



How School Closings are Announced

School closings, delayed openings, and early dismissals resulting from inclement weather are announced through the district's automated phone messaging system; on the Watauga County Schools website at www.watauga.k12.nc.us; via Twitter ([@scottelliott_nc](https://twitter.com/scottelliott_nc)); by e-mail (for families who provide an e-mail address); on the "Snow Line" recording at 264-0200; on the Ray's Weather website; and through the radio and television stations listed below.

<u>Radio Stations</u>			<u>Television Stations</u>	
WATA	1450	AM	WBTB	CH 3
WECR	102.3	FM	WCNC	CH 36
WZJS	100.7	FM	WCYB	CH 5
WMMY	106	FM	WGHP	CH 8
WXIT	1200	AM	WJHL	CH 11
			WSOC	CH 9
			WXII	CH 12

School Closing Decisions: How and Why?

The Watauga County Board of Education policy is that schools will operate on a regular schedule if roads are judged to be safe for travel. However, hazardous weather requires difficult decisions about school closings, delayed openings, early dismissals, and limited bus routes. The following information will help students and parents understand these decisions.

What is the process for deciding to close schools?

By 3:30 – 4:00 a.m., a team of school system personnel are on the road to perform direct on-site inspections of road conditions throughout the county. Reports from all team members usually come in between 5:00 - 5:30 a.m. We announce a decision by 6:00 a.m. unless rapidly changing conditions require us to delay the final announcement. Because we operate as a unified school system, decisions about school closings and delays apply to all schools in the district.

Many times streets in our area are fine, yet schools close. Why not open some schools?

We operate on a county-wide calendar. Since we make up missed days, closing only some schools would put those schools on a different calendar for the rest of the year. Also, poor road conditions anywhere in the county affect our high school students and school personnel.

What are “Limited Bus Routes”?

With limited routes, buses run only on a pre-determined list of roads and avoid more dangerous secondary roads. There are two basic options, Limited Routes A, which is the option normally used, and the more restrictive Limited Routes B. Information for Limited Routes A for each school is available on the school website. Information for Limited Routes B is available on the page for school bus information under the heading *For Parents and Students* on the district website.

Why do we sometimes delay the opening of school?

To allow state crews time to salt and scrape roads, to provide decision-making time as conditions change, or to get more information about roads in specific areas.

Who actually makes the decision?

The superintendent is ultimately responsible. However, school staff members, the NC Department of Transportation, and other agencies supply information leading to the decision.

Why not make decisions the night before to allow more time to make arrangements?

We do this whenever we can. However, conditions often change dramatically overnight or in the early morning hours. We often cannot make the best decision without checking road conditions in the morning.

Does winter weather deprive our students of important school time?

We do not normally lose school days due to weather since we schedule make-up days as needed. (The make-up plan for snow days is available on the school calendar information page, posted under the *For Parents and Students* heading on the website.) A substantial number of school families lack internet access at home so we are not yet at the point where we can provide instruction at home on snow days, but teachers do have options to provide educational opportunities for students using “snow packets” and other methods that do not require online access.

Couldn't chains be used on buses so we could have school on marginal days?

This can help buses on some routes and chains are used on occasion, but buses are not our only concern. Each day we have hundreds of high school students driving personal cars to the high school, as well as hundreds of teachers and other school employees driving to schools all across the county. One of our greatest fears is that a high school student or school employee might be hurt in an accident involving their own vehicle.

Can we be sure the system is making the best decision on school closings?

You can be sure we are making the best decision we can based on the available information, including road checks by the superintendent and other school personnel. However, we must deal with varied weather conditions across the county, sudden weather changes, and many types of roads. In making this decision, safety is our top priority.