

CHATHAM-KENT LAMBTON ADMINISTRATIVE SCHOOL SERVICES

Policy:	Inclement Weather
Reference:	STS-PO-001-16
Adopted:	June 22, 2016
Revised:	May 27, 2026 June 12, 2021



Policy Goal:

It is the policy of the Member Boards and Chatham-Kent Lambton Administrative School Services (CLASS) to actively monitor inclement weather conditions, forecasts, and road condition reports as part of the decision-making process regarding the safe operation of student transportation services.

Policy Statement:

The Member Boards and Chatham-Kent Lambton Administrative School Services (CLASS) value the safety of its students and employees as our utmost priority. During periods of inclement weather that result in hazardous conditions, student transportation may be cancelled under the procedures outlined within this policy.

Preamble:

CLASS is jointly and equally owned by the Lambton Kent District and the St. Clair Catholic District School Boards who mutually benefit in the provision of shared services. CLASS is comprised of various business units, including Student Transportation Services, Community Use of Schools and Child Care Services.

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Policy Guidelines:

1.0 Administrative Procedures:

- a. The General Manager of CLASS or designate, after consultation with Area Spokesperson(s) and/or Zone Captains, will approve curtailment, cancellation, or disruption of transportation schedules in accordance with the approved Student Transportation Policies and Procedures.
- b. The General Manager of CLASS or designate will provide, through participating local radio stations, and various electronic media, consistent, timely and accurate information regarding service cancellations resulting from inclement weather conditions.
- c. The General Manager of CLASS or designate shall provide updates and information regarding conditions and forecasts to the Directors of Education or designate(s) in situations where decisions regarding school cancellations and or Board facility closures may be required.
- d. For the purpose of administering transportation services for the Lambton Kent District School Board and the St. Clair Catholic District School Board, the total geographic area of Lambton County and Chatham-Kent Municipality will be divided into eight distinct zones as described in Section 2.0, Weather Zones.
- e. Two Area Spokespersons, one for Zones 1 through 4 and one for Zones 5 through 8, will represent all the Zone Captains and the school bus operator's assessment and recommendations regarding operational status for all Zones in their area.

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2.0 Weather Zones:

Zone	Boundaries
Zone 1	N - Lake Huron W - Mandaumin Road S - Churchill Line E - County Boundary
Zone 2	N - Lake Huron W - St. Clair River S - Churchill Line E - Mandaumin Road
Zone 3	N - Churchill Line W - St. Clair River S - Bickford Line E - Mandaumin Road
Zone 4	N - Churchill Line W - Mandaumin Road S - Bentpath Line E - County Boundary
Zone 5	N - Bickford Line W - St. Clair River S - Angler Line / Bear Line / Greenvalley Line E - Mandaumin Road / Connection Road / Base Line
Zone 6	N - Bentpath Line W - Mandaumin Road / Connection Road / Base Line S - Kent Bridge Road / Lake Erie E - County Boundary
Zone 7	N - Angler Line / Bear Line / Greenvalley Line / Base Line W - Lake St. Clair / County Boundary S - Lake Erie E - Kent Bridge Road
Zone 8	N - Pioneer Line W - Bear Line Road / Bloomfield Road (including Wilcox Park) S - 401 HWY E - Prince Albert Road / Communication Road

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3.0 Operational Procedures:

3.1 Prior to Regular School Hours –Inclement Winter Weather:

In situations of inclement weather, the following procedure will be followed:

- a. Bus Operators will ensure all road condition spotters are mobilized to conduct on the road condition assessments and prepared to provide reports to appropriate Zone Captains within a suitable timeframe to support the decision-making process.
- b. Each Zone Captain, after consistent and thorough contact with all spotters throughout their zone, will facilitate a recommendation to the Area Spokesperson regarding operating school buses within their assigned Zone.
- c. Each Area Spokesperson (a designated school bus operator), after consistent and thorough contact with all other Zone Captains and school bus operators operating within their zones, will facilitate a recommendation to the General Manager of CLASS or designate for those zones regarding whether or not school buses will operate in those zones.

