

# INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures to close, cancel classes or cease portions of the university's operations due to hazardous weather conditions and to provide continuity of essential operations during inclement weather.

## Policy Statement

The University of Mary recognizes that adverse weather conditions can impact university operations. While every attempt is made to maintain normal operations and services for the benefit of students, faculty, and employees, it may occasionally be necessary to close the university when extreme weather conditions occur.

The university does not advise employees to take unwarranted risks when traveling to work in the event of inclement weather or other emergencies. Each person should exercise his/her best judgment with regard to road conditions and other safety concerns. Therefore, no employee should come to work if he/she feels the conditions are unsafe.

## Life-Threatening Emergency Communication Plan (All Locations)

Not to be confused with the policies and procedures laid out in this inclement weather policy is any life-threatening emergency that demands immediate action. In the event of a life-threatening emergency, the first individual with knowledge of the situation and access to the Emergency Notification System has the authority and obligation to send the notification. Full information can be found in the University's *Emergency Plan*.

## Procedures

### 1. **CLOSING DECISIONS**

*Main Campus/Bismarck Butler Center/all other Bismarck Sites (PT)*

- A. The vice president for academic affairs and/or the executive vice president, in consultation with the other, are authorized to make the decision to close the university and/or cancel in-person class meetings, delay opening or close early due to inclement weather. Deans/chairs, department heads, directors, supervisors are not authorized to make closing decisions in their areas of responsibility. In the event that neither the vice president for academic affairs nor the executive vice president are available to make the decision, another member of President's Council will make the decision.
- B. In these events, the University will strive to provide as much advance notice as possible, with the goal of making announcements regarding the cancellation of morning classes by 6:00 a.m., the cancellation of afternoon classes by 11:00 a.m., and the cancellation of evening classes

(beginning 5:00 p.m. or later) by 2:00 p.m. Closing decisions for the next workday may also be announced during evening hours when hazardous weather conditions warrant.

Communication to all Bismarck location students should be sent with clear instruction using the guidelines found in *“Announcement of Class Cancellations/Closing Decisions”* below.

#### *All Other Sites and Locations*

- A. The leading staff member at each site (or the next highest if that person is unavailable) is authorized to make a recommendation to the Vice President for Enrollment Management to cancel in-person classes, close the facility, delay opening or close early due to inclement weather. The staff member may take into consideration the decisions by other schools in the area.

Once a recommendation has been received, the VP for Enrollment Management will make a final decision. In the event that the VP for Enrollment Management is not available, the leading staff member at the location should consult the VP for Academic Affairs or the Executive Vice President.

- B. The VP for Enrollment Management (or in his/her absence, the person making the decision) will notify the requestor of the decision. If any communication to the students and/or facilitators is appropriate, then communication should be sent with clear instruction using the guidelines found in *“Announcement of Class Cancellations/Closing Decisions”* below.

The leading staff member at each location shall handle communication to local media outlets regarding the decision made.

## **2. *DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN CLASS CANCELLATIONS AND UNIVERSITY CLOSINGS:***

It is important to distinguish between class cancellations and university closings. A decision to cancel in-person class meetings due to inclement weather is made separately from consideration to close the campus. It is possible that classes would be cancelled but the campus would remain open for other business.

- A. Under some conditions, in-person classes will be cancelled but the university will remain open to maintain student access to most services. When in-person academic class meetings are cancelled, employees are expected to perform their assigned responsibility for the day as usual.

In the event that in-person classes are cancelled or the campus is closed, teaching faculty are expected to provide updates to their students via technology. In this situation, students are expected to check with their instructors using the University’s technology to determine whether coursework will be assigned or administered.

It is also generally assumed that if classes on campus are cancelled, online classes would not be interrupted.

- B. Under some conditions, the university will delay opening. In these circumstances, weather reports suggest that conditions will improve early in the day and the delay allows students, staff, and faculty additional time to get to work, limits the number of people commuting during the rush hours and allows for clearing of parking lots and roads.
- C. Under some conditions, the university is closed. In these circumstances, no in-person classes are held and most offices are closed. There are certain personnel who must report for work even when the university is closed so that the institution can serve the essential needs of residential students. The decision is made when extreme conditions are widespread in the city and raise personal safety issues.

