



Subject: School Closure Notice – Thursday, March 12

Dear Bigfork Public Schools Families and Staff,

Based on the best information currently available, and out of an abundance of caution, **Bigfork Public Schools will be closed tomorrow, Thursday, March 12.** All after-school events, activities, and athletic practices are also canceled. The band and cheer teams are still scheduled to leave tonight at 5:00 pm to head to Great Falls, the major portion of the storm is supposed to impact our area between 12:00 am and 6:00 am tomorrow morning.

Local Conditions

This afternoon, the National Weather Service (NOAA) issued a Blizzard Conditions Warning for our area for tomorrow Thursday, March 12 and is predicting an historic wind event, with a 100% chance of wind gusts exceeding 50 mph. In addition, Flathead Electric has indicated there is an extremely high likelihood of widespread power outages during this storm.

After consulting with the National Weather Service, **Flathead County Sheriff Brian Heino has also begun assembling the County Response Team and is recommending all school districts across Flathead County close school tomorrow.**

Community Safety is Top Priority

In making this decision, we also considered the lessons learned during the recent December wind event. Our schools are not equipped to operate without power and do not have backup generators.

In situations like this, getting students to school is often not the greatest concern. Rather, the larger challenge arises if power outages occur while students are in our buildings. Loss of electricity affects lighting, heat, communications, and in some cases running water. Additionally, if emergency conditions require shelter-in-place measures, it can create unrealistic expectations for our schools and challenges for parents wishing to sign out their children.

While weather and wind events are inherently unpredictable, I believe this decision reflects reasonable caution based on the best information we have and the unprecedented level of confidence of the likelihood of these events from the weather service.

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VIKES
and
VALS

Our intent is to provide advanced notice to allow families time to plan ahead for childcare and adjust schedules as needed. It also helps avoid early-morning confusion regarding school closures and specific canceled transportation route services. Students may also want to take home winter clothing and other school supplies or equipment.

Looking Ahead to Friday

We will continue to monitor weather conditions before making a decision about our school schedules for Friday.

We will follow our process of notifying families by 6 AM on Friday if the school schedule is impacted by the weather through our BrightArrow alert system with a text and email.

Families can find more information about the weather's impact by referring to the following community preparedness resources:

- [National Weather Service updates](#)
- [Flathead Electric outage information](#)
- [Flathead County emergency preparedness updates](#)

Thank you for your understanding and support as we prioritize the safety of our students, families, and staff.

Tom Stack
Superintendent