

School Cancellations, Late Starts and Make-up Days

With two late starts and two no-school days already behind us at the time of this writing, and possibly more to come, parents may appreciate having more information about how these decisions are made, how to get the latest information on a potential closure day, and what might be in store for make-up days.

The process begins the day before as staff at the district office and at First Student Bus Company (formerly Laidlaw) monitor weather reports and bulletins from Benton County Emergency Management. At about 4:30 a.m. the bus manager from First Student drives through several routes to check road conditions. He makes a recommendation about whether bus transportation can be provided and when. The decision usually is made around 5:00 a.m., since some high school students catch their buses as early as 6:00 a.m.

One of the challenges is that weather may not be the same across Corvallis. One neighborhood could be fine, but a half mile away it's very icy and dangerous—the hilly and outlying areas tend to have the worst conditions. Another challenge is that sometimes the weather changes unexpectedly between the time the decision is made around 5:00 a.m. and when most families are getting children ready for school a few hours later.

The bus manager makes a recommendation to the auxiliary services director, who checks the most up-to-date weather report, and then the superintendent and auxiliary services director make the final decision.

Our highest priority is the safety of our students and staff, so, in the end that must be the bottom line when making the decision.

The quickest way to hear the latest news about school closures and late starts is through Flash Alert. The FlashAlert.net website gives you access to emergency messages, such as snow closure information and news releases from participating schools in Oregon. In addition you may subscribe to the messages we post, receiving the information as e-mails and/or cell phone text messages. Often the television and radio stations are not able to update closures in a timely fashion. However, the e-mail and/or cell phone text messages are sent within 15 minutes of posting. To sign up go to: <http://flashalert.net/signup.html> and under "Add an Organization" select Willamette Valley Options.

If more than two school days are missed, then the superintendent makes the decision about scheduling make-up days to ensure that we meet the state-required minimum for instructional hours. Presidents Day, on February 18, may be used as a make-up day, or one or more additional days may be added to the end of the school year.