Area Spokespersons, together with Zone Captains will make recommendations regarding whether or not to operate school buses within a designated zone based on factors such as:

1. local weather reports, doppler radar conditions & forecasts from sources including Environment Canada
 2. road & visibility conditions as reported by zone spotters
 3. reports from other CLASS Zone Captains
 4. condition of school loading zones
 5. wind speed, temperature & wind-chill conditions and forecasts
 6. reports from local police & emergency services
 7. reports from local City / Municipal Public Works departments
 8. reports from neighbouring districts
- d. Each Zone Captain will communicate the transportation recommendation for each zone to the Area Spokespersons prior to 5:40 a.m. who will contact the General Manager of CLASS or designate prior to 5:45 a.m. with final recommendations.

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- e. The General Manager of CLASS or designate will compile and coordinate the zone recommendations and formulate a decision regarding whether or not to provide transportation services in each zone. The General Manager of CLASS or designate will post an update on the student transportation website www.cklass.ca, through the Bus Tracking App, Social Media Platforms, and communicate with participating local media prior to 6:00 a.m. School Board Senior Administration and CLASS staff will be promptly informed of any closures directly via email.
- f. Buses that have been cancelled in the morning due to inclement weather will not return students in the afternoon. If parents drive students to school in the morning, they are responsible to pick their children up and take them home in the afternoon.

3.2 Prior to Regular School Hours – Fog Only:

In situations of inclement weather involving only fog, the following procedure will be followed:

- a. Bus Operators will ensure all road condition spotters are mobilized to conduct on the road condition assessments and prepared to provide reports to appropriate Zone Captains within a suitable timeframe to support the decision-making process.
- b. Each Zone Captain, after consistent and thorough contact with all spotters throughout their zone, will facilitate a recommendation to the Area Spokesperson regarding operating school buses within their assigned Zone.
- c. Each Area Spokesperson (a designated school bus operator), after consistent and thorough contact with all other Zone Captains and school bus operators operating within their zones, will make a recommendation whether or not to declare a Fog Cancellation within a designated zone.
- d. Area Spokespersons, Zone Captains and Transportation Services personnel will follow the procedures detailed in Section 3.1, parts b and c, to communicate Fog Cancellation recommendations, and resulting decisions.
- e. Buses that have been cancelled in the morning due to fog will operate in the afternoon to return students to their homes.
- f. For fog conditions persisting throughout the day, refer to Section 3.4.

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3.3 Situations Occurring During Routes:

Drivers shall use the following procedures in the event he/she is unable to continue with the route:

- a. Maneuver the bus slowly to the shoulder of the road, or off the traveled portion of the road to a safe location, activate the vehicle 4-way flashers and ensure the roof-mounted strobe light remains activated.
- b. When necessary, advise passengers to move to the front and shoulder side of the bus (as many as possible).
- c. Ask for assistance, if necessary, to keep passengers calm and quiet.
- d. Call dispatch to advise them of the location, circumstances, and the last student picked up. Dispatch shall then notify the school(s) and Student Transportation Services of the situation, post delays on the Bus Tracking App, and provide regular updates.
- e. Under no circumstances should students be returned to their homes (morning route). Procedures to return students to their homes should follow the process outlined in Section 3.4.
- f. When it is safe to proceed, advise dispatch and proceed in accordance to road conditions. Dispatch shall then notify the school(s) and Student Transportation Services. In the event that the conditions preventing the continuation of the route persist and do not appear to be improving, Dispatch shall notify the Zone Captains who in turn shall consult with the Area Spokesperson.
- g. Each Area Spokesperson (a designated school bus operator), after consistent and thorough contact with all other Zone Captains and school bus operators operating within their zones, will make a recommendation whether or not to declare a mid-route service cancellation within a designated zone to the General Manager of CLASS or designate.
- h. Area Spokespersons, Zone Captains and Transportation Services personnel will immediately communicate the mid-route service cancellation recommendation with the General Manager of CLASS or designate.
- i. The General Manager of CLASS or designate will review and assess recommendations and formulate a decision regarding whether or not to initiate a mid-route service cancellation in the impacted zone(s). The General Manager of CLASS or designate will update CLASS Board of Directors, post an update on the student transportation website www.cklass.ca and through the Bus Tracking App. School Administrators and Board Senior Administration will be promptly informed of any closures directly via email.

