



Media Release

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STEO Prepared for Inclement Weather

(Johnstown) With winter approaching and the impending onset of inclement weather, Student Transportation of Eastern Ontario (STEO) is preparing the process used to manage bus cancellations for the upcoming winter season.

“STEO continues to work to enhance communication with parents and students about decisions to cancel busing when adverse weather conditions or icy roads make it unsafe to run buses,” said Janet Murray, STEO’s Acting General Manager and Chief Administrative Officer.

Letters are sent to all parents of students in both the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario and the Upper Canada District School Board, explaining the process for issuing bus cancellations. STEO’s website offers easy access to transportation updates during inclement weather and provides a link to a video that explains the bus cancellation process in detail. While STEO continues to work with area radio and TV stations to issue details about cancellations, the website means parents don’t have to wait for the next newscast to get details. They can log on at www.steo.ca to access information.

Parents are reminded to have a transportation contingency plan in place in the event that school vehicle transportation is cancelled, as schools typically do remain open to receive students, even when busing is cancelled. Conversely, if buses are operating and parents feel that conditions are not conducive to travel, it is to their discretion to keep their children home.

“The decision to cancel busing is not taken lightly,” explained Ms. Murray. “It is based on careful analysis of several factors, from up-to-date weather forecasts, to information from bus company weather captains, who physically check the roads on mornings when problem weather is expected.”

STEO staff review forecasts each day before 2:00 p.m. to check for weather alerts that may affect busing. If there may be challenges on the horizon, bus companies are notified. Forecasts are reviewed again at 9:30 p.m.

On those mornings that snow storms, freezing rain or other weather challenges are predicted, STEO directly contacts the forecasting service MeteoGroup/The Weather Network beginning at 4:30 a.m. to check on the latest weather conditions. MeteoGroup is one of the most accurate forecasting services in the country. The same system is used by road crews from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation.

STEO does not rely solely on forecasts, however, when gathering information around weather and road conditions.

Consultation takes place with a team of bus companies, whose staff members check roads across the region of service, beginning at 4:30 a.m. when bad weather is expected. The region is separated into 18 zones with a contractor as a captain in each zone. The captain reports weather and road conditions to STEO directly, confirming the amount of snow and ice accumulation on roads, if snow or freezing rain is continuing, and providing details on accumulation and intensity. STEO, and the contractors, also consult with municipal road crews, police, and other school boards throughout the region, before making the call.

The final decision on bus cancellations is made by the Director of Education from each school board, or their designate, in collaboration with STEO. The decision to cancel must be made by 5:45 a.m., as bussing begins as early as 6:00 a.m.

“We understand that cancelling buses in bad weather can have a big impact on families and we know that students are best served in the classroom,” said Murray. “Parents must understand though that we sincerely care about our students and that their safety is our top priority. There are times that we simply must cancel busing, with the safety of the entire student body – and our bus drivers – top of mind.”

Once the decision is made to run buses, STEO cannot reverse it, even if weather takes an unexpected turn for the worse. Parents rely on that decision when they leave for work in the morning.

Student Transportation of Eastern Ontario operates approximately 800 school vehicles, which transport approximately 33,000 students across districts in Eastern Ontario.

For more information, please call:

Student Transportation of Eastern Ontario

1-855-925-0022

www.steo.ca