

# School District No. 71 (Comox Valley)

Superintendent of Schools

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## Understanding Bus Schedules and Power/Snow Closures

As the snow season is upon us, it is helpful for parents and the community to understand how we come to make calls on the closure of schools and how those calls are related to bus schedules.

Each day, we have over 1000 students who travel by bus to attend school. The departures of those buses and the picking up of students in the morning are major goalposts for us. Buses in the morning begin routes at about 6:45 am and begin picking children up by about 7:00 am. In the afternoon, most buses are on the road by 2:00 pm.

If there is snowfall overnight and accumulating in the morning, we make every attempt to make a call about school closures prior to the morning pickup of children by the buses. If we do not make the call by this time (again about 7:00 am), then students are on their way to school and we need to be prepared to receive and care for them. It is extremely difficult for us to make a call on school closures as late as 8:00 am. It is long past the time buses have left and we have approximately 1000 children on their way to school.

If there is snowfall accumulation during the day, we need to ensure the safe return of children home to parents. Many parents are working and cannot pick up their children or the children are too young to be at home alone if we run buses early. We would need to then contact all parents to let them know that their children are returning home early. For these reasons we believe that it is better to keep students safely with us in our schools rather than to dismiss early from the school day. We would, in these cases, dismiss at our regular times and bus students home as safely as possible.

On Hornby and Denman, who often experience distinct and rapid weather changes as well as power outages, we may dismiss early, but only with the knowledge of parents through a phone tree system.

We hope this gives parents some information and understanding about our routines that we consider when there is snow or a power outage and we need to close schools. We care about the safety of your children and always want to make the most prudent decision given the conditions. We make these calls with great thought and care, recognizing that weather patterns throughout the Valley can be very different within the school day.

Finally, once again, if there are any concerns and we do make a call to close schools, our local FM radio stations (***The Eagle, 97.3, (250) 703-2200*** and ***98.9 JetFM, (250) 703-2538***) are the first point of contact. Parents and staff should regard these stations, as well as the district website ([www.sd71.bc.ca](http://www.sd71.bc.ca)) as the source of communications for school closures due to power outage and snow.

Respectfully,

Sherry Elwood  
Superintendent of Schools