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- j. In the event of a mid-route service cancellation decision, the General Manager of CLASS or designate will liaise with the Board's communication staff to coordinate informing local media regarding the mid-route service cancellation.
- k. Senior Board Administration will notify Principals of the decision for a mid-route service cancellation.
- l. School Principals or designates will notify parents / guardians of students at the school of the service cancellation and need to pick up students at the school.
- m. Bus drivers shall bring any students on the bus prior to the service cancellation to their school at the earliest opportunity with the utmost concern for safety and shall keep their dispatch regularly updated of their status / location.

3.4 Situations Occurring During the School Day:

Early release / afternoon service cancellation shall only be considered as a last resort, or in emergency situations. If inclement weather necessitates the need to consider the early dismissal of students, or the cancellation of bussing, the following procedures will occur:

- a. The School Bus Operators and Zone Captains will consult with the Area Spokesperson with their recommendation for early dismissal or the cancellation of bussing in that zone.

Most schools require up to three (3) hours for the completion of their parental contact system. Any recommendation from Area Spokespersons for the consideration of an early release must be submitted to the General Manager of CLASS or designate by no later than 10:00am.

The General Manager of CLASS or designate will submit the recommendation to the Directors of Education or designates from the member boards for final approval. If the recommendation is supported, the system notification process will begin immediately following approval from the Directors of Education or designates from both Boards.

- b. Senior Board Administration will notify Principals of the decision for an early release or cancellation.
- c. It is the Principal's (or designate's) responsibility to follow their respective Board procedures regarding notification of parents / guardians of the early release decision and subsequent plans for student release / student transportation.

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- d. The Board's communication staff will notify the media and the General Manager of CLASS or designate will post an update to www.cklass.ca and through the Bus Tracking App immediately following confirmation from Senior Board Administrations of the early dismissal / cancellation of bussing arrangements.
- e. If inclement weather necessitates the early dismissal of students, the buses will only make one run home. The buses will not come back at the regular dismissal time or any other time to take any additional students home.

4.0 Extreme Cold Conditions:

During extreme cold conditions, diesel vehicles may experience no-start and mechanical breakdown situations. Ambient (actual) temperatures below -40°C (excluding wind chill) can create the potential for fuel clouding/gelling, clogged filters and loss of engine power in diesel school buses. Extreme cold conditions can also have adverse effects on other vehicle systems and components that can lead to breakdowns and delays. Temperatures in this range are highly unusual in the Chatham-Kent, Sarnia-Lambton areas.

There is no defined temperature threshold at which student transportation services will be cancelled by CLASS. Monitoring conditions, vehicle breakdowns and Environment Canada forecasted temperatures and wind chills are part of the daily service cancellation decision process.

During a prolonged period of extreme cold temperatures that do not reach -40°C (excluding wind chill), the General Manager or designate may use their discretion in considering cancellation of bussing, keeping in mind the impact on the vehicles and the bus operator's realistic ability to repair mechanical breakdowns.

5.0 Cancellation of Late Buses:

In the event adverse inclement weather conditions deteriorate or present during the school day and school bus operator(s) have concerns about the safety of providing Late Bus Service:

The school bus operator(s) will advise the school Principal or designate that late buses have been cancelled prior to the end of the daily lunch period at the school to enable students to take the regular buses home.

6.0 Cancellation of Charter Buses:

Charter bus trips shall not occur during periods of time when the conditions have been deemed to not be safe for home to school student transportation. This applies to the Zone the school is located within, any travel Zone that would be part of the Charter trip, and the destination Zone where the Charter trip will occur. The school bus operator(s) will advise the school Principal or designate when charter buses have been cancelled as a result of unsafe conditions.

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On days when Morning home to school student transportation services have been cancelled due to Fog conditions and are anticipated to operate for the Afternoon service with improved conditions (i.e. fog dissipates):

- Charter Buses will NOT perform services while Fog conditions persist;
- Charter Buses will NOT depart from a 'closed' Fog zone prior to 9:30am or the school morning bell time, whichever is later, and;
- Charter Buses will NOT travel through, or to any Zones where unsafe Fog Conditions exist.

7.0 Communications:

CLASS shall maintain a current library of the policies, regulations, administrative and operational procedures and parental expectations for Transportation on their student transportation website www.cklass.ca.

8.0 Emergency Situations:

In the event of an emergency situation not previously addressed in this procedure, CLASS shall develop and implement timely local solutions in collaboration with the school Principal(s), Board Senior Administration and local bus operators that support student safety.