Decision Process for a Delayed Opening or Closure of Campus during a Weather Event

The safety of students, faculty, and staff is the University’s top priority. Any decision that disrupts the normal operations of the campus seriously impacts the teaching and research mission of the university. Because of this, a process has been developed that aims to minimize the negative impacts, while ensuring the highest safety possible of the UT community.

How does the decision process begin?

The decision to delay opening or close the campus during a weather event begins as soon as the event is forecasted. Group conference calls for information gathering are scheduled with top administrators from the following organizations:

- City of Austin
- Travis County and Travis County Sheriff
- Multiple County Independent School Districts (ISD’s)
- Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT)
- Austin Police Department
- Homeland Security
- National Weather Service Meteorologist
- Area Incident Meteorologist
- Other Government and Non-government Agencies

Weather can often be unpredictable but forecast information is obtained from the best meteorological sources available. A projection is made about the possible accumulation of sleet, snow, or ice on area roads and highways. Special consideration is given to elevated or otherwise hazardous routes. A determination is made as to whether travel can be made safe by treating roadways with salt or sand or whether certain routes will require closure due to conditions. Each organization carefully weighs the impact that the road conditions will have on their ability to carry out normal operations.

How are decisions made to delay opening or close the UT campus?

University administrators involved with campus operations, safety and security, and facilities and grounds evaluate the projected forecast. Temperatures and wind chill are taken into consideration due to the high amount of time students, faculty, and staff spend outdoors in order to reach their destinations. Because of their impact on our UT students’ and employees’ lives, consideration is also given to decisions made by ISD’s and other higher education institutions.

If it is determined that conditions will be unsafe during the early hours when employees and students need to travel to campus, but that conditions are projected to improve later in the day, a delayed opening is recommended. Conditions continue to be monitored to assure that this decision is remains prudent. A second delay may be necessary. If conditions do not improve as expected, a recommendation is made to close the university campus until the weather improves.
Who makes the decision?

The university president makes all final decisions, based on recommendations from the vice president for university operations.

When is the decision made?

The university makes every effort to decide on a campus delayed opening or closure as early as possible to allow faculty, staff, and students time to make appropriate plans.

If the university has compelling information the night before the anticipated weather event, we will try to communicate a decision by approximately 10 p.m.

If the university does not have such information by 10 p.m. the night before, the next update and decision point will be the next day by approximately 6 a.m.

How is the public notified?

Announcements are made on the university homepage (http://www.utexas.edu/), the emergency page (http://www.utexas.edu/emergency), and UT Austin social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Additionally, group emails are sent to all students, faculty, and staff, and text notifications are sent to all those who sign up for this service (https://utdirect.utexas.edu/apps/csas/text/main/). Local news media is also notified immediately.

Detailed information regarding the university’s plans for severe and inclement weather can be found at: