

Emergency Closing/ Cancellation Procedures

These procedures are intended to apply to all events that may lead to an emergency closing of University operations or cancellation of individual events. While the most common occurrence is adverse weather, many other events can lead to closure (e.g., utility interruption, hazardous material spill, fire, riot, and government order).

Closing Decision Process

Decision Factors -The decision factors are grouped into two categories – **Safety and Service Levels**. When considering these factors, conditions on the campus as well as off campus need to be taken into account, since off-campus conditions can significantly affect both safety and service levels.

1. **Safety**

Judging safety can be difficult because subjective criteria must be used in making an evaluation. No situation is absolutely safe, but the following criteria can help in delineating parameters for safe conditions. Campus conditions, because they are under our control, can generally be assessed accurately. Judging the safety of public facilities and infrastructure can be difficult because of the lack of information and the variety of conditions spread over a large geographic area. The recommendations and actions of area government agencies should be used as a guide. Generally, the federal government is reluctant to close its activities and, therefore, their closure is an indication of extreme conditions.

A. Condition of campus facilities.

- a) Roads and walks should allow safe passage with the exercise of due care. This does not require that we have only dry pavement however. Snow and ice are a natural occurrence and must be accepted to some degree. The key elements in evaluating closure are the extent of campus area hindered and the availability of alternate routes. Generally, snow accumulations of greater than four inches and ice accumulation of greater than one half inch will render the campus impassable.
- b) Buildings should have electric power and be at temperatures between 55 degrees F and 95 degrees F. Other unsafe conditions such as: gas leaks, hazardous materials spills, and standing water should not be present. In certain circumstances, widespread or extended malfunctions of fire alarm systems can also dictate closure. While in many instances government agencies will require closing, their action is not always timely. We should, therefore, be prepared to take quick action when an unsafe condition arises.

- B. Condition of public facilities.
 - a) Public roads should allow safe passage for students and employees to reach campus. While conditions vary significantly throughout the area, conditions in the city and five miles outside the beltway should be considered. News media reports and the actions of the federal and local governments should be considered.
 - b) Public transportation availability should also be considered, since many students and employees rely on it. To a lesser extent, the availability of the University shuttle should be considered.

2. *Service Levels*

There may be conditions that cause such discomfort or disruption that normal activities are not possible. Internal or external issues can cause these disruptions.

- A. Electric power – Because of our reliance on electricity to operate building systems and office equipment, loss of power for an extended period will generally require closing.
- B. Temperature -In theory, many activities could continue within a fairly wide temperature range. However, temperatures outside fairly narrow parameters tend to cause such distraction that productive activity becomes minimal. Temperatures below 60 degrees F or above 85 degrees F for an extended period of time can cause enough disruption to warrant suspending activities.
- C. Water -Lack of water in academic buildings does not require drastic changes unless it is widespread and for an extended time. Lack of water in residence halls, dining facilities, and/or science laboratories without self-contained water tanks for eye-wash and/or shower safety stations is more critical and may require that activities in those facilities be adjusted.
- D. Employee availability -- Activities may need to be suspended if large numbers of employees are unavailable because of widespread illness, organized work stoppage, or other event.

NOTE: When these conditions occur in a single building, the decision to close the affected facility will be made by the unit head in the facility in consultation with facilities management.

3. *Decision Process*

- A. Assessment – Sufficient information needs to be collected to make a reasonable determination of risk. Whenever possible, this information should be based on first-hand knowledge about the condition of campus facilities and recent news reports concerning off-campus conditions. Public safety, facilities management, and other appropriate personnel with first-hand knowledge of the emergency situation and its effects will conduct the assessment on a timetable to allow effective decision-making.
- B. Reporting and Consultation -Public safety and other appropriate personnel will communicate their assessments to the Emergency Response Team (ERT) leader, with recommendations for actions to be taken and the consequences of

those actions. The ERT leader will consult with members of the ERT, and provide advice to the President and/or appropriate Cabinet members.

- C. Decision -Once the President or their designee has made a decision, it will be communicated to the appropriate members of the ERT and the Cabinet.
- D. Snow/Ice Closing Timetable -For a morning closing the assessment needs to be communicated by 5:00 a.m. with the goal of having a decision made and communicated by 5:30 a.m. When there is insufficient information to make a definitive decision, a two hour delay can be used to reassess the situation after more information is available. For closing at other times, the announcement should be delivered no less than 3 hours prior to the scheduled event.