



Hastings Highlands Public Library

Area: Operational
Policy Title: Inclement weather and
Unscheduled closure
Policy Number: OP-20

Initial Policy Approval Date: March 25, 2017

Last Review:
Year of next review: 2023

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline roles and responsibilities in situations where the Hastings Highlands Public Library temporarily suspends or curtails operations due to an emergency situation, such as severe weather, as well as when the Library remains in operation but some staff experience difficulty reporting to work due to inclement weather or other emergency conditions. The suspension of Library Service may also result from community-wide emergencies and recommendations prompted by the Municipality of Hastings Highlands Emergency Response Plan.

Guiding Principle

The Library has a responsibility for maintaining services and, therefore, the application of this policy must consider both the operational obligations of the Library as well as the safety of Library staff and patrons. The Library will make every effort to maintain services despite inclement weather or other circumstances that could disrupt the normal operations of the Library.

Responsibility for decision-making

The determination to close Hastings Highlands Public Library shall be made by the Library CEO or designate, except where evacuation is essential for staff and public safety or by order of police, fire officials or the Municipality of Hastings Highlands Emergency Control Group. As the Library is located within shared facilities, any determination made by Municipal staff will influence the Library CEO's evaluation. Consultation with the Municipality's Manager of Operations and/or the Emergency Control Group Planning Section Chief will be initiated where appropriate.

Conditions Warranting Closure

The following conditions *will* warrant closure of the library:

- a) **Non-emergency closing:** Failure of heating/cooling equipment during periods of extreme weather or lack of electrical power.
- b) **Emergency evacuation:** Building problems resulting in clear and present danger to employees and/or patrons (e.g. gas leak, noxious/toxic fumes, or fire) or any event such as a criminal investigation, severe accident involving injury, severe building damage.

The operational status of the library *may* also be affected by **inclement weather**. Where inclement weather is in play, the determination to close the library is based on a number of factors including:

- General conditions of roads, both present and projected
- Requests for closure by local or provincial agencies
- Severe Weather Warning, as issued by Environment Canada
- Closure of municipal facilities
- Availability of staff to open and operate the Library

Program & Service Interruption

Staff acknowledge that there is no one strategy to mitigate service interruptions caused by inclement weather.

The Library offers a variety of programs of a drop-in, instructional, pre-registered, and incremental, basis. In situations where inclement weather conditions prevent the provision of Library programming and/or services, the following time guidelines will be used to make a decision of upcoming closures and/or cancellations:

- By 8:30 am - Cancellation of programs or bookings (as a rule, if school buses are cancelled, then programs are cancelled)
- By 11:00 am - Cancellation of afternoon programs or bookings
- By 2:00 pm - Cancellation of evening programs or bookings

Recognizing that program cancellations and facility closures are in the best interest of public safety, staff will make every attempt to reschedule or credit participants for the full value of the period that was interrupted. In all cases, no overdue charges will be levied for items due on a closed day.

Communication Plan for Closures

In cases where Library closure is determined prior to regular hours of operation for the Library, the CEO or designate will initiate communication of the closure to Library staff, members of the Library Board and the Municipality of Hastings Highlands CAO and Manager of Operations via email or telephone.

In the event of an unscheduled closing, the following means of communication will be used to communicate with the public about the closing:

- Posting on library social media (website, Facebook, Twitter (if available))
- Media Outlets, including radio station MooseFM
- Signage at library entrances
- Telephone messages on library line.

For those people already in the library, the staff on duty will inform all users in the library of the closure and ensure that they exit the Library safely and have time to arrange for transportation, if necessary.

Efforts will be made by staff on duty to directly inform any impacted program registrants or volunteers if possible.

Staff scheduling and compensation

- a) **Reporting for work** - The safety of library staff and patrons is a key concern. During periods of poor weather, employees are expected to make every reasonable effort to report for work as scheduled. It is recognized, however, that inclement weather may cause significant transportation problems or locally hazardous conditions. Employees are expected to give first consideration to their personal safety in evaluating their ability to commute to work. However, library staff must also use their own judgement regarding personal safety and transportation to and from work.

Staff members concerned for their safety who choose for themselves not to travel to work, or choose to leave work before their shift is over, should notify the Library CEO as soon as possible and advise the reason(s) that he/she will not be coming into work or will be leaving work early. The employee and Library CEO shall mutually ensure that there is minimum negative impact on operations when making such a decision.

- b) **Checking operational status of library** - Employees who are scheduled to work and need to determine the Library's operational status in an emergency are encouraged to consult their e-mail and/or telephone message to receive instructions concerning their work assignment and status. In the absence of any communication by phone or on the Library's web-site or via email, normal operations are presumed.
- c) **Temporary closures and remaining in library** - In some cases, such as temporary power outages, the Library may be closed temporarily to the public, however staff will be required to stay on site until the situation is resolved or more information is available regarding the timeline of an expected resolution. If the outage is expected to continue past 5:00 pm, or if no information is available regarding an expected return of service as of 4:30 pm, the Library will be closed for the remaining regular hours of operation. Failure of electricity for more than 45 minutes in the evening will also prompt closure of the impacted service point.
- d) **Continued closures** - If a closure continues beyond one day, staff shall be responsible for remotely accessing their work e-mail or the Library website (if operational) each day for instructions as to whether the Library is open or closed.

Compensation options for staff are as follows:

- If the Library closes prior to the scheduled closing time, all full-time and part-time employees *already present* at work shall be paid for the remainder of their shift.
- Employees **instructed by the employer** not to report for their scheduled shift or to leave work due to an emergency will be compensated at their normal hourly rate for the balance of their shift. This compensation is on the basis that all employees scheduled to work will be deemed to be "on call" for what would otherwise be a regular work day and available to return to work upon notification by Library CEO or designate.
- If an employee **chooses (for themselves)** not to come into the library due to inclement weather, Such day, or portion of a day, will be taken as earned vacation. If there is a loss of pay, an employee may request an opportunity to make-up the time if organizational needs and timing permit. Scheduling of this shift shall be at the discretion of the employee's supervisor.
- Compensation for missed time for extended closures may be referred to the Library Board.