

Complete Policy Title:
Storm Emergency Policy and Procedures

Policy Number (if applicable):
n/a

Approved by:
Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

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Responsible Executive :
Vice-President (Administration)

Enquiries:
[**Vice-President \(Administration\)**](#)

***DISCLAIMER:** If there is a Discrepancy between this electronic policy and the written copy held by the policy owner, the written copy prevails.*

The University will “close” because of severe winter weather when normal operation would pose a danger to students, staff and faculty (including Mohawk students at the Institute for Applied Health Sciences) while on campus or would prevent large numbers of them from coming to campus or returning safely to their homes.

When the University is “closed”:

- classes are not held
- meetings and other scheduled events are cancelled
- all areas and operations not defined as “essential” are closed
- examinations are cancelled and rescheduled
- deadlines for student assignments and other submissions due on a “closed” day are postponed until the same hour on the next academic day on which the University is not “closed”
- deadlines for job applications and other employment requirements are postponed to the same time on the next business day on which the University is not “closed”.

Morning Closure (Monday through Friday)

When a decision is made to close the University in the early morning, the duration of the closing will be specified. In the event that the duration of the closure is only until 12:00 noon, any subsequent decision to extend the closure for the balance of the day and evening will be made and communicated by 11:00 a.m. In the event of a closure for less than a full academic/business

day, only those events, shifts, or activities scheduled to commence after the re-opening time will proceed as scheduled.

Procedure

Every effort will be made to confirm a closing by 5:30 a.m. When the closing decision has been made, Public Relations is responsible to do the following things:

- Post the announcement on McMaster University's Daily News website <http://dailynews.mcmaster.ca> and on the University's home page www.mcmaster.ca
- Post the announcement on McMaster University's Social Media websites: www.facebook.com/mcmasteruniversity and www.twitter.com/mcmasterupdates
- Notify local radio stations and other media that "McMaster University is closed and classes are cancelled," including the anticipated length of the closure if other than one full day
- Notify Telecommunications, who will make the announcement on the recording that answers the University's main telephone numbers.
- Notify the Director of Physical Plant.

The Director of Public and Community Relations (or delegate) will notify the following people of the decision:

- Media
- Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
- Dean & Vice-President (Health Sciences)
- Vice-President (Research & International Affairs)
- Vice-President (Administration)
- Vice-President (University Advancement)
- Senior Integrated Communications Manager
- Executive Assistant to the President
- Associate Vice-President (Student Affairs) & Dean of Students
- Associate Vice-President (Academic)
- Assistant Vice-President (Facility Services)
- Chief Human Resources Officer
- Director, Grounds and Custodial Services
- Director, Security and Parking Services
- Director, McMaster Children's Centre
- President & Dean, Divinity College

Individual departments may arrange for staff to be telephoned, but the University has no obligation to telephone staff to notify them that the University is "closed". Individual staff, faculty and students are responsible for checking local radio stations or the University website www.mcmaster.ca on stormy days. If there is no specific announcement about McMaster University, the University remains open. Staff, faculty and students are advised not to overload

the telephone system by calling the University for information about a storm closing. Printed copies of the procedure are available upon request from the Office of Public Relations.

Decision to Close

If Hamilton is affected by a major storm, the Provost, or in her/his absence, the Vice-President, Administration or in her/his absence the Associate Vice-President (Academic), in consultation with the Director, Security and Parking Services, will make the decision to close the University and notify the Director of Public and Community Relations.

In the absence of a communicated decision to close, the University remains open and all activities continue as planned. At all times, individuals should assess their personal safety in deciding about whether to come to work or class.

Staff, other than those employed in “essential services”, as defined in this policy, are not expected to be at work, but are paid for a normal day. “Staff”, for the purposes of this policy, includes all employees other than management and faculty.

Communication

The information will be communicated via the University’s news website <http://dailynews.mcmaster.ca> , on the University’s home page www.mcmaster.ca and via the University’s social media sites: www.facebook.com/mcmasteruniversity and www.twitter.com/mcmasterupdates

Media that will be notified and could be expected to carry announcements concerning closings include:

- Hamilton
 - Hamilton Spectator website: www.thespec.com
 - OLDIES 1150 am/K LITE 102.9 fm
 - CHAM 820 am
 - CHML 900 am/Y108 (107.9) fm
 - WAVE 94.7 fm
 - CKPC Brantford
 - CFMU 93.3 fm
 - CHCH Television

No one other than Public Relations is authorized to call the media about the closing of McMaster University, and local radio and TV have been asked not to pay attention to other calls.

