Authority to Close the University

The authority and responsibility for closing the University rests with the President or designate. In the absence of the President, the responsibility for closing the University shall rest with the next available officer in the following sequence:

- Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
- Vice-President (Finance, Administration and Risk)
- Associate Vice-President (Academic)
- Vice-Provost (Student Affairs)

Although these procedures have been developed primarily for closings as a result of hazardous weather conditions, they will also be followed in the event of any other conditions that require the closing or evacuation of the University.

While every effort will be made to conduct thorough consultations before a closing decision is made, where hazardous weather conditions or other emergency circumstances pose an obvious risk to public safety, some consultations provided in this policy may be eliminated in the interest of a speedy and efficient closing decision.

Whenever possible, if a decision is to be made about closing before normal business hours, every effort will be made to render a judgment on the matter by 5:30 a.m. to allow public communication. If the University must close during normal business hours, every effort will be made to communicate the decision so as to provide a one hour lead time to ensure the orderly cessation of operations.

With the exception of those essential services listed in Appendix I, the closing will be final and not left to the discretion of individuals or departments unless special arrangements are made with the President or designate and the University of Guelph Campus Community Police. Only those employees who have been notified in advance by their supervisors that they are essential workers for the purposes of this policy are expected to report to work.

The President (for operations reporting directly to the Office of the President) and each Vice-President will be responsible for ensuring the preparation of telephone contact trees that can be utilized in emergency closing situations to communicate decisions concerning the closure or curtailment of normal University operations. The development of phone trees should incorporate, as appropriate, the need to contact non-University operations located on campus (e.g. external retail and professional service providers located in the University Centre), student and employee organizations with their own staff, and volunteers (e.g. Campus Safe Walk, First Response Team). Each Vice-President will be responsible for ensuring these telephone trees are current and activated appropriately when this policy is implemented.

In all cases where this policy identifies a particular University administrator, this will apply to the administrator or his/her designate at the time the policy is being implemented.

Section A Steps Leading to a Decision Concerning Closure of Guelph Campus

Step 1

The on-duty Campus Community Police Sergeant or Senior Constable will monitor:

- road, parking lot and sidewalk conditions in consultation with the Grounds Manager or designate
- the weather forecast through the University website weather link
- City schools, other organization closures, radio broadcast road conditions and closures with a focus on Highway 6, 7, and 401 through the MTO website [1].
• Guelph Transit operational status as communicated to the Campus Community Police Dispatch.

If the above information indicates that conditions are such that closure should be considered, the Sergeant or Senior Constable will contact the Director, Campus Community Police or designate by 4:15 a.m. with advice regarding the curtailment of University operations due to hazardous weather conditions or other emergency conditions.

Step 2

The Director, Campus Community Police or designate will then telephone the AVP, Physical Resources or designate with a preliminary assessment of hazardous weather conditions. The Director, Campus Community Police and the AVP, Physical Resources or their designates will consult with relevant contacts as possible given the time of day and particular circumstances.

The Director, Campus Community Police in addition to the information provided by the on-duty Campus Community Police Sergeant or Senior Constable will gather information regarding weather and road conditions from other sources including:

• Canadian Automobile Association (CAA)
• Environment Canada
• Guelph City Police
• Ministry of Transportation
• Ontario Provincial Police
• Guelph Transit Commission

The AVP, Physical Resources or designate will determine (a) whether other educational institutions in the City of Guelph are closing and (b) whether there is other relevant information available from other agencies or institutions, including:

• Conestoga College (Guelph Campus)
• University of Waterloo
• Wilfrid Laurier University
• McMaster University
• Upper Grand District School Board
• Wellington Catholic District School Board

After consulting with the AVP, Physical Resources, and if closure is being recommended, the Director, Campus Community Police will call and advise the Vice-President (Finance, Administration and Risk) by 5:00 a.m. The Vice-President (Finance, Administration and Risk) will be responsible for advising the President of hazardous weather conditions by 5:30 a.m. The President or in absence of the President, the President’s designate will decide to close or open the University.

Step 3

If the President decides to close the University, the decision will include, when possible, an indication of when the University expects to reopen. The President will inform the Vice-President (Finance, Administration and Risk) of the decision. The Vice-President (Finance, Administration and Risk) will, in turn, advise the AVP, Physical Resources, and the Director, Integrated Communications and each of the Vice-Presidents.

In the case of a decision to close the University it is also the President’s decision, based on input and/or consultation with the appropriate Vice-President, whether special arrangements for selected University operations to remain open will be allowed. This decision shall be communicated to affected operations and to Campus Community Police by the appropriate Vice-President.

The Director, Integrated Communications will initiate communications concerning closure of the University and will serve as the official University spokesperson with media concerning the closure. The AVP, Physical Resources will advise the Director of Campus Community Police, and they will proceed to work together on operational matters.
throughout the closure of the University. Each Vice-President will proceed to advise their operations of the closure decision using their telephone tree contact lists.

