School Closing Due to Hazardous Conditions

I. When in the judgment of the Superintendent conditions exist, which are hazardous to the health and safety of students and employees, the Superintendent shall take appropriate action by:

A. Delaying the opening of schools;
B. Dismissing students early from school;
C. Closing school for the entire day; or
D. Taking other action necessary to safeguard the health and safety of students and employees.

II. In the event that any of the above actions are taken, the Superintendent shall make appropriate adjustments in the pupil transportation system and communicate necessary information to employees, students, and the community-at-large.

III. In the event of hazardous conditions within individual schools, principals shall take necessary action to safeguard the health and safety of students and employees.

IV. Information on school closings, delayed openings, or early closings can be found on the PWCS home page and the PWCS Information Line, 703.791.2776, option 3, within minutes after a decision is made. See details on the PWCS website (www.pwcs.edu); click on “About Us,” then click on “Closings, Delays & Emergencies.” In addition, the news media will be informed as soon as a decision is made. Principals and school staff are responsible for learning of the decision from these sources.

V. During all Code Red and Green closing situations, administrative and teaching staff may voluntarily elect, but are not required, to employ “telework” or other work-at-home strategies to enter data, grade student papers, or otherwise supplement their normal work efforts. Time spent in this manner is strictly voluntary and will not be counted against contract hours or otherwise compensated. As classified staff must be compensated for all work done on behalf of the School Division, they are prohibited from engaging in “telework” or other work-at-home strategies without the express, advance approval of their supervisor. See Regulation 561-1, “Telework.” Further special instructions related to unscheduled closings or delayed openings are listed below.

*Throughout this regulation, “teachers*” refers to teachers and nurses, based or working in schools, as well as librarians, counselors, and ITCs.

A. Code Red:

1. Schools are closed and all school activities (day and evening) are cancelled. School buses will not operate. The School Age Child Care (SACC) program will not open.
2. Employees shall not report for work. Certain administrators and classified employees, as specifically designated by their supervisor, will report at times specified to perform essential duties such as snow removal.

3. All non-school activities (day and evening) are cancelled including Adult Education and night school classes and recreational programs scheduled in school buildings. The announcement of cancellation of NVCC classes is the responsibility of the college.

B. Code Green:

1. Schools are closed and all school activities (day and evening) are cancelled. The SACC program will not open. School buses will not operate. Rare exceptions may be made for highly important activities that cannot be rescheduled on days when the weather improves. Such exceptions must be approved by the Superintendent or appropriate level associate superintendent.

2. All 12-month employees and all administrators shall report for work as soon as possible or shall contact their supervisor to request annual leave if they are unable to report for work (liberal leave).

3. Teachers* on less than 12-month contracts, teacher assistants, library media assistants, bus drivers, bus driver attendants, cafeteria workers, and other less-than-12-month classified employees shall not report for work.

4. All non-school activities (day and evening) are cancelled including Adult Education and night school classes and recreational programs scheduled in school buildings. The announcement of cancellation of NVCC classes is the responsibility of the college.

C. Two-Hour Delayed Opening

1. A simplified breakfast will be offered. Field trips are cancelled. Athletic trips may be approved by the level associate superintendents and the Director of Transportation Services on an individual basis, depending on the road conditions.

2. Lunch will be served.

3. All students, teachers*, teacher assistants, library media assistants, bus drivers, and bus driver attendants report on a two-hour delay. All classified employees, teachers on 12-month contracts, all administrators, and all cafeteria workers report at normal times. When the delayed opening is caused by snow or ice, school bus drivers will report on a one-hour delay.
4. Parents/guardians should not bring students to school early when a delayed opening is in effect because school staff members may also be delayed in getting to school.

5. In periods of very severe weather, some parents/guardians may consider roads and sidewalks in their area unsafe for travel by students. In those instances, parents/guardians have the option of not sending their child to school. However, the student is expected to make up all assignments. In addition, the student will not be penalized academically, and the student will be given an excused absence.

D. One-Hour Early Closing

1. Bus runs will be in regular order. There will be no change in the preschool mid-day time schedule.

2. Field and athletic trips are cancelled.

3. The after-school SACC program will not open.

4. Teachers*, teacher assistants, and library media assistants may be excused early by the principal after students have safely departed the building and grounds.

5. Administrative staff and classified employees, except teacher assistants and library media assistants will remain on the normal work schedule unless specifically excused by an announcement from the Superintendent.