Interpretation

Delegation

Directors and others mentioned in this procedure may name a delegate or alternate to take action in their stead. Public Relations will maintain a current list of individuals to be consulted or notified about closings, with telephone numbers. When a decision by the Provost is required and the Provost is not available, the decision shall be made by the Vice-President (Administration) or the Associate Vice-President (Academic).

Essential Services

Even when the University is “closed”, it is home for some 3,000 people, chiefly students in residence, and some services must be maintained for their care and for the protection of life and property.

The following operations are defined as “essential services” to be kept in operation even when the University is “closed”:

- Security Services
- Food service in the residences, as designated by Hospitality Services
- CAF
- Housing & Conference Services
- Staff providing patient care
- Powerhouse
- Nuclear Reactor & related Health Physics services
- Snow Removal (grounds crew)
- Emergency repair and maintenance
- Telecommunications

Staff to provide essential services will be so designated by the department heads (or delegates) responsible for those services. Staff in these areas not designated “essential” are not covered by this designation. Department heads are responsible for assigning duties to be carried out and making reasonable arrangements for the protection of essential staff. Department heads will take into account individuals’ needs in assigning duties for “essential services”.

No department can designate any other services as “essential” or require staff to work during a “closed” period without approval from the Provost.

Classes

Classes will not be held during “closed” periods, and assignment deadlines occurring on a “closed” day will be extended to the same time on the next academic day.

Staff Payment on “Closed” Days

Unless stated differently in an applicable collective agreement, staff are paid for scheduled time during which the University is “closed”, regardless of whether they are at work or not. Staff who are required to work providing essential services during a “closed” period are entitled to equivalent time off at a later date at straight time rates.

A staff member who is on vacation, sick leave or unpaid leave, or who is not scheduled to work on a day when the University is “closed” is not entitled to equivalent time off later. In the event of a closure until noon, employees scheduled for work commencing prior to noon are not expected to come in for any portion of their shift after noon.

Staff who come to work and find out on arrival that the University is “closed” may leave if they wish. In the event that there is no productive work to be accomplished, staff may be sent home at the discretion of their supervisor. In making such a decision, a supervisor will take into account the provisions of the *Persons Working Alone Policy* contained in the Risk Management Manual #304. Staff who come to work and work a portion of their scheduled work day are entitled to time off at a later date at straight time rates equal to the amount of time actually worked.

Daytime Closing

The University will “close” after classes and business hours have started for the day only in extreme circumstances.

A decision to close during the day will be made by the Provost.

A decision to close during the day will specify whether the closing is “immediate” or at a stated hour. Unless otherwise specified, the closing continues from that hour until the beginning of work on the next day. A class or examination that would continue past the specified closing hour is cancelled in its entirety.

The Zone 1 entrance/exit and the Stearn Drive/Forsyth St. exit will be opened to allow for more timely and efficient exiting from campus.

When such a decision is made, it will be communicated as follows:

“At [the designated hour], staff and faculty (except those carrying out essential services) are entitled to leave for home, without loss of pay. Department heads have discretion to permit staff and faculty to leave sooner.” Faculty and Administrative Units will be responsible for this communication.

Closing Outside Normal Business Hours

Any closing that involves the cancellation of evening classes will be determined during the working day according to the procedure described above.

If weather conditions justify closing the campus during late evening, so that any night shift staff are not required to come to work, the decision will be made by the Provost, in consultation with the Director of Security and Parking Services, who will notify the Director of Public and Community Relations. The Director of Public and Community Relations will initiate the appropriate communication procedure. Such a closing is effective until the next morning, by which time a decision will be made whether the University will be closed for any portion of the following day.

If weather conditions justify the closing of the campus on a Saturday, Sunday or holiday, the Provost in consultation with the Director of Security and Parking Services (or delegate) will notify the Director of Public and Community Relations, who will announce this decision.

Security Services will also notify a designated person in each department that is known to have activities scheduled or staff on duty.

Any department (such as the Library) that has scheduled activities, or staff scheduled for duty overnight or on a weekend day or holiday, is responsible for notifying Security Services of an emergency contact person. Such a department is also responsible for maintaining its own plan for notifying staff of a closing, when the decision is made to close the campus. The principles set out in this procedure regarding payment of staff will apply.