### 3. **ANNOUNCEMENT OF CLASS CANCELLATIONS/CLOSING DECISIONS**

- A. The individual making the decision will initiate the process of communicating the class cancellations/closing decision to the University of Mary community.
- B. Once a decision has been made, the individual making the decision must first inform appropriate staff of the decision via email. Distribution list should be as follows: Facilities and Space Committee (all), the Director of Public Affairs, the Media Relations Specialist, the Social Media Specialist, the Website Specialist, the Safety and Security Coordinator, and the Switchboard Operator. These individuals can be found readily under a distribution list entitled "Weather-Related Announcement".
  - i. This email communication from the individual making the decision should also include a first-draft of the text to be published on [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu). The text of this draft should specify the duration of the cancellation or closure. It should also include a first-draft of the *second* text message for the emergency notification system (see E below, 160 characters maximum).
  - ii. For satellite campuses, this communication will be composed and sent by the Vice President for Enrollment Management. Again, the text of this draft should specify the duration of the cancellation or closure.
- C. All weather-related closure or cancellation information will first be posted to [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu). The text of these messages should always end with: "Students are expected to check with their instructors using Canvas to determine whether coursework will be assigned or administered. Faculty and staff should refer to the weather-related policies from the Employee Handbook, also posted on this site. If you are not yet registered for emergency notifications, please [click here to sign up now.](#)"
  - i. The responsibility to post this information to [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu) in a timely fashion belongs to the Director of Public Affairs or his/her delegate.

- ii. The department of Public Affairs will also proofread or otherwise edit this initial draft for clarity of information, and to ensure that the conclusion of the message reads as noted above.
  - iii. Once [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu) is updated, the Director of Public Affairs or his/her delegate replies to all members of the email distribution list to inform that this action has been completed.
- D. As soon as that information is visible at [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu), and not before, then emergency notification texts and posts on Twitter and Facebook go out with one of two messages:
- i. “Weather Alert: See [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu).”
  - ii. “Urgent Alert: See [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu).”
- a) The individual making the decision or the Director of Public Affairs is responsible for sending the initial text through the emergency notification system.
  - b) The Director of Public Affairs or his/her delegate is responsible for distribution using social media platforms.
- E. After the action above has happened, then vital information from the message on [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu) may be issued through further texts (160 characters maximum) and Tweets (140 characters maximum). A full or edited version of the message on [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu) may be posted to Facebook, always ending with “Monitor [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu) for more updates.”
- i. The Director of Public Affairs or his/her delegate is responsible for this distribution.
- F. Normally, the office of public affairs then alerts appropriate media outlets. Bismarck media outlets include:
- i. TV – KFYZ and KXMB
  - ii. Radio – KFYZ 550 and KBMR 1130

The Director of Public Affairs or his/her delegate is responsible for this distribution in Bismarck. For non-Bismarck locations, the leading staff member at the location is responsible for contacting appropriate media outlets.

- G. Following posting of the immediately relevant closure/cancellation information, other departments may draft additional updates, announcements, or clarifications for posting on [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu). This may include campus dining, campus events (including University Ministry activities, athletic events, concerts, convocations, student activities, etc.) or other pertinent information. These notices should be sent by email to the Director of Public Affairs, who is responsible for validating relevance, proofreading or otherwise editing the initial drafts for clarity of information, and then posting the notices.
- H University Switchboard is responsible for informing incoming callers to the switchboard of all University class cancellations/closing decisions. The announcement will include: cancellation of classes (if applicable); time of closing. Circumstances will dictate whether this announcement is

accomplished through voicemail greeting or if the switchboard operator will continue to answer incoming calls.

- I. **Re-Opening or Keeping Open the University:** At the conclusion of a weather-related closure event, notice of re-opening the University is posted to [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu), along with any other relevant information (e.g., arterial roads of campus and University Drive have been plowed, commuters and employees are reminded to use their best judgment with regard to road conditions and other safety concerns, etc.). Once this information has posted, an emergency notification text (“Weather Update: ...”) and social media alerts may proceed and media outlets may be notified.

In such cases as the University remains open when other community institutions are closing or delaying opening, it may be deemed helpful to provide an explanation on [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu) and through other means, above. By directing followers to [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu) in social media platforms, care can be taken not to invite public debate.

