

EMERGENCY BUFFALO STATE UNIVERSITY CLOSINGS POLICY

Division: Finance and Management

Responsible Office: Finance and Management

Date Established: 11/19/1966

Date Last Revised: 07/06/2026

Date Posted to Library: 12/12/2025

POLICY SUMMARY

During adverse weather, the university follows a decision-making process to change scheduled operations and will make a timely announcement to cancel or delay classes and events, allow an early departure* for employees, or conduct operations as usual.

It is our practice to continue normal hours of operation and maintain a regular work and class schedule for faculty, staff members, and students during periods of severe weather to the extent that it is possible that students, faculty, and staff can travel safely to and from campus given local conditions.

POLICY STATEMENT

Buffalo State University recognizes that adverse weather conditions, including winter weather, can impact university operations. The safety of students, employees, visitors, and guests is a primary concern in making any weather-related decision about campus operations. While every attempt is made to maintain scheduled operations, it may be necessary to change scheduled operations when adverse weather conditions occur. In such circumstances, the President or designee may make a decision to change scheduled operations resulting in class cancellations, class delays, an early departure*, or a closing*.

* Only the governor can officially declare that Buffalo State University is closed or direct early departure and only the governor can authorize employees to remain away from work without charge to leave accruals. A declaration of emergency, even by the governor, does not automatically mean the closure of the university. Although pursuant to NYS Executive Law, Article 2-B, a Chief Executive of a county, city or village may declare a state of emergency, such declaration has no authority over the closure of state offices or facilities.

Decision to Change Scheduled Operations

The decision to cancel or delay classes or events, or issue an early departure is based on numerous factors and input by officials from departments responsible for the continuity of campus operations including Facility Operations, University Police, and Emergency Management. These officials monitor and discuss current weather conditions and forecasts throughout the region, road conditions both on and off campus, scheduled academic and extracurricular activities, and circumstances which may affect a particular region or campus.

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During the decision-making process, information issued by the National Weather Service (NWS) Buffalo Office (including announcements of a weather advisory, watch, or warning), current and expected campus conditions, and all scheduled classes, events, and activities are considered.

Change in Scheduled Operations Options

Based on information considered during the decision-making process, including conditions that may affect a particular region or campus, the officials will recommend activation of one or more of the following change(s) in scheduled operations options:

Change in Scheduled Operations Options	Description
All Classes and Events Canceled	All classes and events are canceled. Weather conditions are severe enough to threaten the safety of the campus community. As the situation improves, this restriction will be altered, as necessary, to resume scheduled operations. Only those individuals designated as essential-critical personnel should report to work. Scheduled performing arts or athletic events may or may not be affected by this announcement. Ticketholders are advised to check with the sponsoring unit of a public event. Review employee attendance rules.
Classes and Events Delayed	All classes and events are delayed for a specific time period based on current conditions and forecasts. Essential-critical personnel should report for work if conditions allow. Review employee attendance rules.
Early Departure for Employees	Weather conditions have deteriorated to the point where transportation and health and safety of employees may be jeopardized. Employees should not be required to leave, but instead permitted to leave then or any time after the early departure announcement is made. Review employee attendance rules, accruals must be utilized.
Classes and Campus Operations Conducted as Usual	All classes and events will continue as scheduled, but officials will continuously monitor campus conditions and communicate any changes as necessary. Although the university is open during periods of adverse conditions, supervisors and department chairs may alter work schedules to make allowances for unique travel problems.

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Essential Services and Personnel

Services related to the health and safety of students, faculty, staff, and guests, and the security and maintenance of facilities are essential- critical and must continue in spite of adverse conditions. Departments should conduct a detailed analysis of their services and determine which services must continue during adverse weather conditions. The determination of essential – critical services and personnel may vary depending on the adverse weather conditions and its impact on communities in western New York.

Departments may also determine, based on the impact of the weather conditions, which employees are essential-critical. Departments may approve an alternate work arrangement (e.g., telecommuting) to support university activity and meet the business needs of a department during adverse weather. Advance approval is required from your direct supervisor.

