



Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools School Board & Central Office

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WJCC School Board

September 25, 2017

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Dear WJCC Families:

It is vital that WJCC Public Schools prepare for weather and emergency events to ensure the safety of students and staff. And, while our students are very aware of the actions they need to take in an emergency, it is important for our families and our community to also be aware of our plans, drills, emergency protocols and our inclement weather decision-making process.

Plans

School and division crisis plans are reviewed each year and are updated as needed to reflect lessons learned from previous events and best practices collected from other school divisions and first responders. These plans include a wide range of possible emergency scenarios, but, to maintain plan confidentiality and integrity, specific plans are not available for public distribution.

Drills

The Virginia Department of Education requires every public school to conduct at least one fire drill per week during the first month of school and at least one fire drill each month for the rest of the school year. Additionally, every public school must conduct two lock-down drills during the first 20 days of school, one of which must occur in September, and two additional lock-down drills during the remainder of the school year, one of which must occur in January.

WJCC also participates in the Great ShakeOut each October and a tornado drill in March. These drills are designed to prepare students and staff to respond during these specific types of emergencies.

Families will not always be notified of drills held in our schools. Some drills are planned, but others are unannounced to help students and staff be prepared in the event of an actual emergency.

Emergency Protocols

Depending on the type of emergency, our response could include evacuation, lock-down, relocation to a previously designated safe haven, or a modification of any of those options. Our administrators are trained to remain flexible, to make situation-appropriate decisions, and to wisely and effectively use available crisis management tools. Additionally, we maintain close contact with county and city police and fire departments. They are the experts, and we value their advice in preparing for and addressing emergencies.

Whenever a school is in lock-down, regardless of the reason, all doors will be locked and no one will be allowed to enter or leave the building. In the event of an actual emergency that requires a lock-down, families will be notified as soon as practical;

however, our primary focus will be on the safety of students and staff, and the speed of external notification may be affected.

Inclement Weather

Whenever inclement weather is forecast, WJCC Public Schools staff members take a number of behind-the-scenes steps to prepare for and then respond to weather events that might impact our schools. While most of this work occurs for bigger storms – snow, hurricane, flooding, etc. – even when the forecast is rain or extremely hot or cold temperatures, staff keeps an eye on the weather.

WJCC works closely with county and city emergency departments, and we monitor weather reports from the National Weather Service in Wakefield. As soon as possible after a storm hits, WJCC Road Assessment Teams drive primary and secondary roads throughout the county and city, often take photos, and report back to operations department leaders. Division staff members also inspect schools, both inside and out, and report those findings to the operations department.

Once all of the reports are in, a recommendation is made regarding school for the next day, and a decision is made by the superintendent. ***Closure, delay and early release decisions are communicated via the division website, our telephone notification system, Facebook, Twitter, WJCC TV-47, email and local media outlets.***

Timing of this decision is based on when the inclement weather hits and the speed of either snow/ice melt or plowing. Often, a storm will hit overnight, and a decision cannot be made until the morning. When this occurs, our goal is to make delay or closure announcements before 6 a.m. In recent years, however, the remnants of storms have resulted in multiple-day closures. When this occurs, division staff members work through each day to assess roads, plow school lots, and clear sidewalks and steps. Closing school is a significant decision that impacts students, staff and families, and we strive to make decisions in a timely manner based on facts that are constantly changing.

Your Role

While we understand the desire to immediately act when notified of an emergency at a school, it is very important for families to stay off school grounds and wait for information. In a true emergency, first responders will require unobstructed access to all areas of a school, and school grounds must remain clear.

During an actual emergency, families will be notified and will be provided with specific information regarding student dismissals and pick-ups. If needed, students will be transported to an alternate pick-up location (***see below school-specific information***) and families will be provided with directions via our notification systems. Please remember that before a child will be released to a parent/guardian in an emergency situation, proper identification will be required.

To ensure that you will receive notification in the event of an emergency, please ensure that your contact information is current. If you need to update your information, please contact your child's school.

WJCC is committed to taking all steps necessary to keep our students and staff safe, regardless of the type of emergency or inclement weather event. We are focused on taking actions that are best for our schools, and while we will be aware of the actions of surrounding school divisions, we will make independent decisions that fit conditions in our community.

If you have any concerns about WJCC's emergency protocols, please do not hesitate to contact your child's school or the division's safety and security coordinator, Brian Weaver (email: brian.weaver@wjccschools.org). These protocols are also available online at <https://wjccschools.org/about-wjcc/emergency-crisis-planning/>

Hornsby Middle School Alternate Pick-Up Locations: Warhill High School or Toano Middle School