

# Extreme Weather Plan

## Operational Considerations and Procedures

University of Iowa  
Office of Emergency Management



**IOWA**

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Department of Public Safety  
Office of Emergency Management

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## Introduction

This document represents a functional annex to the University of Iowa Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). It provides procedural guidance for any changes in campus operational status due to severe weather, including reducing operations, class cancellations, delayed opening and/or early termination of services. Most often, this procedure will be implemented for snow and other winter weather event impacts, but may also be used for any hazardous or severe weather that threatens normal operations such as flooding, extreme temperatures, and other potentially dangerous conditions that could impact university operations.

The University of Iowa (UI or university) will operate in accordance with the university academic and master calendars except when overriding public safety concerns otherwise require operational adjustments to be made.

As a matter of policy, the University of Iowa is never closed. The residential, healthcare, research, and overall public safety aspects of UI operations make this a requirement.

## Purpose

To enable a consistent, transparent, efficient, and coordinated multi-department and multi-campus response to any inclement weather.

## Scope

This plan applies to the UI-Johnson County campuses in coordination with all other UI campuses. UI campuses located outside of Johnson County will follow each of their own campus policies and procedures for inclement weather decision making in coordination with the Provost. University of Iowa Health Care (UIHC) will be included in the coordination through the routine emergency management structure and contacts, but will follow UIHC policies and plans regarding inclement weather.

This plan addresses roles and responsibilities, provides definitions, and outlines campus procedures.

In cases where the UI Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is activated due to severe weather, UI will follow the incident management structure and process as outlined in the EOP.

## Authority

The authority to make extreme weather operational decisions on behalf of the university has been delegated by the President to the Executive Vice President and Provost (Provost). The Provost may consult with various resources, including but not limited to the members of the Severe Weather Advisory Group (SWAG), as applicable. For current conditions and other real-time updates, the Provost may confer with campus

partners such as Department of Public Safety, Landscape Services, and CAMBUS as needed to make an informed decision.

## Limitations

The University of Iowa will endeavor to make every reasonable effort to respond to severe storms or hazardous weather incidents. However, there is no guarantee implied by this document that a perfect response to a severe storm or hazardous weather incident will be practical or possible.

## Operational Decisions

Inclement weather often develops overnight and can change rapidly. In such cases and depending on conditions, attempts are made to distribute a campus announcement and notify media by 5:30 a.m. before the start of the day. If inclement weather or an emergency develops during any other time of the day, the same notification procedures are followed and an announcement will be made as soon as reasonably possible.

When inclement weather or emergency conditions are such that a reduction in operations needs to occur two or more days in succession, the procedure is followed each day, including weekends. Unless there is an announced operational change for a particular day, the university is open and operating on a regular schedule. Because conditions can change unexpectedly overnight, an evening announcement usually will not be made for the next day except in the most extreme circumstances.

Even when the university is operating normally, there could be unsafe travel conditions in the area. Students and employees should exercise caution and gather as much information as possible about weather and road conditions before they decide whether to travel during periods of inclement weather.

During deteriorating weather conditions, it should be assumed that university operations will continue unless an official announcement is made via Hawk Alert in conjunction with the Office of Strategic Communication. For special events, individuals are encouraged to check with event sponsors and/or applicable webpages. Those who travel to or from campus should use their judgment as to whether or not such travel is wise. Employees should refer to the UI Operations Manual for additional information regarding leave and other Human Resources related topics.

In the event of inclement weather or an emergency, the university follows set procedures for announcing university-wide operational changes by making a formal announcement. All announcements will follow the Office of Strategic Communication's procedures as outlined in OSC's applicable procedure plan.

Most, but not all, inclement weather announcements will be made in response to the declaration of a Wind Chill or a Snow/Ice Emergency.

- **Wind Chill Emergency**  
Conditions: When existing or predicted low temperatures and wind conditions have the potential to pose a severe health threat to those walking to and from class or work assignment, a Wind Chill Emergency may be declared based on forecast or actual temperatures. This may occur when the sustained wind chill is less than or equal to -30 degrees Fahrenheit and/or the time for frostbite to occur is less than 10 minutes.  
\*Wind chills and frostbite times as determined by NWS.
- **Snow/Ice Emergency**  
Conditions: When snow or ice accumulation is predicted or occurs, significantly impacting roads and sidewalks on campus, a snow/ice emergency may be declared if the impact rises to the level that safe travel is no longer possible and poses a significant public safety threat.

When UI reduces operations to include essential operations only, employees involved in critical functions should report to work, as applicable. Unless otherwise determined by a specific department's Business Continuity Plan, critical functions are those that relate directly to the health, safety, and welfare of the university, ensure continuity of key operations, and maintain and protect university property.

