is canceled or delayed?**

Student, staff, and community safety is our top priority. Several factors are carefully evaluated before making a decision, including:

- **Temperature:** Extremely cold temperatures, especially with windchill, can pose safety risks for students waiting at bus stops or walking to school. We monitor temperature forecasts and consider delays or cancellations when temperatures reach unsafe levels.
- **Precipitation:** Snow, ice, or rain can significantly impact road conditions, making travel dangerous. We assess expected accumulation and its impact on roads and sidewalks, including freezing rain conditions.
- **Windchill:** The perceived temperature due to wind can make conditions feel much colder, increasing the risk of frostbite or hypothermia.
- **Road Conditions:** In coordination with local transportation agencies, we assess whether roads are passable and if they have been treated to ensure safe travel.
- **Visibility:** Heavy snow, fog, or rain can impact drivers and pedestrians, making travel hazardous.
- **Bus Operations:** The ability of school buses to operate safely is a key factor. If road conditions are unsafe for buses, we may implement delays or cancellations. Additionally, extreme cold (-32°F) may affect diesel engine performance.

We work closely with the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)**, local public safety officials, and emergency responders to gather weather data and ensure a well-informed decision.

### **3. What time will the decision be made?**

We aim to make and announce weather-related decisions by 9:00 PM the night before whenever possible. However, if conditions change unexpectedly, decisions may be made in the early morning and communicated as soon as possible.

#### **4. Is there a specific amount of snow or ice that triggers a cancellation?**

There is no set threshold, as multiple factors influence the decision. In addition to snowfall accumulation, we also consider:

- Windchill and humidity levels that may worsen the impact of cold weather.
- Road conditions in collaboration with local transportation agencies and our bus provider, First Student.
- NOAA weather forecasts to assess worsening conditions.
- Bus safety and operability in extreme cold or icy conditions.

Each weather event is unique, and we evaluate all these factors before making a decision.

#### **5. Will there be online learning if school is canceled?**

At this time, we do not have an online learning platform established to offer remote instruction for our 16,500 students.

#### **6. Will school buses operate if there is a delay or snowstorm?**

Yes, unless stated otherwise. However, during extreme cold, bus operations may be limited. This could include modified stops, adjusted schedules, or full cancellation of bus services. Any changes will be communicated via ParentSquare, the district's Facebook page, and our website.

#### **7. How does the school handle early dismissals due to weather?**

Although we do not anticipate early dismissals, in the event of a weather-related emergency, we would implement our early release protocols, following a schedule similar to our Wednesday early release.

#### **8. Can my child stay home if we don't feel safe sending them in bad weather?**

Yes. While we strive to make the best safety decision for the district, parents always have the final say in whether their child attends school during severe weather conditions.

We aim to keep schools open whenever possible to ensure students continue their education. However, we understand that certain students—such as those who are immunocompromised or have transportation challenges—may need to make individual decisions. Parents can excuse their child's absence if they feel it is unsafe to attend.

#### **9. Will after-school activities still take place if school is canceled or delayed?**

All after-school activities will proceed as scheduled unless otherwise notified. Any changes will be communicated through ParentSquare and other district communication channels.

#### **10. Will students be allowed to make up for missed work?**

Yes. Students will be given the opportunity to make up missed work to ensure they stay on track with their learning.

## **11. How can we prepare our children for unexpected weather-related school changes?**

To help your child stay prepared for sudden weather-related changes:

- Download ParentSquare for school notifications and updates.
- Use the StopFinder app to track the bus and receive transportation alerts.
- Ensure contact information (email and phone number) is updated in PowerSchool.
- Wait with your child at the bus stop during winter weather in case of delays.
- Dress your child in layers and warm clothing for cold weather conditions.