

Martensdale-St. Marys Community Schools School Closing and Hard Surface Only Guidelines

School Closings

The decision to close school can be a difficult task because of the unpredictable nature of Iowa weather. Just as weather systems do appear without warning, there are times when weather systems do not appear as predicted. Please keep in mind that a forecast is a prediction. Even skilled meteorologists agree that not all watches, warnings and advisories materialize as predicted.

No school closing decision will be universally accepted, but it is helpful to understand that the decision to close school involves many factors including temperature, wind chill, visibility, city and county road conditions, location of county snow plows in the area, the ability to clear school parking lots and driveways, ability to keep transportation running safely, ability to heat and/or cool buildings appropriately, weather forecasts and the status of neighboring school districts. Other factors include the state day and hour requirement, family schedules, day care arrangements when school closes at the last minute and, most importantly, student safety.

Safety

In the end, the school district's primary goal in making a final decision is the safe transportation of all students, parents, faculty and staff. At all times, weather conditions are monitored to ensure that students can be safely delivered to and from school.

NEW – EMERGENCY HARD SURFACE ROUTE PLAN

There may be times when a decision is made to have school buses run on paved hard surface roads only. Effective January 10, 2019, MStM will be implementing Hard Surface Only Routes. The purpose of this plan is to provide a bus transportation system on days when it is not possible to run the buses on gravel roads. In situations such as drifted or icy country gravel roads, or soft surface gravel roads, this plan will be implemented. Please review our **Hard Surface Only guidelines** listed below for pick up and drop off locations along with times. PM routes will run hard surface also that day.

- Announcement concerning implementation of the Emergency Hard Surface Route plan will be made on via the district messenger system.
- The decision for implementing this plan will normally be made no later than 6:00 a.m.
- When the plan is utilized in the morning, it will also be utilized in the afternoon. The District will notify parents if the afternoon route locations are changed no later than 12:00 p.m.
- Buses will stop at gravel road/hard surface intersections as listed below. Please decide which intersection is closest to where you live and wait there.

- Students who live in the country who are not able to make it to a hard surface pick up spot will not be counted absent from school if parents write a note to the school informing us of the problem.
- A student will not be left at a drop-off point unless a parent/guardian is there to pick them up. If no parent/guardian is there, the student will be brought back to the school and parents will be required to pick them up as soon as possible.
- There may be times when a transportation employee will call individual families to arrange an alternative pick up location due to poor road or turn around conditions.

BUS #	BUS DRIVER	CELL PHONE	LOCATION	PICK UP	DROP OFF
Bus #1	Ray Gavin	515-669-2251	Kum & Go	7:50 A.M.	3:30 P.M.
Bus #2	Brian Sweet	515-238-1109	Cumming Highway	7:40 A.M.	3:35 P.M.
Bus #3	Gary Hart	515-205-1323	Middle River Auto	7:45 A.M.	3:55 P.M.
Bus #5	Carol Banks	515-314-0593	St. Marys Church	7:45 A.M.	3:45 P.M.
Bus #6	Joe Gavin	515-681-4694	Linn Grove Church	7:45 A.M.	3:40 P.M.
Bus #6	Joe Gavin	515-681-4694	Corner 43 rd /Hwy 28	7:50 A.M.	3:45 P.M.
Bus #7	Andrew Overton	515-508-9114	St. Marys Gym	7:55 A.M.	3:45 P.M.

When the hard surface road only plan is implemented, we will follow the time schedule as closely as possible. Please remember these are approximations, the exact times may vary somewhat. Students still need to be at their designated stop 5 minutes prior to pick up, to ensure buses stay on a timely schedule.

Parent Rights

For a student, a snow day is a gift. More time to sleep, maybe a chance to play with friends, and most of all—no school! But for an adult, the decision to close school is quite difficult and complex. The school district covers a large amount of area with extreme variations, for example. Conditions in one area of the school district may be quite different from the next. Weather patterns and conditions are unpredictable and can change suddenly, without warning. Therefore, on days when the weather is questionable and the school district is open, parents always have the right to keep their child at home. Under no circumstances should parents risk the safety of their child. If parents feel that driving conditions are dangerous and unsafe, or will become worse, they are encouraged to call the school and excuse their child for the day. These absences will be treated as excused absences.

Parent Responsibilities

Students need to dress for cold weather and be prepared for emergencies such as bus breakdowns or building evacuations. Whether walking, driving or riding the bus to and from school, all students need to dress appropriately for the weather conditions. It is not uncommon to see older students come to school wearing shorts, sweat shirts or light jackets, and no hats, gloves or boots. Hypothermia and frostbite can occur in minutes. Even students that drive to school should be prepared for the cold in case of breakdowns or accidents. Although popular fashion trends may not include winter hats, gloves, heavy coats and boots, parents should insist on their child wearing such items when the temperature or wind chill factor is low.

Decision-Making Process

The two most common reasons to close school are weather related issues and building problems (e.g., power outages, leaks, etc.). Closing school because of building problems is a relatively easy decision in comparison to weather related closures.

