

North Putnam School Delays or Closings

Guidelines for School Delays and Closings Due to Inclement Weather

Beliefs

- Weather conditions are both variable and potentially extreme in Indiana; however, the safety of children will guide decisions regarding delaying or closing.
- Concrete rules do not exist in making decisions regarding variable and extreme weather; however, these guidelines will serve as a reference for North Putnam Community Schools (NPSCS).
- NPSCS believes the public expects schools to be open and provide educational services as well as supervision and other services, such as meals, to its students.
- NPSCS believes all parents are committed to keeping children safe and these parents will dress their children appropriately for the existing weather conditions when sending their children to school.
- NPSCS recognizes that it is first and foremost a parental decision as to whether or not a child should attend school on inclement weather days.
- NPSCS respects the parent's determination regarding his/her child's attendance at school during inclement weather. If school is open, or delayed, because of inclement weather, the school will respect the parent's decision to keep their child at home. Parents are expected to contact the school and inform school officials of their determination, and the student will be counted as absent, per Indiana code. Students who are absent due to inclement weather will be given the opportunity to complete their academic work in the same manner as an excused absence from school.

Communication

- On a normal school day, a delay and/or closing will be announced no later than 6:00 a.m.
- Following a delay, if the need to close should arise, it will be announced no later than 8:00 a.m.
- A School Messenger phone alert will be sent for school delays and/or closings.
- Delay/Closing announcements can also be found on the district's website at www.nputnam.k12.in.us.
- Media outlets that are contacted and informed of the delay/close decision include:

WTTV TV	Channel 4
RTV6 TV	Channel 6
WISH TV	Channel 8
WTHR TV	Channel 13
FOX59 TV	Channel 59
WREB radio	94.3 FM

Delaying or Closing School is Based on Multiple Variables

The need for driving slower and allowing for additional travel time does not necessarily indicate that conditions are unsafe for travel to or from school. It is understood that varying interpretations and opinions exist in terms of a "right" decision regarding whether or not to delay the start of school or close for the day. However, before a decision is made, as much information is gathered as possible, and it is made within the beliefs communicated on the previous page of this document. NPSCS bus drivers travel 1920 miles daily in the 6 northern Putnam County townships; it is possible that one part of the district is experiencing safe conditions, while another part is not. Likewise, it is possible for other school districts to be experiencing different weather/road conditions than those within NPSCS.

Freezing Rain/Sleet and Dense Fog

The most unpredictable weather variables are freezing rain/sleet and dense fog. Freezing rain/sleet is temperature sensitive and, like dense fog, fast-occurring. Each begins and ends with little notice. When freezing/rain sleet are predicted or when dense fog appears, the decision regarding whether or not school is delayed/closed will occur at the latest possible time in an effort to observe the most current and local conditions.

Snowfall

Snowfall is more predictable than freezing rain/sleet. Meteorologists typically give predictions that include at least a 2-inch variance. Because of the variance in actual snowfall when compared to predicted snowfall, the decision regarding school status is not determined until the snow accumulation indicates a need for action. Such a decision, except in extreme situations, will generally be made in the morning.

Extreme Snowfall Situations

When snow accumulated to significant levels, or is at such a level with more snowfall predicted, then a decision regarding school delay/closing **may** be made the previous evening. A significant level is one in which local city, county, or state authorities have indicated that it is unlikely for streets, roads, or highways to be passable by the following morning.

