

## Sterling Public Schools

### Delaying or cancelling school due to inclement weather

### Frequently Asked Questions

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#### 1. Who makes the decision to delay or cancel school?

The Superintendent of Schools is responsible for the final decision to delay or cancel school.

#### 2. When is the decision made to delay or cancel school?

- In most cases the decision to delay or cancel school will be made the morning of the inclement weather. This decision will be made and communicated no later than 6:00 AM.
- If it is not posted on our district website by 6 AM, or you have not received an automated telephone call by 6AM, Sterling Public School is running a regular schedule.

#### 3. Is the decision to delay or cancel school ever made the night before?

- Though rare, if the conditions warrant it, I have made the decision to delay or cancel school the night before.
  - If this decision is made it will be made and communicated no later than 7:30 PM the night before.
  - If this decision is made, by IL State Code, the day missed or delayed must be made up in its entirety.
- Especially with snow and/or ice, I prefer not making the decision the night before because weather predictions are not always accurate. Also, if the decision is made to delay or cancel school the night before, by law, that day of school it must be “made up” before the end of the school year.

#### 4. How are students, parents, and the community notified of this decision?

Once the decision has been made to delay or cancel school, details will be communicated via the following methods:

- It will be posted immediately on the school district’s web site at [www.sterlingpublicschools.org](http://www.sterlingpublicschools.org)
- The school district will notify Sauk Valley Newspapers who will send out an automated text message to those who have a pre-approved account.
  - [Click here](#) to sign-up for this SVN text feature.
- The superintendent will send an automated telephone message (from School Messenger) to all SPS Contacts
  - [Click here](#) to edit your SPS Contacts list
- The District will provide information to local news media outlets, including:

| <b><u>Radio Stations</u></b> | <b><u>TV Stations</u></b>                          |
|------------------------------|--|
| WIXN AM 1460<br>WSDR AM 1240 | WHBF-Channel 4<br>KWQC-Channel 6<br>WQAD-Channel 8 |

- Please do not call the district office or your school unless it is an emergency.

## 5. What are the factors considered when making this decision?

- The top priority is the safety and security of students, staff and parents.
  - Safety really comes into play when inclement weather conditions include ice and/or extremely cold temperatures.
  - When snow is the only factor, safety and security is not necessarily about the amount of snow accumulated. In this scenario it's all about road conditions.
  - One other point to mention regarding safety is the fact that we have many new high school-aged drivers on the road.
- Past, current and future weather conditions
  - This includes the amount of snow and ice accumulated, the current weather conditions and future weather forecasts.
- Road conditions
  - Though it is important to observe the roads within the City of Sterling, when I'm talking about road conditions I am mainly referencing rural road conditions.
  - It is important to note that since I have been superintendent I have witnessed multiple times where Sterling's city roads were "travelable," while at the same time our district's rural roads were very dangerous.
  - This scenario is caused by the timeliness of the storm, which has simply not allowed township road commissioners the opportunity to clear the rural roads. Additionally, the amount of wind in rural areas has an impact on drifting, which creates tough driving conditions for busses.
- Wind-chill temperature
  - This is important to consider because many of our students walk to school or have to wait for their bus outside at the bus stop.
  - [Click here](#) for the document titled, "Delaying or Cancelling School Due to Cold Weather."
- District conditions
  - Our district facilities and grounds department informs me about the conditions of our parking lots, sidewalks and entryways.
  - Though very rare, one other important piece of information is whether schools have power and heat.

## 6. Why do we delay school instead of just cancelling?

- When the decision is made to delay school, it has been determined that there is no serious safety or security issue if school starts at a later time than normal. It's based on several factors:
  - The inclement weather situation has ceased or will improve within the next couple of hours.
  - The delay of school will allow an opportunity for road crews to clear city and rural roads for safe travel.
  - The delay of school will usually allow the temperatures to rise (if needed).
- Delayed school days do not need to be "made up," if the decision is made the day of the delay.

## 7. What are the options for a delayed school start?

There are only two delayed start options at SPS:

- A 1-hour delayed start schedule
- A 2-hour delayed start schedule

**8. Pertaining to extremely cold weather, at what temperature is the decision made to delay or cancel school?**

The simplest answer is there isn't one. In fact, air temperature is not the most important factor I consider when making this decision. What I really keep an eye on is the wind chill factor. When the wind chill factor reaches the -30 degree mark, I evaluate the situation very closely. I use this temperature as a guide because it is the approximate temperature the National Weather Service uses in its guidelines. According to the NWS, when wind chill temperatures reach 30 below zero there are serious health risks. The most significant of these health risks is frostbite, which can develop on exposed skin in 30 minutes.

- [Click here](#) for the National Weather Service's Wind Chill Chart

**9. In the case of a delayed opening, is the school day extended?**

No. Schools dismiss at their normal times, even if they opened with a one or two hour delayed start.

**10. Do we have to make-up "snow days?"**

- Delayed-start school days  
As long as the decision to delay school is made the same day, these hours do not have to be "made up."
- Cancelled school days  
If the decision is made before student attendance, the day must be "made up" in its entirety.
- Interrupted school days  
Once students attend school, if the decision is made to dismiss for any emergency, including weather, the day does not need to be "made up."

**11. When will snow days be "made up?"**

Any "make up dates" will take place following the last scheduled day of school (in May).

- This will not change the date of SHS Graduation, which will be at 3PM on the Sunday before Memorial Day.
- This will change the CMS Promotion Ceremony because it traditionally occurs on, or near, the last day of student attendance.

**12. Are there a maximum number of "make up" days?**

Yes, only five total days must be "made up." These are officially called Emergency Days by the State Board of Education.

**13. What happens to co-curricular games and practices when school is delayed or cancelled?**

- When school is cancelled (or) school is released early due to inclement weather:
  - All home activity and athletic events are cancelled, except in extreme circumstances.
  - All away events are determined by the host school. If the SHS administration determines that travel to the event is unsafe for students, they will notify the host school that we are not coming and the event will be postponed.
  - Teams and clubs may hold "open practices," but if a player cannot attend he or she will not be formally punished.
- When schools have a delayed start:
  - All after-school activities will remain as scheduled.

**14. Do you understand how inconvenient it is to arrange child care at the last minute?**

- Yes, I do! Therefore, please understand that I do not take the decision to delay or cancel school lightly.
  
- One purpose of this website information is to assist parents and guardians by communicating how important it is to make *arrangements in advance* for the care of your children when schedule changes are made. Parents, you should then talk to your children about your plans and explain what to do if a parent will not be home.

**15. Does Sterling Public Schools make the decision to delay or cancel school for the private schools in Sterling?**

- No. Newman Central Catholic HS, St. Mary's Elementary and Christ Lutheran School all make these decisions on their own.
  
- Some of these schools ask that I communicate our decision with them, which I am more than willing to oblige.