512 Hazardous Weather / Emergency Closing Procedures

The following Policy and Procedures have been updated in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, taking into consideration employees working on and off campus as well as students learning and living on and off campus.

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 and Operations)
- 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 and Operations) during the decision consultative process.

Whenever possible, if a decision is to be made about closing[1] 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 the workplace.

Employees who have not been designated as either essential or required but who are otherwise operating under a remote work/work from home arrangement will continue to perform their normal work responsibilities, to the extent feasible, during a period of closure for inclement weather.

A closure due to inclement weather is not expected to affect the delivery of online classes and/or remote examinations, which will continue. The Provost and Vice-President (Academic) will determine if special circumstances exist that would require the cancellation or postponement of these activities (e.g. widespread power outages or internet disruptions). Face to Face classes/labs/tutorials will be cancelled and in person examinations postponed during a University closure due to inclement weather.
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 department-specific decisions concerning the closure or curtailment of normal University operations. Notification to the University community and external community will be managed by Communications and Public Affairs and Campus Community Police (for U of G Alert messages). 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
- 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)
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 and Operations) by 5:00 a.m. The Vice-President (Finance and Operations) 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 and Operations) of the decision. The Vice-President (Finance and Operations) will, in turn, advise the AVP, Physical Resources, and the Director, Integrated Communications and the Director, Marketing and Digital Engagement, 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 to the University and external communities 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 and the specific effects on those operations using their communication procedures.

4. Once a decision is made to close the University, the Director, Integrated Communications and the Director, Marketing and Digital Engagement, are 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:

1. post the closure message in an article on the University News page
2. send notification through U of G Alert (process managed by Campus Community Police), which will automatically post the closure notice on the uoguelph.ca homepage. Communications and Public Affairs will edit the alert notice on the homepage to link to the article on the University News page
3. communicate the closure through social media and link to the article posted on the News page (allows for a single-source of correct and up-to-date information)
4. ensure that the main University telephone switchboard greeting is changed
5. contact local radio and television stations

The homepage alert, social media, switchboard message, digital signs and other communication vehicles will advise students, faculty and staff to monitor the University News page and social media for updates.

The Director, Integrated Communications, and the Director, Marketing and Digital Engagement, will ensure that the home page, social media, switchboard, and other closure messages are updated as required. The Director, Integrated Communications will also be responsible for checking the Campus Events calendar to determine what in-person events are planned that may be affected and communicating the closing decision where possible.

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 News page and sharing on social media a "weather watch" (or other emergency situation) that is being monitored for impact on the University's normal operations. The Vice-President (Finance and Operations) 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 in-person events listed on the Campus Events calendar if a decision to close the University appears likely. As time permits, the Director, Integrated Communications will consult organizers about any communication considerations that should be addressed for a postponed or cancelled event.

Section B - Closure of U of G Operations Outside of Guelph

Since weather conditions may vary across the province, the President normally delegates responsibility to the Dean, Ontario Agricultural College (OAC), and the Vice-President (Research) 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.

Section C – Reopening of the University following a closure

To address questions from the community, an update will be made to the closure notice News posting indicating the University’s reopening date and time.

A U of G Alert will not be sent to notify the community that the University has reopened.

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, the dean or vice-president who oversees the 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.

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

[1] It is recognized that there are areas that will continue to operate (e.g., OVCHSC, SHS, PR) and staff required to attend campus due to the essential or required nature of their roles. It is in this context, “closing” or “closure” is used.

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%202020.11.23.pdf