

# Help! We're canceling our event!

## How can we tell the world?

When bad weather forces school closings and delays, the Communication Services Office often gets calls from administrators who want us to notify the public of canceled meetings, field trips and the like. Here's how we can (and can't) help:

### 1. Will the Communication Services Office notify the media for us when our school or department cancels a field trip or meeting?

Communication Services communicates news of **systemwide** importance or when an **emergency** situation affects an entire school community. Given that FCPS has 67 schools and many departments—each with its own schedule of field trips, sports events and curriculum meetings—it is impossible for one office to handle individual schedule changes that occur when school is closed.

### 2. Okay, then how can we get the word out?

First, consider the significance and impact of the change. Who is affected? How large is the group? Is it a class, team or committee? Is it all your school's students or parents, or hundreds of teachers or students coming from around the county?

**Phone, email or PA announcement** — Use these when your audience is relatively small and you have contact information for them. For a field trip cancellation, for instance, it may be best to make calls. A band director can contact members about a canceled competition. Use the PA system to tell students tonight's game is canceled.

**FCPS email distribution lists** — Perfect for groups such as school counselors or principals or all employees at a school. You can reach everyone with the same message using the appropriate Outlook distribution group. If the cancellation affects *employees* at many locations throughout FCPS but you don't have their names or email addresses, send your notice to Dian Nelson for Employee News.

**Your school's website & social media** — Post a notice. Remember to date and remove it from the Web when it's no longer current.

**FCPS Television (Comcast Cable Channel 18)** — Use only to announce items that have wide-reaching impact and/or pertain to large external audiences (such as a Board of Education meeting). Email [dian.nelson@fcps.org](mailto:dian.nelson@fcps.org) and cc [tim.dean@fcps.org](mailto:tim.dean@fcps.org). If you are postponing rather than canceling, give the new date.

**Local radio stations** — Local radio stations will sometimes announce cancellations of events such as school plays or parent nights. Regional radio and most TV stations will not. Go to the employee intranet at [https://ive.fcps.org/dana-na/auth/url\\_3/welcome.cgi](https://ive.fcps.org/dana-na/auth/url_3/welcome.cgi) for media contact information under the Communication Services Department, and make the calls or send email directly from your desk. Be prepared to identify yourself.

### 3. Can we put our school's postponement announcement on [www.fcps.org](http://www.fcps.org)? Or send it via FindOutFirst?

Schools can only send their own postponement announcements **after** Central Office publishes the systemwide notice, provided that schools stick to providing **new information** such as a new date/time for a postponed event. When the FCPS system announcement states that ALL afterschool and evening

activities are canceled or postponed, schools may NOT send additional notices that their afterschool and evening events are canceled or postponed.

If the message is of systemwide or wide-scale significance (and is a non-sporting event), to request a FindOutFirst notice, please contact [dian.nelson@fcps.org](mailto:dian.nelson@fcps.org) with a copy to [michael.doerrer@fcps.org](mailto:michael.doerrer@fcps.org) and [tonya.street@fcps.org](mailto:tonya.street@fcps.org).

#### **4. During bad weather season, what can we do to plan for possible cancellations?**

Choose a snow or rain date **in advance** and include it in all your communications to participants.

Adhere to the “What Schools Do in Bad Weather and Emergencies” guidelines on page 5 of the *FCPS Calendar Handbook*. Let participants know **in advance** that the guidelines will apply to your event.

Refer to FCPS Regulation 400-2 (at <https://apps.fcps.org/legal/doc.php?number=400-02>), and remind participants **in advance** that it will apply to your event.

Provide a name and number for participants to call if they have questions.

Appoint someone to make cancellation/rescheduling decisions and to publicize them.

#### **5. What does FCPS Regulation 400-2 state about after-school and evening activities on days when school is closed for weather or other emergency situations?**

When schools are closed all day or dismiss students early due to weather, all after-school and evening activities are canceled, including events scheduled by outside groups (except daycare centers and Parks and Recreation programs operating in FCPS facilities, which independently make decisions regarding modifications to their program schedules and communicate accordingly with the media, the principal and the families they serve).

In addition, as stated in [FCPS Regulation 400-2](#), except for the daycare centers and Parks and Recreation programs referenced above: **When the Snow Emergency Plan is in effect in Frederick County, all after-school, evening and weekend programs and activities shall be canceled.** This includes evening instructional programs such as FCPS Virtual School and the Heather Ridge Twilight Program.

In rare circumstances, the Superintendent may grant a waiver for schools to hold an event even though the system is closed. Requests should be made to the deputy superintendent, who will then review the matter with the Superintendent.