SUBJECT: College Delay and Closure Policy


RELATED POLICY: MHS Paid Time Off

PURPOSE: This policy communicates the procedure for College delays or closures and the expectations for work during occasions of adverse weather, utilities failure, or other emergencies.

Below are Nebraska Methodist College’s policies and procedures related to adverse weather, utilities failure, and other emergencies and the announcement of class delays or cancellation. Students, faculty and staff are encouraged to review the policies and procedures before the onset of adverse weather, utilities failure, and other emergencies in order to be familiar with how the College operates in the event of inclement weather and where to go for announcements concerning class delay or cancellation.

Nebraska Methodist College primarily serves students in the greater Omaha area, but also has many students throughout Nebraska and nationwide online. Because of this geographical diversity it is impossible for the College to make effective emergency closure decisions for all geographic areas reached by the College. The College will be as comprehensive as possible when making announcements concerning emergencies, but the ultimate decision for safety rests with the individual student, faculty or staff member. If the adverse weather, utilities failure or other emergency, which has caused the College to close or delay opening, you are expected to work or attend clinical as normally scheduled. If necessary, students please contact your clinical instructor or coordinator for further instructions.

Nebraska Methodist College expects to remain open and conduct on-ground and off-campus classes according to the regular schedule. Even if public schools are closed, the College will likely remain open. Therefore, please plan accordingly. Faculty and staff are to report to the College or clinical site when able, but the ultimate decision concerning personal safety in adverse weather is the responsibility of the individual. Students, faculty, and staff should take normal precautions regarding their ability to travel safely to the campus, clinical site, or college-related function.

Policy and Procedure:

When adverse weather, utilities failure, or other emergencies exist, the decision to alter class schedules or College operations will be made by the College President or the President’s designee. The College announces delays and closings by 5:00 a.m. whenever possible. In the event that inclement weather, utilities failure, or emergency exists, one of three options may be invoked: 1) Two-Hour Delay, 2) Classes Cancelled or 3) College Closed—Only Essential Personnel Report.
It is the responsibility of each individual to learn about announcements of closing or delays when adverse weather, utilities failure, or other emergencies exist. Delays and closings will be communicated by e2Campus, the "College Hot Line" voice mail at (402) 354-7222; local radio and TV stations may also be notified of the event and may broadcast the news of the College closing. Students are not to report to the College if it is declared closed, as college closure includes all day and evening ground-based classes, clinical, and laboratory sessions for the calendar day. Departmental and program guidelines apply to specific clinical attendance. Refer to the emergency communication plan on the College website www.methodistcollege.edu and program handbooks for more information.

1. **Two-Hour Delay**

To further clarify, College delays and closings reported by the local radio and TV stations are submitted through systems where the only options are “two-hour delay” or “closed”. A two-hour delay is interpreted as 10:00 a.m. since the College officially opens for business at 8:00 a.m. However, administrative personnel are aware that there are early clinical start times for nursing and health professions programs and as well as some 7:00 a.m. classes. Please verify exact start times with your instructors.

For a two-hour delayed start at 10:00 a.m., please report to wherever you normally would be at 10:00 a.m. that day — even if that is in the middle of a class with a 9:30 start time. Please note, only classes that end before 10:00 a.m. are cancelled entirely.

Delays for any evening classes or events will be announced by 4:00 p.m. on the day of the classes.

Commuters, particularly those commuting from outlying areas, should exercise personal judgment concerning road conditions regardless of College announcements.

2. **Classes Cancelled**

When the College is affected by adverse weather, utilities failure or other emergencies, classes may be cancelled. Classes cancelled means that all classes for students and faculty are cancelled, including evening classes and College-sponsored activities. College personnel, including faculty and staff, should report as normally scheduled. However, commuters, particularly those commuting from outlying areas, should exercise personal judgment concerning road conditions regardless of College announcements and communicate with their supervisor.

