

Winter Weather - Class Cancellations and University Closings

11/1/07

It is again time to remind the community of the process for decisions on class cancellations and University closings due to winter weather. Please remember that either cancellation or closing should be a rare event.

The Provost makes the decision regarding class cancellation or University closing after consultation with several other University officials.

The decision that is made must take into account multiple factors such as number of inches of snow, amount of ice, wind chill, temperature, wind, and weather forecast. In addition, the number of times classes have been canceled throughout the semester is considered. Because there are multiple factors affecting the decision and numerous constituencies are affected, there is no simple formula that is followed.

It is important to distinguish between class cancellations and University closings.

1. Under some conditions, we cancel classes but keep the University open to maintain student access to most services.
2. Under some conditions, we delay opening of the University. In these circumstances, weather reports suggest that conditions will improve early in the day and the delay allows students, staff, and faculty additional time to get to work, limits the number of people commuting during the rush hours and allows for clearing of parking lots.
3. Under some conditions, we close the University. In these circumstances, no classes are held and most offices are closed. There are certain personnel who must report for work even when the University is closed so that the institution can serve the residential students. Their respective departments identify these personnel groups. (See <http://www.drake.edu/hr/policies/staffhandbook/StaffHandbook2005.pdf> for additional information.) This decision is made when extreme conditions are widespread in the city and raise personal safety issues. Often the decision is the result of recommendations from state and local police and safety officials.
4. Under some conditions, certain offices will operate only under limited hours even when the University is not closed. These specifics are included in the closing and/or cancellation announcement.
5. Cowles Library is an important service for students even when classes are canceled and/or the University is closed. Every effort will be made to keep the library open, but that is contingent on the ability of full-time and student staffing to safely commute to the library. During closings, please check the library's Web site (<http://www.lib.drake.edu/>) for any change in regular service hours.

The timing of the decision is critical:

1. For day classes, University closing or delays, all efforts are made to make the University closing or delay decision by 6:00 a.m. so information can be disseminated to media outlets and the University's cancellation line before most people begin their morning commute.
2. For evening classes, all efforts are made to make the decision by 2:30 p.m. so information can be placed on media outlets before most people begin their trip to the campus. For these purposes, classes that begin after 4:30 p.m. are considered evening classes.

3. When weather conditions on weekends become hazardous, the administrator in charge of the event makes the cancellation decision in consultation with the Provost. The administrator making the decision informs Campus Security.
4. Other special circumstances require individual decisions and individual contacts by faculty/school and college administrative staff.

Notification to students and staff occurs in three ways:

1. The University cancellation line, 271-4545.
2. Local television and radio stations, including Mediacom cable channel 16 and CampusNet 12 and 7 on the campus residence cable system.
3. <http://www.drake.edu>, click on "Campus Alert/Special Notice."

The most accurate and detailed information will be found on the cancellation line.

Additional information regarding specific events and facilities may be found by consulting the Campus Alert channel in *blueView* or the Campus Alert message on the home page.

It is impossible to make a decision on the cancellation of classes or the closing of the University that will meet the needs and concerns of all the students, faculty and staff of the University. All students, faculty and staff members are expected to exercise their best judgment with respect to personal safety. No one is expected to take undue risks. It is your responsibility to contact your faculty members or supervisor and explain your decision.

Please remember each weather event is unique and discrete and while there is every attempt to be consistent, special circumstances might require some variations in the decisions and procedures described above. These decisions are made with the best interest of the greater community in mind and with an eye to specific weather conditions within the Drake neighborhood, not all of Central Iowa. Keep in mind that these decisions are based on features of the most variable of elements in our lives—the weather.

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