Step 4

Once a decision is made to close the University, the Director, Integrated Communications is responsible for pursuing the following in a timely manner, as best as can be done in the circumstances, and consistent with the provisions of this policy:

- post the closure message on the University home page (see Appendix II for sample messages)
- ensure that the University telephone greeting is changed when closure occurs during the regular business day, send a notice of closure on the University of Guelph telephone notification system
- when closure occurs prior to the university opening, send a notice of closure to all students via email and SafeGryphon App
- contact local radio and television stations

Messages left on the switchboard, posted on the University web page, on library terminals and elsewhere will all advise students, faculty and staff to monitor local radio and television stations.

The Director, Integrated Communications will ensure that the home page, switchboard, library and other closure messages are up-dated as required. The Director, Integrated Communications will also be responsible for checking the day's agenda via the University web calendar to determine what special events and large campus gatherings are planned that may be affected and communicate the closing decision where possible. These contacts by the Director, Integrated Communications should be reinforced and supplemented through the implementation of the telephone trees from each of the Vice-Presidents' offices communicating any decision to curtail University operations.

Steps Taken, if Possible, In Advance of Hazardous Weather

When there is appropriate lead time and circumstances warrant, consideration will be given to issuing an advisory on the University home page regarding a “weather watch” (or other emergency situation) that is being monitored for impact on the University's normal operations. The Vice-President (Finance, Administration and Risk) will work with the Director, Integrated Communications to prepare and issue an appropriate message in these circumstances (see Appendix II for sample messages).

When a weather watch or other emergency condition develops during regular business hours, the Director, Integrated Communications or designate will endeavor to inform organizers of any special events or large gatherings listed on the University web calendar if a decision to close the University appears likely. As time permits, the Director, Integrated Communications will consult organizers about any special problems that might be caused by cancellation or postponement.

Section B Closure of U of G Operations Outside of Guelph

Since weather conditions may vary across the province, the Dean, Ontario Agricultural College (OAC), and the Vice-President (Research) will be responsible respectively for ensuring that the regional campuses of OAC and the Research Stations outside Guelph have emergency closing procedures in place.

For Research Stations managed from Guelph (Woodstock, Arkell, Guelph, Ponsonby, Elora, Alma, Vineland, Simcoe and Kettleby), the Manager of Research Station Operations (RSO) in consultation with the local unit managers, will advise the Vice-President (Research) regarding hazardous weather conditions, including roads being closed by the OPP or other authority, or other emergency conditions that affect the operation of the Stations. Measures being taken to care for the livestock, as well as for the provision of other essential services at the Research Stations, will be reported to the Vice-President (Research). The Manager, RSO, will relay any instructions from the Vice-President (Research) to the appropriate Unit Managers.

The Provost for the University of Guelph-Humber (U of G-H) will ensure that emergency closing procedures are in
place for U of G-H.

In all cases, the Dean/Vice-President/CEO will advise the President whether a closing decision should apply in some or all of these areas. If a decision is made to close, the Dean/Vice-President/CEO will inform the University's Director, Integrated Communications of the decision and determine whether any related communications are needed at the University's main campus.

**Appendix I Services Deemed Essential**

The Directors of the following units are responsible for ensuring that appropriate levels of service are continued and for identifying the essential staff necessary to provide services and notifying these individuals in advance:

- Laboratory Services Division
- Off-Campus Research Stations
- Physical Resources
- Student Health Services
- Student Housing Services
- CCS
- OVC/HSC

Employees designated to provide these essential services should be notified by their supervisors. All employees in a unit would not normally be deemed essential. When time permits, a reminder should be provided to these employees when a weather watch is in effect.

Only those employees identified by their supervisors as essential for the purposes of this policy are expected to report to work in case of a closure of the University.

**Appendix II Suggested Messages**

Although it is difficult to predict the exact situation that may arise, the following two messages illustrate the sequence of announcements that could be used in a weather-related University closing situation:

**Sample Message 1 Weather Watch**

As of (date/time) the University is open and we are continuing to monitor weather conditions. Any decision to close will be posted on our web page prior to 7:00 a.m. Faculty, staff and students are advised to use public transportation for safety reasons and because the availability of cleared parking spaces may be limited.

**Sample Message 2 - University is Closed**

Time and Date: The University has adopted weather emergency procedures and is closed. Classes and examinations are cancelled for (day/month/year). Only those employees who have been identified by their supervisors as essential workers are requested to report to work. Students, staff and faculty are advised to monitor local radio and television stations and the University home page for updates.

Please [view this link for the service plan](https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/staff-faculty-hr-policies-all-employees/512-hazardous-weather-emergency-closing-procedures-all-staff) related to snow or severe weather potential reduced service.

**File attachments:** SNOW or SEVERE WEATHER SERVICE PLAN 2018.pdf

**Source URL:** https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/staff-faculty-hr-policies-all-employees/512-hazardous-weather-emergency-closing-procedures-all-staff
Links
[2] https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/system/files/SNOW%20or%20SEVERE%20WEATHER%20SERVICE%20PLAN%202018.pdf