Employee Absences

In accordance with New York State policy, employee absences resulting from any change in scheduled operations including class cancellations, early departures, and closings must be charged to appropriate leave accruals. Only the governor can officially declare that Buffalo State University is closed or direct an early departure and only the governor can authorize employees to remain away from work without charge to leave accruals. Any person who reports to work will not be deprived of the opportunity to work. During adverse weather and where applicable, a provision must be made for alternate campus work locations and alternate work for those who do get to the campus but who cannot go to their regular workplaces or cannot perform their regular work assignments. For employees who elect to report for work under emergency conditions, parking may be severely restricted during periods of temporary emergencies. Employees who report to work under these conditions should park in any lot that has been cleared of snow. Employees should report to regular work locations and perform regular duties, even if their supervisor is absent. If the employee's regular work location is not accessible, they must work with their direct supervisor for an alternate work location.

Communication of a Decision to Change Scheduled Operations

A change in scheduled operations including class cancellations, early departure, and closing announcements will be made through one or more of the following communication methods:

- Buffalo State Alert Emergency Alert System
- All campus email (faculty, staff, students), as appropriate
- Buffalo State University – homepage
- Local broadcast media (radio and TV)

DEFINITIONS

Essential-Critical Employees:

Essential-critical services are those that must be maintained to ensure the well-being and protection of those who reside on campus, as well as the maintenance and security of university property. Essential-critical employees are those whose duties and responsibilities are considered mandatory for carrying out operational or life-safety services for Buffalo State

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University, including the continued mission-critical functioning of academic, enrollment management and scholarly research activities. All employees who are designated as essential-critical will be notified in writing by their department heads.

Essential-Remote Employees:

Those whose job functions are essential to the effective operation of Buffalo State University and who are involved in emergency response. Essential-remote employees may be able to report to a remote location to perform their job duties.

Non-Essential Service Employees:

Those employees who do not need to be physically present to perform their job functions or are not required in order for Buffalo State to perform its core functions during the emergency.

National Weather Service (NWS):

The official government agency tasked with warning the public of pending hazards associated with weather. The NWS issues the following alerts during periods of severe winter weather:

Advisory:

Conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences that may be hazardous. If caution is used, these situations should not be life-threatening.

Watch:

Severe conditions such as snow and/or ice may affect one or more campuses and surrounding communities, but the location and timing are still uncertain. A watch is issued 12 to 36 hours in advance of potential severe weather.

Warning:

A winter storm warning is issued when four or more inches of snow are expected over the next twelve hours, or six or more inches in 24 hours, or ¼ inch or more of ice accumulation is expected. A warning may also be issued if the storm is expected to hit during high-traffic driving times like rush hour.

SCOPE & PURPOSE

To provide guidance for students, employees, visitors, and guests when experiencing adverse weather conditions, as well as informational resources to advise of any changes in scheduled operations.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Office of the President (Designee)

- Issue a timely decision to change scheduled operations based on a recommendation from the Vice President for Finance and Management (VPFM).

Vice President for Finance and Management (VPFM)

- Communicate the recommendation to change scheduled operations based on adverse weather conditions to the Office of the President for decision.

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University Police and Emergency Management

- Recommend and advise specific protective actions based on adverse weather conditions.
- Coordinate consensus recommendations based on conditions and input from operational departments.
- Continuously monitor campus conditions.
- Provide input about risk to public safety based on conditions.

Facilities

- Monitor campus conditions.
- Work to clear snow and ice from roadways, parking lots, and walkways.
- Provide input regarding accessibility to the campus based on conditions.

Marketing and Communications

- Disseminate pertinent and timely information to the campus community.

Students, Employees, Guests, Visitors

- Use caution and personal judgment when traveling to and from campus.
- Dress appropriately for protection against cold temperatures and wind chills.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all members of the campus community, including students, employees, visitors, and guests.

APPENDIX/AUTHORITY

[SUNY Policy: Early Departure, Closing of State Offices](#)

https://www.suny.edu/sunypp/documents.cfm?doc_id=553

CONTACT INFORMATION

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APPROVAL

Prior to 2016

REVISION HISTORY

Date of change: 12/9/2025

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Brief description of edit: Update to communication methods; update to contact information; reference to related procedures.

Date of change: 06/24/2026

Brief description of edit: Adapted to ADA compliant template