

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures to close, cancel classes, or cease portions of the University's operations due to hazardous weather conditions and to provide continuity of essential operations during inclement weather.

Statement of Policy

The University of Mary recognizes that adverse weather conditions can impact university operations. While every attempt is made to maintain normal operations and services for the benefit of students, faculty, and staff, it may occasionally be necessary to close the university when extreme weather conditions occur.

The University does not advise employees to take unwarranted risks when traveling to work in the event of inclement weather or other emergencies. Each person should exercise his or her best judgment with regard to road conditions and other safety concerns. Therefore, no employee should come to work if he or she feels the conditions are unsafe.

Life-Threatening Emergency Communication Plan (All Locations)

Not to be confused with the policies and procedures laid out in this Inclement Weather Policy is any life-threatening emergency that demands immediate action. In the event of a life-threatening emergency, the first individual with knowledge of the situation and access to the Emergency Notification System has the authority and obligation to send the notification. Full information can be found in the University's Emergency Plan.

Procedures

Closing Decisions

Main Campus/Bismarck Butler Center/all other Bismarck Sites (PT):

- A. The Vice president for Academic Affairs and/or the Executive Vice President, in consultation with the other, are authorized to make the decision to close the University and/or cancel in-person class meetings, delay opening, or close early due to inclement weather. Deans/chairs, department heads, directors, and supervisors are not authorized to make closing decisions in their areas of responsibility. In the event that neither the Vice President for Academic Affairs nor the Executive Vice President are available to make the decision, another member of President's Council will make the decision.
- B. In these events, the University will strive to provide as much advance notice as possible, with the goal of making announcements regarding the cancellation of morning classes by 6:00 a.m., the cancellation of afternoon classes by 11:00 a.m., and the cancellation of evening classes (beginning 5:00 p.m. or later) by 2:00 p.m. Closing decisions for the next workday may also be announced during evening hours when hazardous weather conditions warrant.

Communication to all Bismarck location students should be sent with clear instruction using the guidelines found in “Announcement of Class Cancellations/Closing Decisions” below.

All other sites and locations:

- A. The leading staff member at each site (or the next highest, if that person is unavailable) is authorized to make a recommendation to the Vice President responsible for that site to cancel in-person classes, close the facility, delay opening, or close early due to inclement weather. The staff member may take into consideration the decisions by other schools in the area.

Once a recommendation has been received, the Vice President responsible for the site will make a final decision. In the event that the Vice President responsible for the site is not available, the leading staff member at the location should consult the Vice President for Academic Affairs or the Executive Vice President.

- B. The Vice President responsible for the site (or in his or her absence, the person making the decision) will notify the requestor of the decision. If any communication to the students and/or facilitators is appropriate, then communication should be sent with clear instruction using the guidelines found in “Announcement of Class Cancellations/Closing Decisions” below.

The leading staff member at each location shall handle communication to local media outlets regarding the decision made.

Distinguishing between Class Cancellations and University Closings

It is important to distinguish between class cancellations and university closings. A decision to cancel in-person class meetings due to inclement weather is made separately from consideration to close the campus. It is possible that classes would be cancelled but the campus would remain open for other business.

- A. Under some conditions, in-person classes will be cancelled, but the university will remain open to maintain student access to most services. When in-person academic class meetings are cancelled, employees are expected to perform their assigned responsibility for the day as usual.

In the event that in-person classes are cancelled, or the campus is closed, teaching faculty are expected to provide updates to their students via technology. In this situation, students are expected to check with their instructors using the University’s technology to determine whether coursework will be assigned or administered.

It is also generally assumed that if classes on campus are cancelled, online classes would not be interrupted.

- B. Under some conditions, the University will delay opening. In these circumstances, weather reports suggest that conditions will improve early in the day and the delay allows students, staff, and faculty additional time to get to work, limits the number of people commuting during the rush hours, and allows for clearing of parking lots and roads.

- C. Under some conditions, the University is closed. In these circumstances, no in-person classes are held, and most offices are closed. There are certain personnel who must report for work even when the university is closed so that the institution can serve the essential needs of residential students. The decision is made when extreme conditions are widespread in the city and raise personal safety issues.

