

Muskoka Lakes Township Public Library  
LIBRARY BOARD POLICY

Policy Type: Operational	Policy Number: OP-09
Policy Title: Emergency Closures/Inclement Weather	Policy Approval Date: 10/15/24
Chairperson: V. Duke	Policy Review Date: 10/28

**Intent:**

The Muskoka Lakes Public Library Board (herein after referred to as the Board) endeavours to ensure that Muskoka Lakes Public Library (hereinafter referred to as the Library) remains open to serve the public for its scheduled operating hours. However, it also recognizes that there may be unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances beyond the control of the Board and/or staff that prevent the Library from being open or closing unexpectedly.

**Regulations:**

In accordance with the *Public Libraries Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, the Board is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for staff, volunteers and members of the public who use the Library. The Board also acts to protect and secure Library property.

**Definitions:**

1. An emergency is defined as an event which may result from a fire, accident, catastrophe, weather or other unforeseen circumstance.
2. Inclement Weather is defined as weather which is severe, squally, turbulent or stormy. It can include, but is not limited to tornadoes, hurricanes, hail, blizzards, ice storms, heavy rain, thunderstorms, and high velocity winds. Safe passage to and from work and working itself can be severely compromised during or following inclement weather, especially if accompanied by a power failure.
3. A Safe Location is defined as an area within a facility where staff members are to congregate in the event of an impending severe weather event such as a tornado. In Port Carling the Safe Location is the Heritage Room. In Bala the Safe Location is the washroom area.

**Procedures:**

The CEO or designate will make the decision as to whether the circumstances require the closure of the Library.

1. The CEO will consider many factors before closing the Library. The factors may include, but are not limited to:
  - i. the safety and well-being of staff and users
  - ii. the ability of the Library to provide service



- iii. circumstances outside the Library that may threaten the security of staff and users inside the Library
- iv. closure imposed by emergency services or other agencies responsible for health and safety and local emergency preparedness. In such an event, the staff will co-operate with these officials.

### **Inclement Weather Before the Library Opens**

If the CEO (or designate) determines the weather to be sufficiently inclement to prevent the opening of the Library, the CEO (or designate) will inform staff about the closure as soon as possible.

### **Emergency Due to Inclement Weather**

1. If the weather appears to be deteriorating during the day, the CEO (or designate) will closely monitor reports from local news updates, any Environment Canada weather statements, watches or warnings advising of severe storms and will keep in close contact with staff at both branches. It is possible that one branch may remain open while the other is closed due to localized severe weather or power outages impacting a specific location.
2. If dangerous weather or warnings suddenly appear, while the Library is open, the staff will take the users, who are in the Library, with them to the Library's designated Safe Location.

### **School Bus Cancellations**

The Library may remain open on days when school buses are cancelled. However, in the interest of user/participant safety, scheduled programs may be cancelled.

### **Responsibilities**

1. The CEO (or designate) is to maintain an awareness of and be prepared to act on the possibility of severe weather conditions which may arise unexpectedly or as forecast by weather authorities.
2. The CEO (or designate) will monitor and evaluate Environment Canada Information, road closures, school bus cancellations, school closures, and Township of Muskoka Lakes information.
3. Employees are responsible to gather information about inclement weather through their Library email accounts, Environment Canada Alerts (website/radio/media), and to contact the CEO (or designate) if they are concerned.
4. Staff will be trained on the location of flashlights, emergency phone numbers and the back-up telephone, as well as the Library's Safe Location.
5. The decision of the CEO or (designate) to close or not open the Library will be communicated to the affected branch, posted on the website, social media and at the Library facility to be closed, if possible.

6. The CEO (or designate) will endeavour to contact staff and volunteers scheduled to arrive later in the day, along with those registered in programmes scheduled for after the closure.
7. The CEO (or designate) will endeavour to contact those registered in cancelled programs.
8. The CEO (or designate) will endeavour to ensure that the Library is as secure and protected, as possible, prior to closing.

**Related Documents:**

MLPL OPHR-12 Closure and Inclement Weather Remuneration

*Public Libraries Act*

*Occupational Health and Safety Act*