

Steps for determining whether to close schools due to snow or ice

Weather forecasts of coming snow and ice, or existing dangerous road conditions the evening before a school day trigger the following response:

2:00-4:00 AM: District representatives drive Bellevue's streets to determine if school buses can safely travel on the **most difficult hills and roads**.

They analyze the situation by answering the following questions:

- Can buses get up the steepest hills, including Somerset/Hilltop areas?
- Does the weather forecast call for more snow, or rising/falling temperatures?
- If we bring students to school, will school have to be closed before the end of the instructional day? (It is not desirable to bring students to school and then have to close early, because we don't know if we can get them home safely and if there will be a parent or adult at home when they arrive.)
- What is happening in other districts?
- Are areas where teachers, bus drivers and staff live, for example, in Snohomish County or East King County, snowed in and can they get to Bellevue safely?

4:00 AM: Around 4:00 am the Superintendent will be provided the information gathered and will make a decision. The phone tree will be initiated to notify central office and school administrators

4:15 AM: The decision will be posted on the Public Schools Emergency Communication System, if possible around 4:15 am. Following this, the 24 hour newswire (425.456.4111) message will be recorded, district website will be updated and a message will be posted on our Facebook Fan page. The Facebook Fan page will also feed the message to the district twitter account and blog. Updating all of these resources take time and will ideally be completed around 5am.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Sometimes when the district closes schools I look outside my house and see only a thin covering of snow on the ground; I could easily take my child to school, but it is closed. Why is my school closed when it doesn't need to be?

A. School closure decisions are based on conditions throughout the district. We operate as a system, not as independent schools. Some staff members work at more than one school. By state law, missed days must be made up and it makes sense to have these makeup days occur for all schools at the same time. Teachers and school staff may live in areas where there is significantly more snow and cannot make it into work. Some areas of Bellevue may have much more snow and school buses cannot be driven safely- i.e. Somerset/Hilltop areas.

Q. Schools are open, but with the snow and/or ice on the road it isn't safe to drive out of my neighborhood. What should I do?

A. We can't make this decision for you or your family. You need to determine if it's safe for you to drive your child to school.

What can cause the best laid plans to fail?

- Forecast of heavy snow coming during rush hour, but no snow on ground at 4 AM
- Ice on streets at 4 AM, followed by warming and no ice by 8 am
- No snow on the ground by 4 AM and snow arrives later in the morning or right before school starts