Announcement of Class Cancellations/Closing Decisions

- A. The individual making the decision will initiate the process of communicating the class cancellations/closing decision to the University of Mary community.
- B. Once a decision has been made, the individual making the decision (e.g., Executive Vice President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President responsible for a site, etc.) must first inform appropriate staff of the decision via email. The distribution list should be as follows: President's Council (all), the Director of Public Affairs, the Media Relations Specialist, the Safety and Security Coordinator, and the Switchboard Operator. These individuals can be found readily under a distribution list entitled "Weather-Related Announcement Group."
 - a. This email communication from the individual making the decision should also include a first draft of the text to be published on 8000.umary.edu.
 - b. For satellite campuses, this communication will be composed and sent by the Vice President responsible for the site.
- C. All weather-related closure or cancellation information will first be posted to 8000.umary.edu. The text of these messages should always end with: "Students are expected to check with their instructors using Canvas to determine whether coursework will be assigned or administered. If you are not yet registered for emergency notifications, please sign up now."
 - a. The responsibility to post this information to 8000.umary.edu in a timely fashion belongs to the Director of Public Affairs or his or her delegate.
 - b. The Office of Public Affairs will also proofread or otherwise edit this initial draft for clarity of information, and it will ensure that the conclusion of the message reads as noted above.
 - c. 8000.umary.edu is the primary hub for all official University of Mary communication regarding closure/cancellation. Once 8000.umary.edu is updated, the Director of Public Affairs or his or her delegate replies to all members of the email distribution list to inform that this action has been completed. All information posted on 8000.umary.edu is to be "time-stamped" at the beginning of each post (e.g., "Oct. 21, 5:57am: The University of Mary is closed due to inclement weather...").
- D. As soon as that information is visible at 8000.umary.edu, and not before, then emergency notification texts and posts on Twitter and Facebook go out with one of two messages:
 - a. "Weather Alert: See 8000.umary.edu. More info here soon."
 - b. "Urgent Alert: See 8000.umary.edu."
 - i. The individual making the decision is responsible for sending the initial text through the emergency notification system.

- ii. The Director of Public Affairs or his or her delegate is responsible for distribution using social media platforms.

Note: "here" in the messages above refers to the platform on which the message was sent (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, text) and not simply 8000.umary.edu.

- E. Following the initial issuance of a "Weather Alert", the issuer waits 5-10 minutes before vital information from the message on 8000.umary.edu is issued through further texts (160 characters maximum) and tweets (140 characters maximum). A full or edited version of the message on 8000.umary.edu can be posted to Facebook, always ending with "Monitor 8000.umary.edu for more updates." If an "Urgent Alert" was issued, vital information is transmitted through 8000.umary.edu, texts, and social media without delay as information becomes available.
 - a. The Director of Public Affairs or his or her delegate is responsible for this distribution.
- F. Often, the office of public affairs then alerts appropriate media outlets. Bismarck media outlets include:
 - a. TV – KFYR and KXMB
 - b. Radio – KFYR 550 and KBMR 1130
- G. Following posting of the immediately relevant closure/cancellation information, the Director of Residence Life, Director of University Ministry, Director of Student Life, and Dining Services will report appropriate information regarding services and activities on campus through email to the Director of Public Affairs within one hour after the initial text. The Director of Public Affairs will then post on 8000.umary.edu and subsequently send out notices through text and social media. Other departments may draft additional updates, announcements, or clarifications for posting on 8000.umary.edu, to be submitted by email to the Director of Public Affairs. The Director of Public Affairs is responsible for validating relevance, proofreading, or otherwise editing the initial drafts for clarity of information and then posting the notices. Each post on 8000.umary.edu should be "time-stamped," and each new post should be placed at the top of the page, above previous posts.
- H. The Director of Public Affairs prompts the university switchboard to take appropriate action. University switchboard is responsible for informing incoming callers to the switchboard of all university class cancellations/closing decisions. The announcement will include: cancellation of classes (if applicable); time of closing; and direction for callers to monitor 8000.umary.edu. Circumstances will dictate whether this announcement is accomplished through voicemail greeting or if the switchboard operator will continue to answer incoming calls. Care must be taken that the cancellation voicemail is operative only during the actual closure.

Designated Personnel

- A. Determination of designated personnel
 - a. When a closing decision is made, certain categories of employees (designated as "designated personnel") are required to work their normally scheduled shifts and/or in excess of their normally scheduled shifts as required during inclement weather to ensure continuity of essential operations. Annually, each member of

President's Council is responsible for preparing a list of "designated personnel" to supplement the list below and provide those names to human resources.

- b. Supervisors of designated personnel are responsible for informing their employees, in writing, of the designation as "designated personnel," their assignment, and the requirement to report to work on time for their regular work shift whenever the Inclement Weather Policy is in effect due to hazardous weather conditions or any acts which may result in a closing decision for the University. Supervisors are responsible for notifying current employees of their "designated personnel" status on an annual basis and informing new employees when they accept employment offers.
- B. Other categories of employees may occasionally be considered "designated personnel" when circumstances require a change in status. Supervisors will notify the employee of this change in status as soon as practical.

Designated Personnel: (Main Campus)

- i. Custodial/physical plant
- ii. Food service
- iii. Switchboard operator
- iv. Campus security
- v. Residence Directors
- vi. Others as determined by members of President's Council

Designated Personnel: (remote campus locations)

- i. All personnel designated by the Vice President responsible for the site.

Approved

April 2017 by the President of the University

August 2017 by the Board of Trustees (EC)

October 2019 revised by the President's Council

11 March 2021 by the Board of Trustees

18 March 2021 delivered to University Senate