For clinical, students are to follow guidelines within their program handbook. If the clinical experience is supervised by a College faculty clinical instructor, your clinical is cancelled. If the clinical is supervised by a preceptor associated with the clinical facility, and not College faculty, you are allowed to attend clinical with permission from your clinical coordinator and the clinical site and at your discretion for safely traveling to and from the clinical site.

Please note, employees and students who work or attend clinical in locations not affected by the adverse weather, utilities failure, or other emergency, which has caused the College to close or delay opening, are expected to work or attend clinical as normally scheduled. Employees contact your program supervisor for further instructions. Students contact your clinical coordinator for further instructions.
Missed work due to extreme travel hazards:

College employees are to report to the College or clinical site when able, but the ultimate decision concerning personal safety in adverse weather is the responsibility of the individual. According to the Methodist Health System Paid Time Off policy, employees are encouraged to accumulate and save some PTO in the event of an unexpected absence. If adverse weather conditions create extreme travel hazards for employees traveling to or from the workplace, the employees should make every effort to notify their departmental supervisor. If the employee is unable to make it into work, the advance notice requirements for use of time off will be waived.

Non-exempt employees (Hourly):

Non-exempt employee status is based on the employee’s position and communicated to an employee at the time of hire. Non-exempt employee status means that the employee is subject to state and federal wage and hour laws. If the College has cancelled classes, but administrative operations run as scheduled employees are expected to make reasonable effort to maintain their regular work schedules, but are advised to avoid undue risks in traveling. If the non-exempt employee is unable to make it to work, the non-exempt employee at their option may:

- Take an absence of less than four hours as PTO or without pay;
- Take an absence of an entire shift of four hours or more as accumulated PTO. However, worked hours plus PTO taken, should not exceed the employee’s weekly scheduled hours for the position in which the PTO is used; or
- With supervisory approval, make up the work on an hour-for-hour basis during the same week so that the employee will not suffer loss of pay.

Exempt employees (Salaried):

Exempt employee status is based on the employee’s position and communicated to an employee at the time of hire. Exempt employee status means that the employee is exempt from certain state or federal wage and hour laws. If the College has cancelled classes, but administrative operations run as scheduled employees are expected to make reasonable effort to maintain their regular work schedules, but are advised to avoid undue risks in traveling. If the exempt employee is unable to make it to work, the exempt employee may:

- Take absences of less than four hours as PTO (if available);
- Charge absences of four or more hours to available PTO; or
- With supervisor approval, work from home. No salary reductions will be made for any absence of less than one day, unless the absence meets the criteria for Family Medical Leave. (See MHS Family Medical Leave policy.)

Faculty employees:

Nebraska Methodist College defines a faculty member as a non-classified employee of an institution of higher education. Faculty employee status is communicated to an employee at the time of hire. If the College has cancelled classes, but administrative operations run as scheduled, faculty are expected to make reasonable effort to maintain their regular work schedules, but are advised to avoid undue risks in traveling. If the faculty employee is unable to make it to work, the faculty employee may work from home with approval from their supervisor.

3. College Closed—Only Essential Personnel Report:
In extremely rare cases, the College will officially close due to adverse weather, utilities failure or other emergencies. When the College is officially closed, all classes are cancelled and administrative operations of the College are also suspended. For the College to officially close conditions at the College and/or immediate surrounding areas are extremely dangerous or the College is in a non-functioning condition. Such closings may be for an entire or partial day/evening.

**On those days when the College is officially closed, only essential personnel will report for work.** Non-emergency College personnel are not required to report to work. Essential personnel are those needed to maintain College and student safety and security and different emergencies may require different personnel. *Some employees due to the nature of their jobs and/or area of expertise will be designated essential personnel and will be identified as such by a Vice President.*

Non-exempt employees not deemed essential personnel at their option may either be absent without pay, use accrued PTO, or with supervisory approval, the work may be made up on an hour-for-hour basis during the same week so that the employee will not suffer loss of pay. Because of state and federal wage and hour laws, non-exempt employees are not to work from home. Exempt employees not deemed essential personnel may use either accrued PTO, or with supervisor approval, work from home. Faculty not deemed essential personnel may work from home with approval from their supervisor.