



Dear Great Falls Public Schools Parents,

RE: School Disruptions Due to Weather and Emergencies

Unfortunately, there is always the potential of unforeseen emergencies such as threats, natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, tornadoes), hazardous material breaches (chemical spills, gas leaks, refinery accidents) and unpredictable weather. While the potential exists, *all students, parents and school employees should assume, even during emergencies, that school will be in session and buses will be running as scheduled unless there is official notification from the Superintendent to the contrary.*

To achieve the maximum safety for all children and the efficiency of operations, the Superintendent may order the:

- Cancellation of some or all bus routes
- Delay of some or all bus routes
- Closure of school(s)
- Delay of school start
- Early dismissal of school

In making these decisions, the District believes that in most cases, schools are the safest places for students to be. The District also believes that school buses are very safe for children to be in as they are heavy, well maintained and driven by well-trained and qualified individuals. It is also important to note that the closure of school is a serious decision and one that is rarely made. The District will take a variety of factors into consideration. See this website for more information on the factors considered and other information as well: <http://www.gfps.k12.mt.us/students/safety>. Other pertinent information with the titles “EduLink Parent Notification System” and “GFPS Crisis Manager App” can be found at this link. Hardcopies have also been sent home with this letter.

Keeping in mind that bad weather and unforeseen emergencies can happen at any time and that disruptions to school schedules require the District to distribute information to a lot of people in a very short amount of time, please **seek out** information if you have any question as to what is happening. It is essential that parents keep the school updated on any changes in contact information. If it is deemed appropriate to put into effect any of the above mentioned actions, you should look for notification here instead of calling the school as they are not staffed to answer hundreds of phone calls:

- *Mass phone and/or voicemail notification from the GFPS automated attendance system (EduLink)
- GFPS Twitter: @GFPublicSchools
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GreatFallsPublicSchools>
- GFPS Website: www.gfps.k12.mt.us
- Media Twitter and websites: @KRTV, www.krtv.com, @KFBB, www.kfbb.com, @GFTribune, www.greatfallstribune.com
 - *Please be aware we have no control over when/if the media posts or announces this information.*
- Radio Stations: FM: 92.9, 94.5, 97.9, 98.9, 101.7, 102.7, 104.9, and 106.1
AM: 560 and 1450
 - *Please be aware that GFPS has no control over radio station announcements.*
- Call 406-268-6444 for a recorded phone message (you may reach a busy signal depending on caller volume)

Please note: **If the decision is to operate as usual, there will NOT be postings or announcements.**

***EduLink notifications will only be made when large groups of parents need to do something (i.e. keep students home, pick students up, etc.). Mass phone and voicemail notifications are not sent for announcements that do not require parents to take action of some kind. For more information about the EduLink system, use the link above.**

Continued...

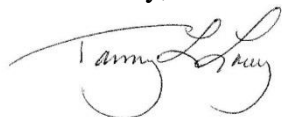
As parents, you are the final authority as to whether or not you believe it is safe for your child to get to school. If you believe that it is too cold or the snow is too deep or the weather is too unsettled, your decision may be to keep your child home. **You have the right and responsibility to make attendance decisions for your children based on your individual circumstances.** Please notify your student's school as you would for any other absence. The absence may be excused and for high school students, it may not count against attendance incentives.

Along with this letter is a REFRIGERATOR NOTE. It is a shortened version of this information for you to keep handy.

Each school has inclement weather procedures regarding building entrance upon arrival, recesses and bus dismissal waiting areas. Please consult your school's procedures for more information.

Thank you for your support and for helping the District keep all students safe.

Sincerely,



Tammy L. Lacey
Superintendent

ADDITIONAL WINTER WEATHER TIPS

Observe the following winter safety tips with your students who walk to and from the bus stops or schools:

- **Dress for Winter!**
 - Dress appropriately for cold weather – sweaters, pants, winter coats, hats, scarves, socks and boots. Even when on a bus, the bus may not heat well in extreme cold. While unlikely, the bus may break down or get stuck. If your family needs assistance with cold weather attire, please talk to your student's principal.
 - Bad weather can happen at any time of the day so students should be prepared for that eventuality. Keep track of weather reports. A nice morning can turn into a freezing snowstorm by dismissal time. If your family needs assistance with cold weather attire, please talk to your student's principal.
 - Wear bright jackets or coats so bus drivers can easily see you in the morning or evening.
- **Plan Ahead!**
 - Allow extra travel time to get to the bus stop or school.
 - In bad weather, expect the bus to run late and be prepared for this event. If possible, wait at the bus stop with your child until the bus arrives. Students need the ability to get out of the elements in the event the bus is late. Make a plan for your child should the bus not come.
- **Keep a Safe Zone!**
 - Stand at least 10 steps away (or back) from bus stops. Buses need extra room to stop where there is snow or ice.
 - Do not walk or play on snow mounds or ice within 10 feet of the roadway – you could fall and slip into the roadway and be at risk of being struck by a vehicle.
 - Do not cross the street at your bus stop until all traffic has come to a complete stop and the bus driver has signaled that it is safe to cross.
- **Be Alert!**
 - Car drivers should keep their car windows clear of frost, ice and snow.
 - Stop! Look! Listen! Hoodies, headphones and electronic devices can distract students from paying attention to traffic.