When an announcement is made to reduce campus operations, the campus community should refer to [emergency.uiowa.edu](http://emergency.uiowa.edu) and/or departmental webpages for information regarding specific operations updates or events.

1. **Special Events** — Departments and units hosting special events should make their own prior arrangements with employees and participants, notifying them how to proceed in case of inclement weather or an emergency. In unique circumstances, where the safety of the participants and employees is not jeopardized, special events, such as ticketed concerts or athletic events open to the public, may be held upon approval from applicable university leadership. All departments and units must ensure adequate services through coordination with Facilities Management, the UI Department of Public Safety, and other units expected to support such operations and then submit their request by email to the UI Office of Emergency Management (OEM) via [DPS-OEM@uiowa.edu](mailto:DPS-OEM@uiowa.edu) or a provided Veoci system address. OEM will coordinate with the Provost and/or the applicable Vice President of the applicable requestor to determine approval.
2. **Transportation** — When the decision is made to reduce UI operations for inclement weather conditions, CAMBUS may continue to provide on-campus transit services beyond that time as road and weather conditions allow. The ability to operate in a safe manner will be the primary consideration when determining whether service can be provided. Notifications regarding operational changes will be made available through CAMBUS official means of communication, including but not limited to, applicable apps and webpages.
3. **Dining Services** — The university residential dining commons will provide meal plan service even when the university closes for inclement weather. However, the department may delay opening on these days by one hour and may opt to close

early if weather conditions are extreme. Meal plan participants will be notified by email of any changes in daily operations. Up-to-date information will also be provided via their webpage or other designated methods of official communication.

4. **Other Campuses** — Announcements for weather related operational impacts at UI campuses outside of Johnson County are disseminated by those campus administrators separately from the main campus announcements.

## Severe Weather Advisory Group (SWAG)

SWAG is a group whose membership is representative of the university administrative structure responsible for certain essential/critical campus operations. In this context, these individuals report to the Provost for the purpose of serving in an advisory capacity regarding severe weather impacts and response capabilities. SWAG is coordinated through OEM.

### Responsibilities

- SWAG will assess the nature, the severity, and the anticipated impacts and recovery of the university due to the potential inclement weather and advise the Provost of its findings.
- The Provost will make the decision to cancel classes and, if necessary, to reduce operations, as applicable.
- SWAG will implement the decision of the UI Leadership.

### Advisory Process

1. Key Actions
  - ✓ Monitor weather threat
  - ✓ Communicate weather forecast, current conditions, and potential impacts
  - ✓ Maintain coordination throughout the event
  - ✓ Provide information to senior leadership
  - ✓ Document event and applicable operations
2. Procedures
  - A. Activation
    - Upon determination of a threat of inclement weather that has the potential to significantly disrupt the normal course of business and/or poses a significant threat to the health and safety of the campus community, the Provost may authorize the activation of SWAG. OEM will activate some or all of the group, based on the direction of the Provost, and request members to provide situation reports pertinent to their areas.
      - i. Any member of SWAG may contact OEM and recommend activation of the group. The decision to activate will be made by the Provost.
    - At the direction of the Provost, OEM will create initial briefing messages and either schedule a conference call or open a Veoci room.

- SWAG members will be notified via email and/or text message.
- B. Coordination Activities
  - When using a conference call, Attachment B should be used to document the call.
  - For operational change discussions, the Provost may use attachment C to aid in the decision-making process although the results of this form shall not override the ability of UI leadership to use caution and best judgment in determining the operational status of the university.
- C. Craft applicable operation change message using template
  - Office of Strategic Communication (lead), OEM, Provost Communications, External Relations
  - Submit for approval to Provost (or designee)
- D. Communicate applicable operational changes:

Task	Assigned To
When possible, provide advanced notice to president, cabinet, collegiate deans and identified associate deans/leaders	Office of the Provost
Issue Hawk Alert	DPS/OSC
Social Media dissemination	DPS/OSC
Share messaging with campus communicators	OSC
Post situation updates to Emergency page	OSC

- E. Continue to gather information
  - Public Safety will continue to monitor the weather threat.
  - Updates in between calls may be shared via email or Veoci room.
  - OEM will facilitate additional conference calls as needed.
- F. Event Close-Out
  - Unless specific announcements, extending cancellations, and/or operational changes are made, classes will resume the next regularly scheduled class day and the university will resume normal operations at the beginning of the next morning shift or regular business day.
- G. After Action Review (AAR)
  - Events will be reviewed as necessary. Extent and type of review (virtual vs. in person) will be dictated by the impacts of the event.
  - After action items will be solicited and should be submitted via email to [DPS-OEM@uiowa.edu](mailto:DPS-OEM@uiowa.edu) or as directed in Veoci.
  - OEM will compile AAR items into a document which may be distributed via email or shared within Veoci.



