

## **Winter procedures-PSD Internal Guidelines: FAQ**

Canceling school is a tremendously difficult and complicated decision for any school district to make, and it's a decision that impacts families in very different ways. Be assured that these decisions are not taken lightly and are always made with the safety consideration of students, transportation drivers, and our entire staff in mind.

There are many factors districts must consider when making weather-related decisions. Even similar storms can require a different decision based on the route, timing, the speed, and the expected duration of the storm. These are tough judgment calls.

*As always, when we remain open, families are welcome to make decisions based on their own circumstances, including comfort levels and safety concerns.*

### **One-source forecasting**

Prescott District relies solely on forecasts provided by the National Weather Service – Twin Cities, which is the official government authority on weather forecasting and weather warnings for western Wisconsin. The National Weather Service offers hourly weather forecasts, searchable by time and region. This is the best forecasting available, but no weather forecast is 100% accurate or foolproof. Weather is prone to change quickly and often.

### **Considerations used for closing Prescott Schools due to weather:**

Safety of our students is paramount in every decision we make. In addition, the safety of our bus and High School drivers, along with staff/faculty are at the top of our list when we are making weather-related closings.

### **Our decisions are based on the interplay of these factors: Windspeed, temperature and snow accumulation. Here are some examples:**

- Sustained [wind chills](#) of 40 to 45 degrees below zero during the hours between morning bus pickups and afternoon bus drop-offs. This threshold likely will trigger delayed starts or complete closure of our district.
  - These levels create significant challenges for families and students waiting for buses.
  - Additionally, if mechanical breakdowns occur with our buses it leaves individual students at risk. The obvious concern for students waiting for prolonged periods of time where short-time frames exist for possible [frostbite](#).
- High wind speed also can create blowing and drifting snow on our roads.
- Severe low temperatures also impact the mechanical functioning of our buses and can create issues related to diesel fuel that can congeal at low temperatures.
- Freezing rain and/or snow mix depending on temperatures and our various terrain throughout the district can create challenges that warrant a delay or cancellation of school if it is determined unsafe for our bus routes.

- Snow amounts. This number more difficult to accurately predict. Common factors include the rate, timing, and duration of snowfall along with corresponding decisions made by the county and city on whether they plow early, throughout the storm, or at the end of the storm.

### **Collaboration among Superintendents, Transportation Directors, and City/County occur on a regular basis.**

- Prescott Schools collaborates with nearby districts by sharing observations and information that influence local decisions.
- **Many times our decision making aligns across our districts, but weather and road conditions do vary by location and terrain, so do not be surprised if there is inconsistency among school district closures.**

### **Notifications**

How will families hear about school cancellations? Families should always assume schools are open and in session unless they hear or see differently through our official reporting methods.

**Websites will only indicate when schools are closed – not when they remain open.**

As a School District, we aim to notify parents the night before if conditions avail themselves to making a decision well in advance. If we make the decision overnight we aim to notify families no later than 5:45 a.m. on the day of the late start or cancellation using text messages, robocalls, voicemail, and email messaging.

**Note.** Keeping your contact information up to date is vital for us to be able to communicate with you. You have the option within Infinite Campus to select the methods of contact: Home phone, mobile phone, email, or all of above. Each fall we remind families to update their contact information online and select how they prefer to be contacted in case of emergency.

We also will post our school closing messages on:

- Twin City News stations: KARE, KSTP, FOX & WCCO
- Facebook, and
- The District website

### **Why do we use multiple methods?**

The city of Prescott has experienced ill-timed internet outages during the winter months. Our own website provider has gone off-line during the winter and at unfortunate times right when we were making the decision to close the school district. Therefore, given the safety concerns and importance of the messaging, we will always use multiple media for conveying the information.

**2-hour late starts:** Here's how the process will work:

- Buses will pick up students 2 hours later than their typical bus stop schedule.
- Schools will start 2 hours later than their typical schedule.

- Class periods will be shortened throughout the day.
- Schools will dismiss at their regular dismissal times.
- Buses will drop off students at their regular drop-off times.

Although 2-hour late starts are not the most convenient for families, this option minimizes full school cancellations and maximizes learning opportunities for all children. Moreover, late starts allow the District to avoid adding make-up days to the calendar.

### **Make-up days?**

Each year Prescott School District builds in two additional academic contact days to address weather-related cancellations. These additional days provide flexibility in meeting state requirements. When the Prescott School District cancels more than two days, the School Board will be presented with make-up day options.

If you have questions please reach out to your school principal for clarifications.

Thank you

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Prescott Superintendent