Non-Closure

Weather conditions can sometimes be intimidating even though the University remains open when School Boards have closed. Staff who live at some distance from the campus can be particularly affected. Consistent with any applicable collective agreement, time not worked due to storm conditions, but when the University is open, will be accounted for through vacation time, accumulated time, personal leave day, emergency unpaid leave day via Employment Standards or flexible working hours or flexible work scheduling arrangements.

Emergency Procedures to Assist Those Stranded on Campus

1. As soon as a storm emergency situation has been declared, the Director of Housing and Conference Services will be informed by the Office of the Associate Vice-President (Student Affairs) as designated in the communication telephone tree outlined in Appendix A and the 24 hour Housing and Conference Service Centre, Commons Building Lobby (ext. 27222) will become the central point from which assistance will be rendered to those stranded on campus.
2. The Director of Housing and Conference Services:

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- a. Will have available a Residence Manager and a group of residence students selected to assist in this procedure.
 - b. Will communicate with Hospitality Services to ensure that food needs are met for those who are stranded.
 - c. Will arrange, through the McMaster Students' Union to make available limited makeshift accommodation in the Student Centre.
 - d. Will make available beds and appropriate temporary facilities for men and women in Hedden Hall and advise the University's switchboard of her/his action.
 - e. Will make available facilities for any stranded individual who has a particular health or physical problem.
3. The Security Services Department will check all buildings for stranded people and will advise them to communicate with Housing and Conference Services Centre (ext. 27222) for assistance.
 4. The switchboard (dial 0) and the Security Dispatcher will have information available as to the location for stranded people. Any particular problem should be directed to the Housing and Conference Service Centre (ext. 27222).

Other Situations

This procedure can also be used if the University must be closed for reasons unrelated to weather, such as utilities failure. However, this procedure does not apply to the closing of only a part of the campus because of storm damage or unsafe conditions in one area. That situation is governed by the existing policy on "Emergencies".

APPENDIX A

1. Director of Public and Community Relations (or delegate) notifies the following upon a decision to close:

- Media
- Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
- Dean & Vice-President (Health Sciences)
- Vice-President (Research & International Affairs)
- Vice-President (Administration)
- Vice-President (University Advancement)
- Executive Assistant to the President
- Associate Vice-President (Student Affairs) & Dean of Students
- Associate Vice-President (Academic)
- Assistant Vice-President (Facility Services)
- Chief Human Resources Officer
- Director, Grounds and Custodial Services
- Director, Security and Parking Services
- Director, McMaster Children’s Centre
- President & Dean, Divinity College

2. Communication continues from Column 1 to 2 and from Column 2 to 3.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
Provost and VP (Academic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Deans of Faculties, except Health Sciences (or in their absence Associate Deans) •AVP & Dean, Graduate Studies •Registrar •Museum of Art •AVP (Academic) •University Librarian and Director, Health Sciences Library • Human Rights & Equity Services • Planning & Analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Departments, Schools and Programs •Centre for Leadership in Learning •Learning Technologies Resource Centre •Arts & Science Program •Indigenous Studies •Centre for Continuing Education
Dean & VP (Health Sciences)	All Faculty of Health Sciences schools, departments, programs, centres, and affiliates and appropriate hospital counterparts as per its internal call list	
VP (Research & International Affairs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Research Services •Office of International Affairs •Nuclear Reactor •Institutes, Centres •Research Contracts & Intellectual Property 	

VP (Administration)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •AVP (Administration) •Chief Information Officer •Chief Risk Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Financial Services •Purchasing Resources •Treasury Operations
VP University Advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Alumni & Advancement 	
AVP (Student Affairs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Athletics & Recreation •Bookstore •Career Services •Centre for Student Development •First Year Experience Office •Graduate Students Association •Hospitality Services •Housing and Conference Services •International Student Services •Inter-Residence Council •Judicial Affairs •McMaster Assoc. of Part-Time Students •McMaster Students Union •Off Campus Resource Centre •Student Affairs Business Office •Student Financial Aid & Schps. •Campus Health Centre 	
President's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •University Secretary 	

APPENDIX B

PERTINENT EXCERPTS WORKING ALONE PROGRAM

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To ensure as far as is reasonably possible, the health and safety of staff, faculty, students, and volunteers with regard to the risks arising from or connected with work being conducted on behalf of the University by ensuring that:
- Regulatory restrictions prohibiting individuals from working alone are known and observed.
 - Working alone situations are identified and assessed jointly by supervisors and the person working alone.
 - Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are developed as warranted by an assessment of the risk associated with the Work Alone situation under review.
 - Training and instruction is provided to all individuals covered by a Working Alone SOP.
- 1.2 To ensure compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations, Statutes and Codes pertaining to the safety of persons working alone. (See Appendix A and Working Alone Regulatory Restrictions. Section 6.)

