



CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF EASTERN ONTARIO

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Dear Parents/Guardians and Students:

RE: THE TRANSPORTATION OF STUDENTS DURING INCLEMENT WEATHER

Winter is fast approaching and there may be times when the weather or road conditions will disrupt school bus and special vehicle transportation. The Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario is working cooperatively with Student Transportation of Eastern Ontario (STEO), local bus companies and our coterminous Upper Canada District School Board to ensure that our approach to transportation during times of inclement weather is planned, coordinated and communicated with the safety of students and drivers in mind.

STEO receives real-time information regarding regional weather and road conditions from an established local precision weather advisor. Decisions concerning the cancellation of school bus and special vehicle transportation are made cooperatively based upon this information and on the input of a team of weather captains deployed across the region of service. Unless otherwise announced, schools will remain **open** for students and staff, even if transportation is cancelled. If transportation services are cancelled in the morning, transportation services will **not** operate in the afternoon.

If transportation is cancelled and schools remain open, students will have the ability, from home, to access work on their classroom teacher's TEAMS/Brightspace platforms.

Announcements regarding the cancellation of school bus and special vehicle transportation will be broadcast by local media outlets, starting no later than 6:15 a.m.

Alternatively, parents/guardians and students can verify if buses are cancelled by accessing:

1. STEO's website at www.steo.ca and clicking on the link "Bus Delays or Cancellations."
2. STEO's free Bus Planner App for your Apple or Android device. Use the access code **STEO**.
3. STEO's Parent Portal for email updates on delays and cancellations (alerts) specific to your child's transportation. Visit www.steo.ca and scroll down to PARENT PORTAL LOGIN to create an account.
4. STEO Facebook page or on Twitter @steo_news and @steocancels
5. STEO's inclement weather hotline at 866-629-0629 (updated no later than 6:15 a.m.)
6. CDSBEO Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/CDSBEO>
7. CDSBEO website at www.cdsbeo.on.ca

Please **do not call** the bus companies directly for inclement weather cancellation updates, as the STEO website will reflect the most accurate information.

Winter weather conditions can change suddenly. If roads become impassable during the school day, or if they are judged to be too risky, students will be kept at school until either their parents/guardians can pick them up or it becomes safe to resume school vehicle transportation.

Fog

Occasionally, regardless of the time of year, fog patches occur. Fog greatly increases the risk that motorists may collide with a stopped vehicle or with a student in the process of crossing a road to board the bus. Consequently, bus drivers have been instructed not to stop in fog patches where visibility is significantly reduced. If students are not picked up due to foggy conditions, the bus driver will call dispatch, who will contact the family, and the driver will provide the names of those students to the school principal upon arrival at the school. **We recommend that you do not permit your child to wait for the bus if visibility is significantly reduced by fog.**

Blocked or Impassable Roads

Occasionally, a road may become blocked or impassable and as a result, the bus may be unable to service sections of a route. If this occurs, upon arrival at the school, the bus driver will communicate to the school principal the name of each student who was not picked up. Please be reminded that you are responsible for your child's safety prior to boarding the school bus and following drop off. You are encouraged to ensure that your child has access to your home or to an approved alternative location where they can go if the bus is unable to service your section of the route.

Mechanical Breakdown

The possibility of a mechanical breakdown of a school vehicle always exists but can be of particular concern during the winter. Please ensure that your child is dressed warmly enough to cope with the potential loss of heat due to a mechanical breakdown on the bus. If mechanical failure occurs, alternative transportation will be arranged as soon as possible. If this occurs, the bus may be late picking up your child in the morning or returning them home in the afternoon.

Parental Responsibility and Discretion

On days of inclement weather or questionable road conditions, STEO and the boards are tasked with making a challenging decision around running or cancelling buses, with the safety of the entire student body in mind. When you consider the significant number of students and the vast geographic region in question, you can be sure that there will be days when some of our families may disagree with the final decision made. On those days, parental discretion and a family's transportation contingency plan are of utmost importance.

STEO and the boards understand the importance of school transportation as it contributes to education and will do everything we can to operate within the due bounds of safety. If buses are operating but a parent feels that weather or road conditions are not conducive to travel, they may ultimately decide to keep their children at home.

The process by which inclement weather decisions are made is undertaken with great care and from an informed position, recognizing that sometimes STEO and the boards are working with information and forecasts which may shift or change. Our mission during inclement weather season and throughout the year, is to provide efficient and reliable transportation to all our families, without compromising the safety of our student passengers.

Yours in Catholic education,



John Cameron
Director of Education