

NEW “Rural Buses on Plowed Roads Only” ADVISORY BEGINS JANUARY 2011

In severe winter weather situations, school leaders must consider both education and safety in their decision making. Such decisions can be complicated when Lake Superior affects how and where such weather hits.

The toughest call involves a weather pattern that includes heavy snowfall in rural areas over the hill and little or no snow in urban Duluth. In these situations, roads in rural areas may not be safe for school bus travel while roads in town are perfectly fine. In the past, all schools would close during such weather events. About 20% of our student population resides in the rural area. About 80% resides in urban Duluth. The challenge – keeping schools open when severe winter weather affects safe bus travel on rural roads but not roads in town.

Beginning in January 2011, when severe snows hit rural areas and not urban Duluth areas, the District may issue an announcement that for safety reasons rural school buses are running on plowed roads only.

This announcement will be made in the morning via the same communication channels that currently announce whether schools are open or closed including TV, radio and websites. The announcement will look/sound like this:

“Duluth Public Schools are open – Rural buses on plowed roads only.”

That means school buses in rural areas will perform their routes as close to normal as possible *on roads that are plowed*. Schools will be open for the day.

Families who live on rural roads that are not plowed that morning have choices: 1) Keep their student home for safety reasons and call their school to report the absence, which is excused or 2) Transport students to and from school themselves. This approach will provide an opportunity for education to continue for most students and at the same time maintain safe school bus travel.

Questions:

What is considered a “rural” area?

--Between Rice Lake and Howard Gnesen Roads: Everything north of and including Norton Road.

--Between Howard Gnesen Road and Woodland Avenue: Everything north of Calvary Road.

--Jean Duluth Rd: Everything north of Everett Street.

--Lester River Rd: Everything north of the intersection with Superior Street.

--North Shore Drive and the freeway: Everything north and east of the intersection with Superior Street.

Does “rural buses on plowed roads only” apply any time it snows? No, it does not. It only applies to situations involving severe winter weather when, after closely checking road conditions, a decision is made by District officials to run rural buses on plowed roads only and the decision is announced through TV, radio and other communication venues.

Can I take my student to school and have the school bus drop them off in the afternoon?

It’s best to plan on picking your student up after school. In the afternoon, buses will again travel only on plowed roads and we have no reliable means of verifying which rural roads will be plowed by dismissal.

Duluth Independent School District #709 District Map