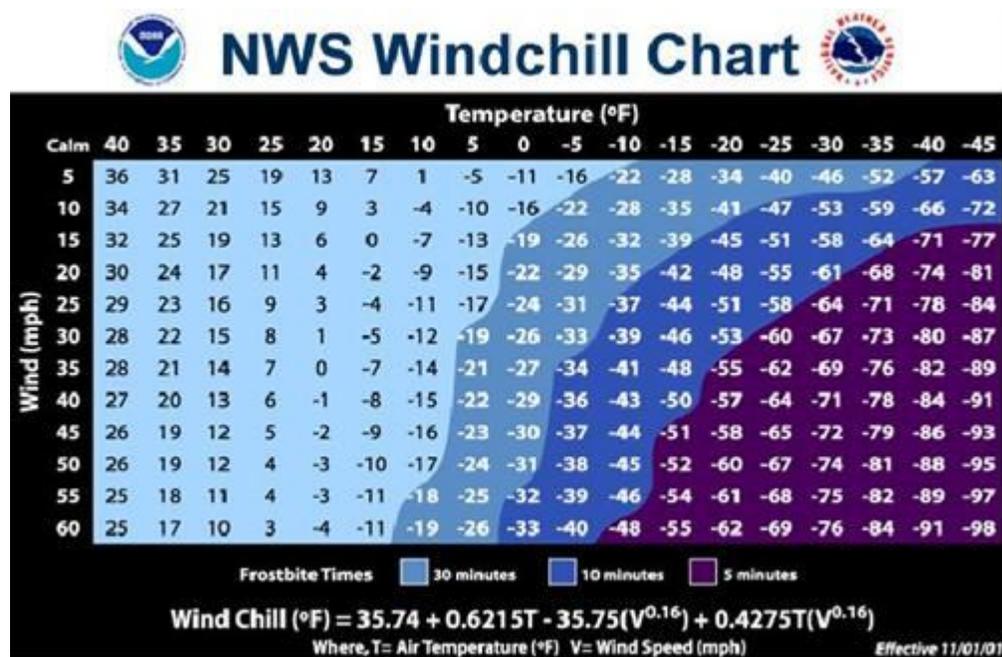
Extreme Cold (see included chart from the National Weather Service)

- Temperature prediction is increasingly more accurate. NPSCS uses the hourly temperature predictions for its zip code from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (noaa.gov). If the air temperature, as predicted by NOAA, is expected to be -10 degrees Fahrenheit or colder with a calm wind at 6:00 a.m., then a two-hour delay **may** be considered in order to insure that all buses started and are not experiencing mechanical difficulties. If the air temperature remains at -10 degrees Fahrenheit or colder at 8:00 a.m. with a calm wind,

then school *may* be closed depending on how our buses are responding mechanically. Such a determination will be made as early as possible, including the possibility of being reported the previous evening.

Extreme Wind Chill (see included chart from the National Weather Service)

- Wind chill predictions are not as accurate as temperature predictions because of the additional variable of wind speed and the variances in wind speed by time and location. These conditions can vary from actual conditions within the district. Local observations will affect the decision regarding delaying or closing school.
- Using the Wind Chill Chart provided by NOAA and the National Weather Service, severe wind chill concerns or frostbite emerge at wind chill temperatures at or near -20 degrees with 30 minutes or more of exposure. Wind chills warmer than -20 degrees typically mean we will remain on time or open. When wind chill temperatures are clearly and consistently colder than -30 degrees, it likely that we will delay or close. When wind chills are between these two extremes, then the decision will be made as late as possible in order to gather as much information about local conditions as possible. Regardless, the decision to delay or close is difficult because of the number of variables that account for the wind chill calculations as well as the variances observed throughout the district.



Two-Hour Delay

Delay schedules will be two hours in length because a two-hour delay does not disrupt the end of the day schedule.

Make –Up Days

In order to comply with Indiana law, each school closing will result in a make-up day. The expectation from the State of Indiana is that school will be in session for a minimum of 180 days of instruction.

Below are answers to questions that have been frequently asked during the past five years.

How decisions about delay schedules and school closings are determined

The ultimate decision of whether school will be closed or delayed is based on whether our buses can safely transport students on NPSCS roads. The buses purchased by our school corporation maximize the various safety features to insure the safest possible transporting of our students. Likewise, our bus drivers participate in ongoing training opportunities to increase the likelihood of safe driving in various road conditions. Our buses and bus drivers must demonstrate proficiency at meeting Indiana State Police expectations on an annual basis. Despite the safety features of our buses and the training that our drivers receive, there are some road conditions that are not conducive for safe transporting of students. Typically, ice, drifting snow, and reduced visibility are the primary reasons for delays and closings.

Each morning between 4:30 a.m. and 6:00 a.m., road and weather conditions are monitored by driving on roads in different parts of the district so that a picture of the entire district is developed. Additionally, weather reports from multiple sources are monitored as well as information from city, county, and state road crews.

The goal is to make a decision regarding delays and closings by 5:30 a.m. each day. However, with changing road and weather conditions, sometimes the decision is made as late as 6:00 a.m. In some instances, a delay may be announced in order to afford more time to determine whether the changing road and weather conditions warrant a school closing. In these instances, a decision to close may be determined as late as 8:00 a.m. or 9:00 a.m. On days that a delay schedule is implemented and later changed to a closing, road conditions either worsened, or despite the best efforts of county, city, or state road crews, roadways were not adequately cleared or treated. Ultimately, school will be in session **only** if our bus drivers can safely navigate buses on the NPSCS roads that must be traveled to transport our students.