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# Just the Facts #1

What happens when there is a winter storm....

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## **Inclement Weather.....What Happens?**

### ***What area does the Limestone District School Board Cover?***

The public school board covers a geographical area of 666,043 hectares. The Limestone District School Board serves more than 24,000 students at 70 schools with 2,300 employees — elementary and secondary school teachers, educational assistants, librarians, clerical and maintenance staff and administration. The Board operates schools in the City of Kingston, the Townships of Frontenac Islands (which include Howe Island, Wolfe Island & Simcoe Island), South Frontenac, Central Frontenac, North Frontenac, Addington Highlands, Loyalist (which includes Amherst Island), Stone Mills, and the Town of Greater Napanee.

### ***Is the weather forecast the same for all areas in the Limestone District?***

Due to the large geographic area which the Limestone District School Board covers, many different weather conditions can exist at the same time throughout the Board, as a result, some transportation services may be cancelled for one area and not another. Unless a massive storm hits our entire area the Board would not make one sweeping decision about transportation cancellations because of the district's large geographical area.

## **What are some KEY issues and concerns of the Limestone Board?**

- 1) The safety of our students - providing students with safe, secure and punctual transportation
- 2) The safety of our staff attempting to travel to the work-site
- 3) The communication of cancellation information to parents (through local media announcements)
- 4) The safety and maintenance of our schools
- 5) The communication to and from the school to handle emergency situations
- 6) The use of our schools as shelters and safe havens for our children and communities

## **Who makes the final decision about cancelling transportation services?**

Decisions about cancelling transportation services to schools are a collaborative effort between the Manager of Tri-Board Transportation and the Director of Education or designated staff person(s). Important information on road conditions and general forecasts within the Limestone District School Board area is gathered from weather reports, area weather contracts, transportation operators and staff. The Manager of Tri-Board Transportation then reviews this data and recommends a course of action. The Director of Education normally supports the recommendation.



Decisions about cancelling transportation services usually occur very early in the morning of a school day, and are based on the latest information about road conditions and weather forecasts. Therefore, staff is confident that cancellation of transportation services is required in order to ensure the safety and security of our students.

## **How do I find out if buses are cancelled?**

1. Listen to the media (radio, television, etc.) for an official announcement from the Board about the cancellation of buses. Schools will not be closed, except in an emergency situation (e.g. Ice Storm). This is a rare occurrence and must be determined by the Director. You may also consult the Tri-Board Student Transportation Services website at [www.triboard.on.ca](http://www.triboard.on.ca) for information.
2. If a decision is made to withdraw all or part of the Board's support of services, parents will be urged to keep their children at home for that day. However, some students may still be at the school. It is the responsibility of the Limestone District School Board to ensure the safety of our students until arrangements can be made for them to be picked up. Principals will arrange for staff to be at the school to supervise students in attendance. Caretakers will be at the school to make sure that heat, lights and other services are available.

## **Why do schools remain open when transportation services have been cancelled?**

Closing the entire school system is a very serious matter which would require a significant set of circumstances.

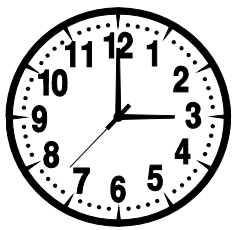
Schools remain OPEN even though transportation services have been cancelled . . . Why?

- to accept those students who may not have heard cancellation notices
- to accommodate a large percentage of students who walk to school or who are driven by their parents. Cancellation of transportation services does not always affect these students.

Parents and/or guardians must always use their own discretion when it comes to determining whether or not their child(ren) can safely get to and from their schools during inclement weather. With due regard to the safety of our staff and students, those who can make their way to school are asked to do so, unless otherwise informed.

Principals, caretakers, clerical staff and teaching staff all play significant roles during times of inclement weather. The safety and maintenance of the building, the communication in and out of each school and the proper supervision and education of our children, all are key considerations in any decisions made about inclement weather situation.

## **When would the Limestone Board send students home early?**



Once again, decisions about sending students home early because of inclement weather are a collaborative effort among Principals, bus drivers, the Manager of Tri-Board Transportation and his staff, and the Director of Education or designated staff person. In order to coordinate early bus departures, elementary staff need to be notified two hours prior to departure time. This allows staff time to notify parents that their children will be arriving home early, or to permit enough time for parents to arrange for their child(ren) to return home safely.

The municipalities within the Limestone Board are aware that buses start to take students home at 2:30 p.m. The municipalities attempt to have roads sanded or plowed by the time our students travel home. The worse thing the Board could do is send buses and staff out on roads before they have been cleared.

When buses are running late because of inclement weather, principals and support staff stay at the school to ensure that every student has left safely, and also to answer calls about transportation delays.

## **When would the Limestone Board close a school?**

The Limestone Board would close a school due to a flood, fire, the breakdown of a heating plant, the failure of utilities essential for an operation, or a similar emergency. Some extreme weather conditions could bring about school closure.

### **How is a school prepared for Inclement Weather?**

Each school has an Inclement Weather Team. This team includes at least an administrator (Principal), a staff member to handle communications (telephone, e-mail, fax), a caretaker who is familiar with the building operating systems (alarms, heating) and sufficient teaching and other staff to supervise students. This team would respond to the needs of students who come to school, provide for communications, look after the building, and make decisions on the operation of the site during the weather situation.



### **Cold Weather Safety Tips**

KFL&A Public Health recommends the following tips to help cope with inclement weather;

- 1) Keep children inside if the temperature is -25 degrees C.
- 2) Keep children inside if the wind-chill factor is -28 degrees C or greater (this is the point when exposed skin freezes within minutes).
- 3) Dress children warmly. However, if they have too many clothes on, they might sweat and become chilled when they stop playing. When this happens, the risk of frostbite occurs.
- 4) Discourage children from eating snow, as it could contain germs.
- 5) Discourage children from licking metal objects. Skin will freeze to the object making it very painful to remove the tongue.
- 6) Keep a hat on, as most of the body heat escapes from the head.

\* Please note that it is up to the Principal to determine if the temperature is sufficiently cold for the students to remain inside.