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RAINIER SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

The winter weather 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. But as always, our top priority is the safety of our students.

HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DECISION?

Please understand that we make the decision to open or close the schools in bad weather based on a careful analysis of all relevant factors, such as:

- Information on road conditions from transportation staff and from the police. We must give careful consideration to the most dangerous roads in the district. Even if your street looks clear, travel elsewhere in the district may be dangerous. Also, we must consider that some high school students drive to school.
- Amount of snow and ice accumulated.
- Whether precipitation is continuing.
- 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 wait outside for the bus.
- Weather predictions. We prefer not to make our decision based on weather predictions, which are not always accurate. But 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 director of transportation and the director of building facilities.

HOW IS THE PUBLIC NOTIFIED?

Information will be posted district on the Rainier School District website www.rainier.wednet.edu and Facebook page (@rainierschooldistrict). Families will also be notified by text, voice and email if you are in our automated system. You can also tune to local radio stations (KGY 95.3 and MIXX 96.1 FM radio) for up-to-date information on school closings. Please do not call the school unless it is an emergency.

WHEN IS THE DECISION MADE?

I must make the decision by 6:15 am or earlier so we can post the decision on our website and social platforms as well as notify radio and TV stations. If I wait longer to announce a closing, some parents will have already left for work, leaving their children unsupervised.

TRANSPORTATION

When there are icy or snowy conditions, buses will run on designated snow routes. Check out the transportation web site for snow route information.
If you or your teenager normally drives to school, your student is welcome to take the bus on snowy or icy days. Our bus transportation will pick up and drop all Rainier School District students at designated bus stops. You may call Transportation at 360-446-2209 or check our website for route information.
https://www.rainier.education/departments/transportation/snow-routes

WILL WE CLOSE SCHOOL IF CONDITIONS WORSEN?

Keep in mind, even if weather conditions worsen, we cannot reverse our decision in the morning without endangering students. Once we make the decision to open the schools, many parents rely on it and leave for work. If we then send students right back home, many will return to unsupervised bus stops and empty houses. 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.

Although my staff and I do our absolute best in this process, we know that often no perfect decision exists. If, based on current weather conditions, you do not feel as though it is safe for your child to attend school, use your best judgment on whether he or she should attend. Also, discourage teenagers from driving in bad conditions and offer them alternatives if weather conditions worsen.

We hope that this explanation helps everyone understand the process that our district staff uses to make the best possible decision for all in our district.

Sincerely,

Bryon Bahr
Superintendent
Rainier School District