## Factors to Consider

- The inherent unpredictability of the weather makes it impossible to definitively dictate a time for certain procedures to take place.
- A more expansive storm/situation may require several pre-event conference calls and/or may result in an EOC activation.
- Special consideration should be given to decisions made after the start of the workday. This represents a logistical challenge especially as it pertains to Parking and Transportation.
- Consideration should also be given to the city streets adjoining the university, as city street conditions may prohibit CAMBUS from passing on their normal routes.
- Consideration should be given to weather in outlying areas, where faculty, staff, and/or students may be commuting from.
- The decision worksheet (Appendix C) can be used to help further aid in the decision-making process. This document includes additional criteria and factors that should be considered with an attributable value system to support the process. The decision worksheet in no way shall limit the ability of leadership to use good judgement and extreme caution. This document should be considered a support tool to guide the decision process.

## SWAG Coordination

### Overview

Upon receipt of an applicable advisory, watch, warning or otherwise indicated by OEM, the Director of OEM (or designee) will inform the Provost. The Provost may opt to request activation of all or specific members of the Severe Weather Advisory Group (SWAG) via conference call or Veoci. The purpose of the coordination may be to:

- Gather information pertaining to impacts and potential recovery capabilities
- Maintain situational awareness

Generally speaking, the first coordination meeting (virtual or via phone) for an event should commence at least 12 hours ahead of the forecasted start of the event. However, these times are subject to change based on the path and timing of the weather event. The University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics also coordinates with their Incident Management Team (IMT). Coordination with UIHC to ensure collaboration and consistent communications will occur through routine coordination in emergency management and UI leadership roles.

Coordination of information is key to effective and appropriate decision making. The following shall be used as a reference for suggested information to be shared by the applicable group/area:

<b>Group/Area</b>	<b>Focus</b>
<b>Emergency Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Weather briefing</li><li>• Local impacts and updates</li></ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UIHC Status (hospital operations, clinic operations, and event declaration/staffing)</li> <li>• Johnson County and State of Iowa status</li> </ul>
<b>Facilities Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roads and grounds conditions</li> <li>• Staffing</li> <li>• Loss of critical services</li> <li>• Expected time for clearing</li> <li>• Operational considerations</li> </ul>
<b>UI DPS/Police</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roads and grounds conditions</li> <li>• Staffing</li> <li>• Building access</li> <li>• Operational considerations</li> <li>• NITE RIDE status</li> </ul>
<b>Business Services (including Parking and Transportation)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchasing needs and approvals</li> <li>• Receiving operations</li> <li>• Road and grounds conditions</li> <li>• CAMBUS schedule/status</li> <li>• Parking lot status</li> </ul>
<b>Provost's Office</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic operations</li> </ul>
<b>Student Life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing and Dining status</li> <li>• Student activities/Iowa Memorial Union</li> </ul>
<b>Human Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee reporting status</li> </ul>
<b>External Relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Events (Hancher, etc.)</li> <li>• Local impacts</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Messaging</li> <li>• Consideration to messaging</li> </ul>
<b>Athletics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Events</li> </ul>
<b>Any and/or all</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updates/Comments</li> </ul>

## Veoci

UI will use Veoci, an incident management system tool that will allow for on-going virtual situational awareness and information sharing as well as accountability/tracking of resources and documentation, as it applies to coordination for extreme weather situations. OEM will activate a room for the forecasted extreme weather so that all SWAG members can share related concerns, information, and assessments.

## Conference Call Procedure

In the absence of Veoci or if the need arises that a conference call is better suited, the call will be announced via email and/or text messaging to the applicable members of SWAG, including backups. Those unable to join the call are encouraged to share updates with OEM to be shared with the group. As applicable, OEM will provide situation reports (SitRep) via email between calls, as appropriate. Therefore, members

of the SWAG are encouraged to share updates with OEM between conference calls, for situational awareness purposes.

The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) will initiate the call and open the line approximately 5 minutes prior to the scheduled time of the call. Participants will be polled for attendance and then the OEM facilitator will poll each office/department and ask for an update. At the conclusion of the departmental reports, there will be time allotted for questions and other commentary.

Conference calls should follow the subsequent agenda:

1. Call will be facilitated by OEM personnel.
2. OEM will begin the call with a roll call and a weather briefing.
3. OEM will then solicit applicable information.
4. Operating schedule recommendation.
5. Schedule next call time.
6. OEM will document all conference calls.

## Appendix A: Severe Weather Advisory Group Contacts

*This appendix is not available via this public access document.*

## Appendix B: Conference Call Worksheet

*This appendix is not available via this public access document.*

## Appendix C: Campus Operations Analysis Worksheet

*This appendix is not available via this public access document.*