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 All faculty, staff, students and volunteers who work alone.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 **Role of Supervisor:**

- 5.1.1 **The supervisor shall:** perform an assessment by evaluating work assignments on a case-by-case basis, considering the following criteria:
- is there a regulation, code or existing policy that prohibits a person from working alone on the task being assessed;
 - tasks and associated hazards involved in the work being assessed;
 - consequences resulting from a worse case scenario;
 - possibility that an injury or incident could prevent the employee from calling from or leaving the area;
 - personal safety issues for individuals working alone after regular working hours;
 - potential for other people to be in the area if emergency assistance is required;
 - emergency response time;
 - security of the work area;
 - employee's / student's training and experience;

- physical disabilities or medical conditions; and
- consulting with the worker(s).

5.1.2 **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):**

If, after consultation with the involved individual (s), it is decided that they can work alone safely under controlled conditions, the supervisor shall provide a Standard Operating Procedure that includes but shall not be limited to the following:

- identification of the individual (s) and work location;
- identification of the possible risks that may arise out of or in connection with the work to be performed;
- the required communications system i.e. radio, telephone, buddy system etc.;
- the procedures to eliminate or minimize the identified risks;
- details of how emergency assistance will be obtained in the event of an injury or incident which may endanger the health and safety of the person working alone;
- registering the SOP with the Department Chair or Director and the JHSC for worker related SOPs; and
- maintaining a copy of the SOP on file and update procedures as necessary.

NB. Working Alone Procedures can be included in the project or task SOP. This may include existing laboratory procedures.

Role of the Department Chair / Director:

The Department Chair / Director shall:

- provide the resources and direction required to support the Working Alone Program.

5.3 **Role of Worker / Student / Volunteer:**

The Worker / Student / Volunteer shall:

- participate in the evaluation of the risks associated with tasks which involve persons working alone; and
- follow the procedures outlined in any Standard Operating Procedure implemented for their protection.

6. REGULATORY RESTRICTIONS

6.1 **Working Alone is prohibited when working:**

- in a confined space entry (O. Reg. 632/05, and McMaster University's Confined Space Entry Program, RRM# 305);
- on live electrical installations, equipment, or conductor operating at a nominal voltage of 300 volts or more, except while testing equipment or trouble shooting [O. Reg.851 for Industrial Establishments, Section 42.1 (3)];

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- on electrical transmission systems or outdoor distribution systems rated at more than 750 volts (See O. Reg.851 Section 42.2, Industrial Establishments);
 - in trenches (O Reg. 213 Section 225 Construction Projects);
 - on a portable ladder that exceeds 6 metres in length and is not securely fastened or work with a ladder that is likely to be endangered by traffic;
 - on suspended scaffolds or when using fall arrest equipment;
 - with quick-acting highly toxic material as described by the Material Safety Data Sheet e.g. inorganic cyanides, fumigants etc.;
 - in an atmosphere that requires the use of supplied air respiratory equipment or self- contained breathing apparatus (CSA Standard Z94.4-02 Sections 9.3.3, 9.3.4.);
 - in a place that places a person at risk of drowning (O. Reg. 213 Section 27: O. Reg. 851, Section 86);
 - where the operator of a vehicle, crane, mobile equipment, or other similar material handling equipment does not have a full view of the intended path of travel (O. Reg.851, Section 56);
 - where a vehicle, crane or similar equipment is operated in a location where the vehicle or its load could come into contact with a live power line;
 - for welding operations where a fire watcher is required as per the current CSA Standard W117.2-06 for Safety in Welding, Cutting and Allied Processes and
 - under all conditions that based on the risk assessment conducted by the supervisor in consultation with the worker, JHSC representative(s) and a representative from the Risk Management Group, are deemed to require more than one person.

McMaster University Risk Management Manual RMM # 304
Working Alone Program, dated Sept. 2008
Risk Management Support Group
Approved by Roger Couldrey Vice President, Administration
Authorized by Patrick Deane President and Vice-Chancellor