#### 4. **DESIGNATED PERSONNEL**

##### A. Determination of Designated Personnel

- i. When a closing decision is made, certain categories of employees (designated as “designated personnel”) are required to work their normally scheduled shifts and/or in excess of their normally scheduled shifts as required during inclement weather to ensure continuity of essential operations. Annually, each member of President’s Council is responsible for preparing a list of “designated personnel” to supplement the list below and provide those names to human resources.
  - ii. Supervisors of designated personnel are responsible for informing their employees, in writing, of the designation as “designated personnel”, their assignment and the requirement to report to work on time for their regular work shift whenever the Inclement Weather Policy is in effect due to hazardous weather conditions or any acts which may result in a closing decision for the university, Supervisors are responsible for notifying current employees of their “designated personnel” status on an annual basis and informing new employees when they accept employment offers.
- B. Other categories of employees may occasionally be designated as “designated personnel” when circumstances require a change in status. Supervisors will notify the employee of this change in status as soon as practical. In some instances, circumstances on campus—such as a critical event—may require that a supervisor requests the presence of an employee not typically designated as “designated personnel.” In such cases, that employee will be compensated as are “designated personnel” for those hours worked upon supervisor request (see “Compensation for Weather Related Closures” below).

##### Designated Personnel: (Main Campus)

- i. Custodial/physical plant
- ii. Food service
- iii. Switchboard operator
- iv. Campus security

- v. Resident directors
- vi. Others as determined by members of President's Council

Designated Personnel: (remote campus locations)

- i. All personnel designated by the VP for Enrollment Management

**Approved**

April 2017 by the President of the University

August 2017 by the Executive Committee of the University of Mary Board of Trustees

## COMPENSATION FOR WEATHER-RELATED CLOSURES

The University of Mary recognizes that adverse weather conditions can impact university operations. While every attempt is made to maintain normal operations and services for the benefit of students and employees, it may occasionally be necessary to close the university or a satellite location. In such cases, the *Inclement Weather Policy*, found separately, will apply. When a limited staffing mode of operation is implemented during weather-related closure of the university, employees designated as critical to continuing operations are expected to make every reasonable effort to report to work. Each person should exercise his/her best judgment with regard to road conditions and other safety concerns. Therefore, no employee should come to work if he/she feels the conditions are unsafe.

Announcements regarding the cancellation of classes or closure of the University will be posted at [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu) and otherwise communicated as outlined in the *Inclement Weather Policy*.

Compensation for weather related closings is outlined below:

### 1. Full Day Closings

When the university is **closed** as a result of inclement weather, all employees who are both scheduled to work and who report to work on that day are paid regular wages for all hours worked. However, the university encourages all employees to sign up for emergency notifications at [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu) and asks that employees (who are not “designated personnel”) do not report to work when the university is closed.

Employees who qualify as “designated personnel” and are both required to work and who report to work on a day in which the university is closed will be paid regular wages and may be given eight (8.0) hours of paid-time off (“PTO”) added to their paid leave bank. This one-day gifted vacation benefit is available only to “designated personnel” as defined in the *Inclement Weather Policy* who are also eligible for vacation pay.

All overtime rules apply for work over 40 hours.

When the weather is inclement but the university is **not closed (even if in-person classes are cancelled the University may remain open)**, employees are expected to report for work. Employees who choose not to come in to work are to notify their supervisor and are required to take PTO hours by submitting a leave request for the entirety of the scheduled hours they do not work. In the event that in-person classes are cancelled, teaching faculty without other obligations may not need to come to campus, but they are expected to provide updates to their students via technology and continue teaching any online classes.

## 2. Partial Day Closings

**Early Closing:** Employees who are at work when an official closing is declared will be sent home and paid for the balance of their scheduled hours that day. “Designated personnel” who are not sent home and are required to complete their regularly-scheduled work hours may be gifted up to four (4.0) hours of PTO.

**Delayed Opening:** Employees who report to work after a delayed opening has been issued will be compensated for the full number of hours they had been scheduled to work. “Designated personnel” who are required to report to work, despite the delayed opening, for their full regularly-scheduled work hours may be gifted with up to four (4.0) hours of PTO.

## 3. Pre-approved Leave

All designated and non-designated personnel on pre-approved leave with pay during an authorized closing will not be charged leave for that day or for the portion of the day the university is closed or delayed.

## 4. Communication Difficulties

Employees other than “designated personnel” who report to work during periods of authorized closing(s) as a result of not having heard the closing announcement will receive pay for all hours worked. However, employees who are not designated personnel are not eligible to receive gifted PTO. All employees are urged to sign up for emergency notifications at [8000.umary.edu](http://8000.umary.edu).

## 5. Policy Application

This policy applies to all university employees. “Employee” refers to an individual who works for the university in a full-time or part-time capacity as administrative staff, teaching faculty, support staff, or contract employee.

### **Approved**

April 2017 by the President of the University

August 2017 by the Executive Committee of the University of Mary Board of Trustees