



Dear Great Falls Public Schools Parents,

**RE: School Disruptions Due to Weather and Emergencies**

Unfortunately, there is always the potential of unforeseen emergencies such as threats, natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, tornadoes), hazardous material breaches (chemical spills, gas leaks, refinery accidents), and unpredictable weather. While the potential exists, *all students, parents and school employees should assume, even during emergencies, that school will be in session and buses will be running as scheduled unless there is official notification from the Superintendent to the contrary.*

To achieve the maximum safety for all children and the efficiency of operations, the Superintendent may order the:

- Cancellation of some or all bus routes
- Delay of some or all bus routes
- Closure of school(s)
- Delay of school start
- Early dismissal of school

In making these decisions, the District believes that in most cases, schools are a safe place for students. The District also believes that school buses are very safe for children as they are heavy, well maintained and driven by well-trained and qualified individuals. It is also important to note that the closure of school is a serious decision and one that is rarely made. The District will take a variety of factors into consideration. See this website for more information about these factors: [www.gfps.k12.mt.us/students/safety](http://www.gfps.k12.mt.us/students/safety).

Other pertinent information with the titles “Parent Square” and “GFPS In Case of Crisis Manager App” can be found at this link. Hard copies of that information have also been sent with this letter.

Keeping in mind that bad weather and unforeseen emergencies can happen at any time and that disruptions to school schedules require the District to distribute information to a lot of people in a very short amount of time, please **seek out** information if you have any question as to what is happening. If it is deemed appropriate to put into effect any of the above mentioned actions, you should look for notification here instead of calling the school as they are not staffed to answer hundreds of phone calls:

- \*Mass phone and/or voicemail notification from the GFPS automated attendance system: Parent Square
- GFPS Twitter: @GFPublicSchools
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GreatFallsPublicSchools>
- GFPS Website: [www.gfps.k12.mt.us](http://www.gfps.k12.mt.us)
- Media Twitter and websites: @KRTV, [www.krtv.com](http://www.krtv.com), @KFBB, [www.kfbb.com](http://www.kfbb.com), @GFTribune, [www.greatfallstribune.com](http://www.greatfallstribune.com)
  - Please be aware we have no control over when/if the media posts or announces this information.
- Radio Stations: FM: 92.9, 94.5, 97.9, 98.9, 101.7, 102.7, 104.9, and 106.1  
AM: 560 and 1450
  - Please be aware that GFPS has no control over radio station announcements.
- Call 406-268-6444 for a recorded phone message (you may reach a busy signal depending on caller volume)

Please note: **If the decision is to operate as usual, there will NOT be postings or announcements.**

**\*Parent Square notifications will only be made when large groups of parents need to do something (i.e. keep students home, pick students up, etc.). Mass phone and voicemail notifications are not sent for announcements that do not require parents to take action of some kind. For more information about the Parent Square, use the link above. For Parent Square to work, it is essential that parents keep the school updated on any changes in contact information.**

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The District may also implement other safe schools protocols to include shelter-in-place, class hold, lockdown, evacuation, and release with care. These protocols are described here: [www.gfps.k12.mt.us/students/safety](http://www.gfps.k12.mt.us/students/safety). Please note, that in the case of most shelters-in-place and class holds, no action is required of parents. These are

usually imposed due to factors not directly related to the school and are precautionary only. If parent action is required for any of the safe schools protocols, the Parent Square notification system will be utilized.

As parents, you are the final authority as to whether or not you believe it is safe for your child to get to school. If you believe that it is too cold or the snow is too deep or the weather is too unsettled, your decision may be to keep your child home. **You have the right and responsibility to make attendance decisions for your children based on your individual circumstances.** Please notify your student's school as you would for any other absence.

Along with this letter is a REFRIGERATOR NOTE. It is a shortened version of this information for you to keep handy.

Each school has inclement weather procedures regarding building entrance upon arrival, recesses and bus dismissal waiting areas. Please consult your school's procedures for more information.

Thank you for your support and for helping the District keep all students safe.

Sincerely,

Heather Hoyer  
Superintendent