512 Hazardous Weather / Emergency Closing Procedures

Authority to Close the University

The authority and responsibility for closing, in whole or in part, any or all of the University due to a condition or situation where, upon assessment or review, such closure is warranted, rests with the President or designate. In the event the President or designate cannot be reached, the responsibility for closing the University shall rest with the next reachable officer in the following sequence:

- Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
- Vice-President (Finance, Administration and Risk)
- Associate Vice-President (Academic)
- Vice-Provost (Student Affairs)
- Director, Campus Community Police

Although these procedures have been developed primarily for closings as a result of hazardous weather conditions, these procedures will also be followed in the event of any other conditions or situations 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, some consultations considered in this policy may not occur in the interest of a speedy and efficient decision for public safety.

When meteorological information indicates the potential for hazardous weather, the Director of Campus Community Police will contact the Registrar to both inform them of the impending weather and to determine if there are any key campus activities that could be impacted should a closure occur. This information will be provided by the Director of Campus Community Police to the Vice-President (Finance, Administration and Risk) during the decision consultative process.

Whenever possible, if a decision is to be made about closing every effort will be made to render a judgment on the matter by 5:30 a.m. to allow for 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 minimum one-hour lead time to ensure the orderly curtailment of operations.

With the exception of those essential or required 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 and the University of Guelph Campus Community Police. Only those employees who have been informed in advance by their supervisors that they provide essential or required services 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 communication procedures (e.g. telephone contact trees, mass email distribution lists, group text messaging, etc.) that can be utilized in emergency closing situations to communicate decisions concerning the closure or curtailment of normal University operations. The development of communication procedures 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 communication procedures 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 designate at the time the policy is being implemented.

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

1. The on-duty Campus Community Police Sergeant or a Special 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 www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/traveller/conditions/southwestern.html [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 a Special 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.

2. The Director, Campus Community Police or designate will then contact the AVP, Physical Resources or designate with a preliminary assessment of hazardous weather conditions. The Director, Campus Community Police and the AVP, Physical Resources will consult with relevant contacts to the extent possible given the time of day and particular circumstances to gather additional information for assessment purposes, including:

   (a) weather and road conditions from sources including:

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

   (b) operational status, i.e. open or closed, of school boards within the City of Guelph including:

   - Upper Grand District School Board
   - Wellington Catholic District School Board; and

   (c) operational status, i.e. open or closed, of other post-secondary educational institutions within the vicinity of the University including:

   - Conestoga College (Guelph Campus)
   - University of Waterloo
   - Wilfrid Laurier University
   - McMaster University

After consulting with the AVP, Physical Resources, and if closure is being recommended, the Director, Campus Community Police will contact 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 5:15 a.m. The President or designate or, if the President or designate cannot be reached, the next reachable officer will decide to remain open or to close the University.

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 select University operations may be permitted to remain open under special arrangements. This decision shall be communicated to affected operations and to Campus Community Police by the appropriate Vice-President.

The Director, Integrated Communications or designate 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 communication procedures.

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 social media and the University website 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 a notice of closure will be sent by email and UofG ALERT
- 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 as well as the University social media sites and website home page.

The Director, Integrated Communications will ensure that the home page, switchboard, UofG ALERT, 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 and with the Registrar 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.

5. 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 President normally delegates to the Dean, Ontario Agricultural College (OAC), and the Vice-President (Research) responsibility respectively for ensuring that the regional campuses of OAC and the Research Stations outside Guelph have similar 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 Research 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.

Similarly, the President normally delegates to the Provost for the University of Guelph-Humber (UofG-H) responsibility to ensure that the UofG-H have similar emergency closing procedures in place.

In all cases, the Dean (OAC)/Vice-President (Research)/Provost of UofG-H will inform the President whether a closing decision has been made in some or all of these areas. If a decision has been made to close, the Dean (OAC)/Vice-President (Research)/Provost UofG-H will also inform the Director, Integrated Communications of the decision and determine whether any related communications are needed.

Appendix I – Essential or Required Services

Essential or required services normally remain operational during a closure of the University. For clarity, in the event it becomes necessary to curtail or suspend a required service, that required service will be contacted directly.

The following departments/units that have been identified as providing either essential or required services:

- Laboratory Services Division
- Off-Campus Research Stations
- Physical Resources
- Student Health Services
- Student Housing Services
- Computing & Communication Services
- Ontario Veterinary College/ Health Sciences Centre
- Campus Community Police

The AVPs or Directors of the above essential or required services are responsible for: identifying the levels of service and staffing required to continue operations during a closure; and for ensuring continuing operations during a closure.

Employees designated to provide these essential or required services should be informed by their supervisors. Not every employee in a unit will normally be designated as providing essential or required services. When time permits, a reminder should be provided to these employees when a weather watch is in effect. Only those employees designated by their supervisors as providing these essential or required services 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 the University will be posted on our web page and UofG ALERT prior to 6:00 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). If available, information about rescheduled dates will be
provided. Only those employees who have been designated by their supervisors as providing essential or required services are expected to report to work. Students, staff and faculty are advised to monitor local radio and television stations, the University home page and UofG ALERT for updates.

Please view this link for the service plan [2] for more information related to snow or severe weather potential reduced service.

**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%20POTENTIAL%20REDUCED%20SERVICE%202019.pdf