On mornings when the weather is questionable, school district personnel, including the superintendent and director of buildings and grounds, assess weather and road conditions by (1) closely monitoring weather reports; (2) contacting Warren and Madison County Road Commissions; (3) conferring with other superintendents and transportation directors from neighboring school districts; and (4) driving the roads in the district from about 4:40 AM to 5:30 AM. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, a final decision to close school is usually made by 5:45 AM and announced and/or published by 6 a.m. When at all possible a decision to close or delay school will be made the evening before to allow parents time to make necessary arrangements for their children. It is important to note that weather conditions can rapidly improve or worsen from the time a decision is made in the early hours of the morning. Again, the decision to close school is based on forecasts, which are sometimes accurate and sometimes not.

Weather and Road Conditions

Road conditions and temperature are two main types of inclement weather closings, which are based on the following ever-changing variables:

1. **Snow Depth:** The amount of snowfall (a minimum of about four inches on level ground), drifting, and its impact on roads, which includes all main, secondary and back roads.
2. **Snow Removal:** The timing of the storm and the ability of local road crews to clear roads and district personnel to clear parking lots.
3. **Icing Conditions:** Ice or freezing rain and its impact on road and parking lot conditions as well as downed trees and power lines.
4. **Temperature:** Frigid temperatures or wind chills that carry the risk of frostbite in a short period of time (i.e., 20 minutes or less). Generally, school will be closed when the actual temperature combined with the wind chill is between 20 and 30 degrees below zero for an extended period of time.

Closing/delaying school based solely on temperature alone is the most difficult criterion to use. Factors such as length of bus routes, availability of spare buses on an immediate basis, and temperatures moderating throughout the day are all part of the decision-making process.

Early Dismissal

As a general rule, once students are at school, the school district does its best to avoid early dismissal. The school district believes that keeping students at school is the best way to keep them safe when bad weather occurs during the school day.

On rare occasions, however, weather related conditions and/or building problems (e.g., power outages, leaks, etc.) may necessitate closing school early.

Sometimes, when road conditions deteriorate during the day, a decision may be made to dismiss students early to allow buses additional travel time so students arrive home at their regularly scheduled time.

Notification

If school is closed, parents will receive an automated phone call from the school district informing them of the decision to close. Therefore, it is important to keep accurate telephone numbers and email addresses in Infinite Campus. This same information will also be shared with local radio and TV stations.

Afterschool and Evening Activities

If students cannot be transported to and from afternoon and/or evening activities safely, they will be canceled.

Extended School Year

Inclement weather, hazardous road conditions, power outages, floods or other reasons may require the closing of school. However, the school year may be extended in order to comply with the state law, which requires a minimum number of days and hours of student instruction in each school year. According to the Iowa Department of Education, schools must choose whether to follow the 180 day calendar or 1080 hour alternative. Martensdale-St. Marys falls under the 1080 hour minimum and any hours falling short of the 1080 hour requirement will be made up.

Transporting students to and from school requires a team effort to be successful. Parents, students, and the school staff all need to work together to provide the safest transportation possible.

Parents Responsibilities:

- Ensure your student arrives at their bus stop safely and on time.
- During days of extreme weather, ensure your student boards the bus safely.
- Make suggestions for improvement of school transportation to the transportation director.
- Review the Bus Rules and Disciplinary Policy with your child.

Bus Driver and School Responsibilities:

- Ensure the school bus is safe to transport students.
- Ensure buses run on time.
- Ensure there is room on each bus to transport students safely.
- Ensure all students are safely transported to and from school.

Student's Responsibilities:

- Arrive at the bus STOP on time.
- Follow ALL of the bus safety rules.
- Report violations of the Bus Rules to the bus driver immediately.

School Bus Rules

- Follow the instructions of the bus driver.
- While waiting for the bus, stand in an orderly fashion. Do not approach a bus until the driver gives a signal to load.
- Do not push or shove when loading the bus.
- After entering the bus, go directly to a seat and sit down.
- Books and other property must be properly stowed out of the aisle.
- Talk quietly with those around you using inside voices; loud or vulgar language is prohibited.
- Remain seated; facing forward while bus is in motion.
- Windows are to be opened only with the permission of the driver.
- Do not extend hands, arms or head through the windows.
- Stop all conversations when stopped at a railroad crossing.
- Always be courteous to the driver and to fellow students (keeping hands to yourself).
- Keep the bus clean.
- No glass containers are allowed on the bus.
- No aerosol or non-aerosol pump sprays are permitted to be used on the bus. This includes perfume, cologne hairspray, deodorant and also fingernail polish.
- Pupils must keep sharp objects and feet off the seat. Any damages will be charged to the student/students.
- Do not throw objects on the bus.
- No cleats/spikes, for any sport, shall be worn on the bus. This includes football, baseball, softball, soccer, and track.
- Report problems or concerns to the bus driver immediately. Never be afraid to talk to your bus driver.