

**TO: Rapid City Area School District Parents**

**RE: Bus Transportation During Inclement Weather**

Transportation by school bus or private vehicle always involves some degree of risk. Inclement weather, slick or snow-laden roads do increase the danger for all travel. The extra weight of a school bus, dual wheels and chains (when appropriate), and driver expertise make a school bus relatively safe when compared to private transportation. School bus transportation has enjoyed an excellent safety record.

There are few days the weather will not allow us to operate buses or open schools. A general rule is if the buses can run, schools will be open. In unique situations we may have school with limited school bus service. People who have moved to this area from other parts of the country might be used to several snow days a year, but in the Rapid City Area School District that is not the case.

The decision making process to close schools or operate buses involves many sources. The National Weather Service, Pennington County Highway Department, Rapid City Street Department, Pennington County Sheriff's Office, and the Rapid City Police Department all contribute to the decision. A summary of current and expected conditions along with recommendations are presented to the Superintendent of Schools prior to 6:00 a.m. on days of inclement weather. If the Superintendent makes a decision to cancel schools, the information is passed to radio and television stations prior to 6:30 a.m..

Weather and road conditions can vary a great deal across 448 square miles of the school district. Transportation decisions that are correct for most of the school district may not appear appropriate in some locations. When the weather is inclement, it is unlikely the buses will run on schedule. It is possible that buses will not be able to travel certain streets and roads. It is very important that students be properly dressed for inclement weather conditions and not left alone to wait for their bus.

Whether or not school is in session, and whether or not the bus is on it's schedule, it is the parents decision if a child attends school. No child should be sent to school when a parent feels the risk too high. If a student does not attend school because of inclement weather, he/she will be given an excused absence. The student will be allowed to make up missed school work, if the parent calls or sends a note to school.

Rapid changes in the weather will occasionally cause problems. Alternatives to calling off school might be: operating buses late for better road conditions or an early school dismissal if the weather turns worse. Information will be on local radio and television stations if an early school dismissal takes place.

Because weather is unpredictable, every effort will be made to make a decision that is in the best interest of everyone involved. Of all administrative decisions, none elicit as many hostile phone calls as those involving snow days. These calls are evenly divided between those who think it is unsafe to hold school and those who feel it is ridiculous to call it off.

Again, if a decision is made to close schools, operate buses late, or dismiss schools early, that information will be broadcast on all the local radio and television stations as early in the day as possible. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call Transportation Officer Mike Kenton, at 394-4105; Superintendent Dr. Peter Wharton, at 394-4031 or your school principal.

Thank you for your support of the Rapid City Area School District.

RAPID CITY AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT 51-4  
300 6TH STREET  
RAPID CITY, SD 57701