



WHEN SEVERE WINTER WEATHER STRIKES



Introduction

Winter weather in Upstate New York can be very unpredictable. When severe weather strikes our area, our number one concern is the safety of all Oxford Academy and Central School District students. Specific plans and protocols are in place to ensure that all students and staff members arrive at school safely.

Decision-Making Process

The decision to close school is made by the Superintendent of Schools working in consultation with the Head Bus Driver and representatives from New York State, Chenango County, DCMO BOCES, and the Town and Village of Oxford. Information provided by various weather-service reports, newscasts, and computer simulations also factor into the decision-making process. The Superintendent of Schools and Head Bus Driver will drive on primary and secondary roads in the District to evaluate travel safety as needed. Variables that factor into the decision include, but are not limited to, amount and type of snow or freezing rain, timing of first snowfall and anticipated end, ability to clear primary and secondary roads and District parking lots, building conditions, temperature, wind and wind chill.

Depending on a host of circumstances and factors, the District may elect to delay the start of school by one or two hours; close for the day; dismiss early at 11:30 a.m.; or cancel all afterschool events at the end of the day.

Communications Plan

In general, the decision to delay the start of school or to close for the day is made no later than 5:30 a.m. and is subsequently communicated to all stakeholders no later than approximately 5:45 a.m. using the following communication methods:

Cell phone/telephone: Global Connect Call from 607-843-2025

OXAC website: www.oxac.org

OXAC Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/OxfordAcademyCSD>

OXAC Twitter: @OxBlackhawks

Radio: WNBF, WAAL, WCDO

Television: WIVT/WBGH, Newschannel 34, WBNG, YNN, WICZ, Fox 40

The same methods will be used to communicate early dismissals and afterschool cancellations.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When is the decision made to close or delay school?

In general, the following **approximate** timeline is used to frame school closing and delay decisions:

- 5:15 a.m. - Preliminary decision is made to close or delay school
- 5:30 a.m. - Decision to close/delay is communicated to all district stakeholders
- 5:45 a.m. - Media outlets are notified of closing/delay
- 10:00 a.m. - If school has started and weather conditions deteriorate, the decision to dismiss early is communicated at this time
- 11:30 a.m. - Early dismissal time when school has started and weather conditions have deteriorated
- 1:00 p.m. - If school has started and weather conditions deteriorate, the decision to cancel afterschool activities is communicated at this time

Who makes the decision to delay or close school?

The Superintendent of Schools makes the decision to close school in concert with the Head Bus Driver, NYS and county officials, and Village and Town of Oxford officials. In addition, select television and weather forecasts factor into the decision-making process.

If school is closed, are evening and weekend activities canceled?

If OXAC is closed due to inclement weather, all evening activities are also canceled. If school has started and weather conditions deteriorate, a decision to continue afterschool activities will be made no later than 1:00 p.m.

As a parent/caretaker, can I keep my child home on inclement weather days?

Parents/caretakers are encouraged to use their best judgment to determine what is best for their children. Parents/caretakers must notify the District when their children will be absent.

Are we going to have to make up snow days?

OXAC builds additional days into the school calendar each year to account for time lost to inclement weather. In the event this additional time is exhausted due to extraordinary weather conditions, OXAC's Board of Education retains the right to extend the school year by scheduling school during vacation holidays (such as the mid-winter break in February or the annual spring recess).

What are some states of winter weather declared by the National Weather Service?

The National Weather Service may make the following declarations when severe winter weather is forecast to present a potential risk to travelers:

- **Winter Storm Watch:** Conditions are favorable for heavy sleet, heavy snow, ice storm, heavy snow and blowing snow, or any combination to meet or exceed local winter storm warning criteria in the next 24-72 hours. Criteria for snow is 7 inches or more in 12 hours or less; or 9 inches or more in 24 hours covering at least 50 percent of the zone or encompassing most of the population. Use "mid-point" of snowfall range to trigger a watch (i.e., 5-8 inches of snow = watch).
- **Winter Storm Warning:** Heavy sleet, heavy snow, ice storm, heavy snow and blowing snow, or any combination is expected to meet or exceed local winter storm warning criteria in the next 12-36 hours. Criteria for snow is 7 inches or more in 12 hours or less; or 9 inches or more in 24 hours covering at least 50 percent of the zone or encompassing most of the population. Use "mid-point" of snowfall range to trigger warning (i.e., 5-8 inches of snow = warning).
- **Winter Weather Advisory:** Sleet, snow, freezing rain, snow and blowing snow, or any combination is expected to meet or exceed local winter weather advisory criteria in the next 12-36 hours but stay below warning criteria. Criteria for snow is 4 inches or more in 12 hours or less covering at least 50 percent of the zone or encompassing most of the population. Use "mid-point" of snowfall range to trigger advisory (i.e., 2-5 inches of snow = advisory).

What are some states of winter weather declared by Chenango County?

Chenango County may make the following declarations when severe winter weather is forecast:

- **State of Emergency:** This declaration may be made by the County Chief Executive in the event that conditions are so severe as to require additional resources by the county. Included in the declaration of a state of emergency may be various "orders," which could include road closures for the entire county or for specific roads within the county. Road-closure orders are meant to keep non-essential persons off the roads and to help keep the roads clear of motorists so that highway departments can more effectively clear them. The Superintendent of Schools is charged with determining which district personnel are considered essential and thus authorized to travel on roads that have been ordered closed.
- **Travel Advisory:** Chenango County also may issue a travel advisory in conjunction with the State of Emergency declaration or as a standalone "order." A travel advisory is just that – an advisory to motorists to alert them that road conditions may be deteriorated and that travelers should use caution.

Unless otherwise stated by Chenango County, the decision to delay or close school remains at the discretion of the Superintendent of Schools.

For More Information

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

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