Guidelines for Delivery of Instruction on Severe Weather Days ("Snow Days") for DVM and Master’s Programs During the COVID-19 Pandemic

December 4, 2020

These guidelines are for snow days and other occasions when travel may be impacted by severe weather. Everyone is affected when severe weather arrives, including faculty and students who must contend with power outages, longer commutes, and the challenges of providing care for family members. We want to err on the side of caution to minimize the risk of traffic accidents that may result in injury, increasing the likelihood of exposure to COVID-19 and putting added pressure on an already strained health care system. We also may not be able to provide synchronous (live) instruction during these times because of the power outages and the potential for other school or childcare closures. We would like courses to continue whenever possible in order to avoid the challenges associated with rescheduling classes or extending the semester. These schedule changes negatively impact faculty, staff, and students because of the many other demands on their time.

Please see Appendix 1 for University Weather Closing Procedures.

1. Communications of decisions around weather.
   a. An email will be sent out on the grafton, DVM2021, and Grad2021 e-lists for all pre-emptive cancellation of live zoom or in-person lectures, and for all campus closures.
   b. For campus closures (full, delayed start, early release), it will be posted on the website, including with information for clients of our hospitals and clinics.
   c. A message will be put on the “snow line” that can be reached at: 508 839-6124

2. Goal of continuing with educational programs to avoid rescheduling

Rescheduling classes is a significant challenge so we will follow these guidelines to continue delivering instruction on snow or severe weather days. The main component of this plan is to pre-emptively cancel all scheduled synchronous remote and in-person lectures or small group non-lab teaching when a severe weather event is anticipated. Faculty members will be asked to prepare and upload materials to Canvas ahead of time whenever severe weather threatens so that an inability to deliver remote synchronous or live on-campus instruction does not disrupt scheduling.

3. Determination of weather conditions and early notification

Full campus closures (Snow Days): The University monitors weather conditions and key personnel meet the evening before or at 5 a.m. on the day to determine if campuses should close because of weather
conditions. When weather deteriorates during the day, a campus closure may also be called over the course of the day or there may be a delayed start.

**Pre-emptive Suspension of Live Lectures:** Going forward, the Dean, in consultation with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Graduate Program Directors, will try to provide early notification of anticipated severe weather and cancel all live lectures (in-person or remote) so that faculty and staff can upload materials to Canvas ahead of time and prepare for a probable closure. When severe weather is anticipated, the decision may be made up to 24 h in advance.

**Communications:** Communication of decisions will come from the dean’s office and will be sent out on the Grafton, DVM, and graduate student e-lists. A notice will also be placed on the main Cummings School web page.

4. **Pre-emptive Suspension of Live Lectures for Severe Winter Weather**

   i. **Online preclinical DVM lectures and other virtual teaching:** Given the likelihood of power outages and interruption of internet service during severe whether events, synchronous (live) Zoom sessions should be switched to prerecorded lectures when severe weather threatens. Ideally faculty will prepare new prerecorded lectures and upload them to Canvas. As an alternative, *lecture capture recordings from the previous year may be used under these circumstances*, despite our policy that recordings from previous years should not be used. If you choose to use recordings from previous years, faculty or staff should locate and move them into the current course on Canvas and instructions for doing this are posted on [Faculty Commons](#). Contact Kara Witt if you have questions. The deadline for uploading materials by 3 PM Friday the week before is still the normal expectation, but please upload recorded materials as soon as possible whenever severe weather threatens, with the goal of doing this prior to the arrival of the expected severe weather event. Faculty may still choose to offer a live Zoom from home but, given that students or faculty may unexpectedly lose power, a pre-recording should still be loaded on Canvas ahead of time.

   ii. **Live in-person lectures in the master’s graduate programs:** To reduce the necessity for people to travel during times of bad weather and to reduce the need for early campus closures that result in people traveling during periods of poor road conditions, all on-campus live lectures will be cancelled. Given the likelihood of power outages and interruption of internet service, all in-person lectures should be switched to prerecorded lectures, or to some other form (e.g. written assignments addressing the scheduled discussion topics). Recordings or other relevant materials should be loaded to Canvas prior to the expected weather event so that students may stay on schedule. Faculty may still choose to offer a live Zoom from home but, given that students or faculty may unexpectedly lose power, a pre-recording should still be loaded on Canvas ahead of time whenever possible.
iii. **Examinations**: It is still possible to deliver examinations during severe weather, but remote proctoring cannot be used when there is an unstable internet connection. There are three options: 1) have students take the exam on ExamSoft without remote proctoring, 2) switch to a take-home examination, or 3) reschedule the examination.

Students will need an internet connection when downloading and uploading their exams in ExamSoft. Once the student has the exam downloaded onto their computer, they are able to take the exam without internet connection. When the student completes the exam, they must reconnect to the internet to upload their answers to the exam. Results will not be posted for students until their exams have been uploaded. Contact Karen Reagan if you have questions.

We should try to deliver exams where possible by:

- Preparing the exam earlier and having students download it before severe weather arrives and internet connections are lost.
- Expanding the window for students to take the exam. The length of the exam can remain the same, but you should extend or remove the time allowed for students to upload their completed exams. The exam will remain on the student’s computer until there is an internet connection and the student logs into ExamSoft. When the internet comes on, the student’s exam will upload. Once a student submits their exam, they will not be able to change any answers even if there is a power outage.
- Allowing further extensions for students with extenuating circumstances.
- For the master’s programs, re-scheduling may be the most appropriate approach.

iv. **Clinical rotations**: There will be no pre-emptive changes in clinical rotation expectations.

v. **Laboratories/Clinical Skills**: There will not be pre-emptive cancellations of laboratories. This will depend on snow day full closure. See below for details.

When weather conditions that raise concerns about travel on roads or affects specific faculty and staff, including those who commute longer distances or lose power in certain locations, then the following approach is recommended:

i. Reschedule the lab by contacting Associate Registrar Sarah Hurd for the DVM program, or the Graduate Program Manager, Kate Beckett. Use multiple approaches (email, Canvas, or VERC rep) to communicate with students and ensure that they are notified.

ii. Go ahead with the lab, but clearly state that attendance is optional. Relax attendance policies for labs so that students can prioritize their safety. A make-up lab or equivalent online experience may be provided when appropriate (this will be program dependent).
5. **Campus Closure ("Snow Days")**

Campus closure (full or partial days) will be determined the evening before when possible, on the day of the closure, either during the 5 a.m. university call, or when weather deteriorates over the course of the day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Normal operations are cancelled for the business day (first shift) for each campus. Unless otherwise decided, activities scheduled for the evening (second shift) or night (third shift) are expected to continue.</td>
<td>The campus cannot be safely made ready for the day, and the weather impact is forecast to continue or worsen during the day.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delayed Opening</td>
<td>Activities occurring before the selected opening time are cancelled, and activities beginning after the opening time continue as scheduled.</td>
<td>The campus cannot be safely made ready for normal opening time, but is confidently expected to be safe at the selected time. Weather impact has ended or is confidently forecast to end before the opening time.</td>
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<td>Early Release</td>
<td>Authorizes supervisors to dismiss employees early at their discretion. Generally, classes, clinics, scheduled events, and supporting activities continue unless independently cancelled.</td>
<td>Weather impact creates hazardous traveling conditions or other problems.</td>
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a. **Live lectures (remote or in-person) for DVM and master's programs** are cancelled. Lectures should be recorded and placed on Canvas as soon as possible, and where appropriate, discussion topic assignments as outlined in the previous section. No live lectures should be delivered. It is hoped in most situations that this will have happened pre-emptively.

b. **Laboratories/clinical skills**: If the campus closes, all labs in the DVM and graduate programs are cancelled and must be rescheduled. Where possible, delayed openings or early releases will be used to allow as many hands-on sessions to occur as possible.

c. **Clinical rotations**: The current hospital and rotation protocols for snow days should be followed. Although attendance is required for rotations under normal circumstances, absences
can be approved by rotation directors if students are concerned about endangering themselves by traveling into the clinical site.

d. **On-campus research.** On campus closure days, PhD students, PDFs, and research staff and faculty should only come to campus if the work is essential and time-sensitive.

### 6. Questions or concerns

For the DVM program, contact the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (Nick Frank) or Assistant Dean for Student Affairs (Barbara Berman).

For the Graduate Programs, contact the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education (Cheryl London) or the Graduate Program Manager (Kate Beckett).
Appendix 1

Weather Closing Procedures

12.3.20

This document is a functional annex to the *Emergency Operations Plan* (EOP) providing procedural guidance for a change in campus operational status due to weather, including closure, delayed opening, or early release. Most often this procedure is implemented for snow and other winter weather event impacts, but may be used for any severe weather that threatens normal operations such as hurricane, tropical storm, or tornado watch.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title/Department</th>
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<tr>
<td>Content team (UCM)</td>
<td>Receives campus status decision and communicates the decision via internal (e.g., email) and social media channels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Manager</td>
<td>Monitors weather forecasts, obtains relevant information from government agencies and counterparts at nearby institutions, coordinates reaching a weather-related operational status decision, and ensures that the decision is promptly shared with stakeholders. Usually the Director of Emergency Management or their designee. Refer to the <em>Weather Operations Checklist</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Vice President</td>
<td>Authorizes the decision to close, delay, or release a campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Representation (EAD or assigned)</td>
<td>Participates in campus status decision and approves school-focused internal communications to follow university communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities Services lead person</td>
<td>Assesses campus conditions to assist in reaching an operational status decision. Coordinates snow/debris removal operations and responds to reports of facility damage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Supervisor</td>
<td>Assesses campus conditions to assist in reaching an operational status decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Relations (UCM)</td>
<td>Receives campus status decision and notifies external media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-based communications personnel</td>
<td>Receive campus status decision and craft school-focused internal communications to follow university communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President of Operations</td>
<td>Advises Executive Vice President on snow/debris removal, damage remediation, and ability to operate campuses.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Response Options – Modification of Campus Operational Status

The university has identified three possible response options to modify operations prior to, during or after the impact of significant weather: closing, delayed opening, and early release. While longer-term options may be modified by decision of the emergency operations Executive Policy Group, short-term status modifications should always follow one of these three options.

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Emergency Closure Definitions:
Applies when the campus suspends operations for a delayed opening, early release, or closure.

- Emergency closings are implemented on a campus-by-campus basis
- Staff will follow the HR Emergency Closure Policy: [https://access.tufts.edu/emergency-closings](https://access.tufts.edu/emergency-closings)
- Academic Classes: In-person classes and activities will be canceled or changed to a virtual format. School deans will decide whether in-person classes will go virtual or be canceled. Deans will also decide if virtual classes will be continued, canceled, or the decision left to individual faculty. Faculty will be responsible for communicating the modality of the class to their students.

Procedures
Advances in meteorology have made forecasts more accurate. When possible, a closing decision will be made the evening before an anticipated weather impact based on the projected impact, confidence of the forecast, and the known or anticipated actions of public authorities. When a decision cannot be made in advance, the status decision should be made, and notifications sent to affected campus(es) by 5:15 AM on the affected day.
Operations Advisory Conference Call or Meeting
The Emergency Manager will coordinate an information-gathering discussion prior to an operational status change decision. For morning decisions, the Zoom meeting will occur at 4:45 AM. Meeting participants include the Facilities Services lead person, University Police supervisor, and the Facilities Services director for the affected campus(es). The purpose of the call is to reach a recommendation for campus operational status.

1. Prior to the call the police supervisor and Facilities Services lead person should discuss their individual assessments of conditions. For each affected campus the police supervisor and Facilities Services lead person will report on:
   a. Condition of roadways on and near campus;
   b. Condition of parking lots, and the ability to safely receive/park vehicles;
   c. Condition of walkways and outdoor stairs;
   d. Accessibility of buildings, including all emergency exits;
   e. Projection of snow/debris removal by 8:00 AM, including ability to maintain or improve roadway and walkway conditions based on the anticipated continuing weather; and
   f. Any additional hazards or conditions of concern.

2. The Emergency Manager will report on:
   a. Latest National Weather Service forecast for the area, including any posted advisories, watches, or warnings;
   b. Emergency/closing status of host and nearby communities;
   c. Status of other area colleges and universities, if known; and
   d. Any additional hazards or conditions of concern.

Decision-Making Conference Call or Meeting
Following the advisory call (~5:00 AM), the Emergency Manager will coordinate a decision-making discussion, usually conducted by Zoom. Participants include the Executive Vice President, Vice President of Operations, Executive Director of Operations, Sr. Director of Auxiliary Services, Director of Dining Services and the Executive Associate Deans, or their designees, of the following schools (if affected):

**Grafton – Cummings School**

**Boston** – School of Dental Medicine, Medical School, Friedman, HNRCA

**Medford/Somerville/Fenway** - School of A&S, School of Engineering, The Fletcher School, SMFA, Tisch College

The participants from the earlier advisory call will remain on the call. The Vice President of Human Resources will be included on calls contemplating early release. The designated on-call representatives from University Communications and Marketing will also participate in order to receive and implement the status decision as quickly as possible. If the weather situation is unusually severe and is predicted to cause property damage, widespread power outages, closure of roadways or evacuations by public officials or be of unusual duration, then the Executive Director of Content and the Executive Director of Media Relations (or their respective back-ups) will also participate.

1. The Emergency Manager will provide a synopsis of the advisory discussion.
2. The Executive Vice President will make the decision to alter campus operations.
   a. Closing or delayed opening decisions should be made before 5:30 AM, or at least 3 hours prior to the resumption of activity if an existing closure will be extended.
   b. Delayed opening must indicate a specific time at which the campus will be open for normal operations.
c. Early release decisions should be made at least 90 minutes before the effective time of the release, when possible.

3. At the conclusion of the decision-making discussion, the Executive Vice President will advise the President of the decision reached.

**Notification**

Immediately following the decision-making discussion, the Emergency Manager will email the Operations and Decision-making groups a summary of decisions made. The Emergency Manager will then immediately notify the affected campus(es) using the TuftsAlert system. Refer to the *Weather Operations Checklist*.

**Campus Operational Status Communications**

The UCM Content team will share the operational status change with campus audiences via internal channels including email, web, social media, and the 7-INFO recorded information phone line. Media Relations will notify external broadcast media using procedures established by each station. Executive Administrative Deans and school-based communications officers have the option of communicating additional details specific to their own school, if necessary, following the university communication. Detailed procedures for communications are contained in the *Weather Message Templates* document maintained by University Relations.

**Continued Monitoring**

The Emergency Manager is responsible for continuing to monitor the weather situation. When a closing has been enacted the Emergency Manager will coordinate a reassessment of campus conditions at least three hours before the anticipated end of the closure, following the same procedures outlined for the initial closing, to determine if it is safe to resume normal operations.

**Related Documents**

*Emergency Operations Plan*
*Employee Handbook*
*Weather Message Templates*
*Weather Operations Checklist*