

Inclement Weather and Unscheduled Closure Policy

Policy Level: Operational

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Date of Formal Board Approval: May 11, 2023

Policy number: 2023-01

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline roles and responsibilities in situations where the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry County Library (doing business as “SDG Library”) temporarily suspends or curtails operations due to an emergency situation, including but not limited to severe weather or power disruptions, as well as in cases when the Library remains in operation but some staff experience difficulty reporting to work due to inclement weather or other emergency conditions. The extent of any suspension or curtailment will differ depending on the particular circumstances and the nature and location of the affected operations. The suspension of Library service may also result from community-wide emergencies and recommendations prompted by the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry’s [Emergency Response Plan](#).

Guiding Principle

The SDG 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 SDG 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 any or all branches of the SDG Library shall be made by the Director of Library Services or designate, except where evacuation is essential for staff and public safety or by order of police, fire officials, or the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry’s Emergency Control Group. As many SDG Library service points are located within shared facilities, any determination made by the hosting or partner organization to close a facility will influence the Director of Library Services’ evaluation. Consultation with the Counties’ Training and Emergency Management Coordinator will be initiated where appropriate.

Conditions Warranting Closure

The following conditions *will* warrant closure of individual branches of the Library:

- a) **Non-emergency closing:** Failure of heating/cooling equipment during periods of extreme weather, lack of electrical power, inability to access the security monitoring

system (“panic buttons”), lack of computers available at staff service points for an extended period of time, or inadequate staffing levels.

- 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.
- c) **Non-openings, delayed openings, or early closings:** The operational status of the Library *may* also be affected by inclement weather. Where inclement weather is in play, the determination to close some/all branches of the Library will be based upon:
 - General conditions of roads, both present and projected
 - Requests for closure(s) by local or provincial agencies
 - Severe Weather Warning, as issued by Environment Canada
 - Closure of host facilities
 - Availability of staff to open and operate the Library facility
 - Condition of parking lots and walkways

If the Library closes prior to the scheduled closing time, all full-time employees and any part-time employees already present at work shall be paid for the remainder of their shift. Employees may be paid for scheduled hours not worked when the Library is closed due to inclement weather. Library operations will be resumed when feasible. All employees will be deemed to be “on call” for what would otherwise be a regular workday, and available to return to work upon notification by Library management or other Library communication channels. Employees who are able to perform their regular duties from home may be required to work remotely until such time that they are recalled to their scheduled workplace/branch.

If the Library is not to be opened to the public at all, every effort shall be made to make this determination at least two hours before the scheduled opening time, and to alert the Library’s municipal partners, the public, and all scheduled staff.

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, during the emergency, they are to remain available for a call-in to work to complete the balance of their shift as deemed necessary by the Director of Library Services or designate. When circumstances require the closure of only select branches, then staff of these branches may be redeployed to other branch locations. This may result in a change in the number and/or timing of scheduled shifts. Employees who refuse scheduled shifts at alternate locations will not be compensated for any shifts cancelled as a result of the closure.

If a closure continues beyond one day, staff shall be responsible for remotely accessing their work email accounts and/or contacting their direct supervisor each day for instructions as to whether the Library is open or closed.

In some cases, such as temporary power outages, the Library will be evacuated and closed temporarily to the public, however staff will be required to stay on site for up to two (2) hours 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 5:00pm, or if no information is available regarding an expected return of service as of 4:00pm, the affected Library branch(es) will be closed for the remaining regular hours of operation. In addition to the immediate evacuation of patrons, failure of electricity for more than 30 minutes after dark will also prompt closure of the impacted service point(s) for the remainder of the day.

Staff Responsibilities

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

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. In such cases, the following protocol shall be observed:

1. An employee may decide not to come to work or leave early at such time as information is broadcast that:
 - A public road is closed by the police (due to weather) that is a main arterial route to the facility from that employee's residence.
 - A major storm is imminent which, for purposes of clarity, is a Severe Weather Warning as issued by Environment Canada that directly affects Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry or the employee's place of residence.
2. In all of the situations found in Number 1., the employee is expected to contact their direct supervisor as soon as practicable and advise the reason(s) that they will not be coming into work or will be leaving work early. 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.
3. Employees who are able to perform their regular duties from home must consult with their supervisor when considering the feasibility of working remotely as a result of inclement weather.
4. In all cases, the employee and supervisor shall mutually ensure that there is a minimum negative impact on operations when making such a decision.

Communication of Closure

In cases where Library closure is determined prior to regular hours of operation, the Director of Library Services or designate will initiate communication of the closure to Library staff via email or telephone or text.

Communication of closures to the public is very important, and all available communication channels will be used to inform SDG residents when there is a decision made to close Library branches. Similar communications will also be directed to local municipal offices.

For those people already in the Library, staff on duty will inform all users 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.

Conversely, the SDG Library will prioritize communications – both directly to the public and to local municipalities – regarding branches that are able to be open during inclement weather or other emergency situations, and will indicate whether those facilities may be used by the public

as warming stations, as technology charging points – especially for residents who are without power – or to access other Library services that may be needed, depending on the situation.

Program & Service Interruption

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 8:30am – cancellation of morning programs or bookings
- By 11:00am – cancellation of afternoon programs or bookings
- By 2:00pm – 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 programs and, if necessary, credit participants for the full value of the (booking) period that was interrupted.

In all cases, no overdue charges will be levied for items due on a closed day.