

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Winter Weather Schedule Information and Announcements

Haywood County, North Carolina – October 8, 2014

Haywood County Schools has closed an average of eight days during the last ten years because of inclement weather. Inclement weather during winter months often creates hazardous travel conditions in the form of icy roads, snow covered roads and even patches of frozen fog on roadways. Hazardous travel conditions may require altering school operating schedules, altering bus routes or closing schools. Schools will be closed when ten percent (10%) of the bus routes have to be altered due to weather conditions. Schools will also be closed if weather conditions prevent all of the buses from running their regular routes at an individual school.

When weather conditions cause a change in school schedules, local media are notified by 5:45 a.m. each morning so the change may be announced as soon as reasonably possible. The school system will continue to use a rapid notification calling system for parents and staff. This year for the first time, schools have the capability to text or email parents in addition to sending a voice message. Parents are encouraged to contact their local school for texting and email options.

Weather related announcements are posted on the school district website at www.haywood.k12.nc.us. Interested individuals can also call 456-2441 (extension 2177) to hear a recorded message. One of five announcements will be made.

1. School Closed – Optional Workday – Schools will be closed for students. However, faculty and staff have the option of reporting to work or taking accumulated annual leave day.
2. School Closed – Annual Leave Day – Schools will be closed for students. Ten month employees will have an annual leave day deducted from their leave allotment and should not report to work. Eleven and twelve month employees may use accumulated annual leave or report to work.
3. Closed (or No Day) – Schools will be closed for students and all staff. Staff may only work with the prior approval of the Superintendent,

Associate Superintendent or Principal. This day may be used for several reasons: (1) when weather causes school to be closed on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday and the make-up day is scheduled for Saturday (2) when annual leave days and workdays have been exhausted or are nearly exhausted (3) when travel conditions are extremely dangerous and there is a significant risk of injury if employees attempt to report to work.

4. Two-Hour Delay – Buses will operate two hours later than their regular schedule for morning bus runs. Buses will not run on icy roads. In the afternoon, buses will operate their normal time and route schedule to the extent roads can be safely traveled. Parents are encouraged to meet school buses at a point on the route where road conditions do not allow a bus to travel. When there is a two-hour delay, school buildings will be opened on the normal operating schedule so working parents may take children to school. Students arriving early should report to their first class or the school's designated area. Regular class schedules will begin two hours later than the normal schedule. Faculty and staff should report to work on the normal schedule. Students who cannot meet buses at safe turn-around locations will be allowed an excused absence and will be required to make-up work in accordance with policy.

5. Three-Hour Delay – Buses will operate three hours later than their regular schedule for morning bus runs. Buses will not run on icy roads. In the afternoon, buses will operate their normal time and route schedule to the extent roads can be safely traveled. Parents are encouraged to meet school buses at a point on the route where road conditions do not allow a bus to travel. When there is a three-hour delay, school buildings will be opened on the normal operating schedule so working parents may take children to school. Students arriving early should report to their first class or the school's designated area. Regular class schedules will begin three hours later than the normal schedule. Faculty and staff should report to work on the normal schedule. Students who cannot meet buses at safe turn-around locations will be allowed an excused absence and will be required to make-up work in accordance with policy.

Many people think delay schedules are designed to allow roadways to melt. While warming can be beneficial, many buses begin their routes before temperatures begin to rise. Delay schedules improve travel safety by allowing drivers to better see road conditions. Delay schedules also provide time for the Department of Transportation to work on road trouble spots.

Delays are also used in some instances to determine if early morning winter storms develop as forecasted.

Dr. Anne Garrett, Superintendent said, “The overriding factor in making weather related decisions is the safety of our students and staff. Since weather can change quickly in our mountains, we will make most decisions in the early morning hours. That allows us to consider the most current weather and road conditions.”

Rick Stiles, Director of Transportation said, “Predicting weather and making decisions about school schedules in the mountains is not a perfect science. In making these decisions, we use every tool available, including information about weather conditions in neighboring counties, radar imagery and first hand observations of local road conditions.

Dr. Bill Nolte, Associate Superintendent said, “When making decisions about school schedules, we focus on road conditions rather than forecasts. Our primary focus is on the condition of roads and the projected condition of roads across the entire district.”

Haywood County Schools
1230 North Main Street
Waynesville, NC 28786

www.haywood.k12.nc.us

Contact: Dr. Bill Nolte, Associate Superintendent

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