6. All non-school activities are cancelled. Announcement of cancellation of NVCC classes is the responsibility of the college.

E. Two-Hour Early Closing

1. Bus runs will be in regular order. If the announcement of closing is prior to the afternoon preschool bus pick up time, the afternoon session is cancelled.

2. Morning preschool and full-day preschool students will be dismissed two hours earlier than the regular schedule. There will be no afternoon preschool.

3. Field trips are cancelled unless already departed. Recall efforts are to be initiated. Late activity and athletic bus runs are cancelled.

4. Lunch is to be served (on an alternate schedule if necessary).

5. Teachers*, teacher assistants, and library media assistants may be excused early by the principal after the children have safely departed the building and grounds.
6. Administrative staff and classified employees, except for teacher assistants and library media assistants, will remain on the normal work schedule unless specifically excused by an announcement from the Superintendent.

7. All non-school activities (day and evening) are cancelled. Announcement of cancellation of NVCC classes is the responsibility of the college.

F. Cancellation of After-school Activities and Evening Programs

Some weather conditions or other situations may occur after school has been dismissed, but in the interest of safety, all after-school and evening activities may be cancelled. When this occurs, the SACC program will close at 5 p.m.

VI. The decision to delay school openings or close schools on Code Green or Code Red is reserved for the Superintendent or an associate superintendent acting for him during his absence.

VII. The decision to close schools on Code Green or Code Red for an entire day because of adverse road conditions will be based upon recommendations of the Director of Transportation Services and the Associate Superintendent for Finance and Support Services.

VIII. Principals or staff officials who have reasons for wanting to close one or more schools because of other adverse conditions should make the recommendation to the appropriate level associate superintendent, the Associate Superintendent for Finance and Support Services, and the Superintendent.

IX. On delayed-opening days, administrative staff and classified employees other than bus drivers, teacher assistants, and library media assistants are required to make every reasonable effort to arrive at their work locations at the regular time or as soon thereafter as possible. On early closing days the administrative and classified employees are to remain at their jobs except on occasions involving particularly severe weather when the Superintendent may announce by telephone message and email to schools and staff departments that all employees are released. Teacher assistants and library media assistants may be dismissed at the same time as teachers. When this announcement is made, those few full-time classified employees who are designated by principals or supervisors to remain at their duty stations to deal with emergency situations will be on an overtime basis starting with the specific time indicated in the announcement. School administrators are expected to remain at their duty stations until all students are transported to their homes. Other administrators and supervisory personnel are expected to remain at their duty stations until such time as their services are no longer required.

X. The following instructions pertain to custodians who remain in school buildings during the evening following a regular school day:
A. When the weather begins to deteriorate after the regular school day, and in the interest of personnel safety, the principal, assistant principal, or custodial manager if the principal or assistant principal is not available, may authorize the early release of custodial personnel due to hazardous weather conditions (liberal leave will be in effect). The authorization for the early release of custodial staff will be made on an individual school basis. The school shall be prepared for opening the following day prior to release.

B. Custodians specifically designated by their supervisor will report at times specified to perform essential duties such as snow removal.

XI. Although principals and appropriate supervisors are responsible for the health and safety of personnel and for the protection of property during emergencies, the use of overtime for employment of classified employees should be restricted to the absolute minimum amount required to deal with emergency situations.

XII. The decision to close schools for an entire day under Code Green and Code Red or to delay school openings will be made as many hours in advance of scheduled starting times as possible. Except in unusual circumstances demanding emergency measures, the decision will be made at approximately 4:30 a.m. on the morning of a closing or delay in opening, so that Associate Superintendent for Communications and Technology Services, or designee, has time to communicate the information to the broadcast news media for a 5:00 a.m. public announcement.

XIII. Early closings of schools already in session will be announced by the Associate Superintendent for Communications and Technology Services, or designee, to the news media. The message will also be transmitted to schools and staff departments by using a telephone tree and email from central office staff employees.

XIV. When schools are required to close early for reasons that are not obvious to the general public, e.g., individual power failures or water shortages, it is the responsibility of principals to have an alert system such as a telephone tree developed to notify parents and child care providers. This process is particularly important for elementary students.

The Associate Superintendent for Finance and Support Services, the level associate superintendents, and the Associate Superintendent for Communications and Technology Services, or designees, are responsible for implementing and monitoring this regulation.

This regulation and related policy shall be reviewed at least every five years and revised as needed.

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS