



Emergency Closing and Minimum Staffing Policy

Approved by the Joint Board of Library Trustees 11/9/2023

Purpose:

This policy is to ensure a cautionary response to an emergency threatening to impact or immediately impacting the Library's facilities, materials, staff, or community members. It also establishes a minimum staffing requirement to ensure the safety of all Library staff.

The Library will make every effort to maintain regular operating hours at all times. However, at times, the Library may have to close, shorten hours, or cancel programs due to emergency conditions.

The Library Director, in consultation with the chair of the Board of Trustees, will make the decision for any emergency closings of the Library. In the absence of the Director, the Assistant Director shall act in place of the Director.

Policy:

Inclement Weather

The decision to close the Library will be based upon factors that include: general road conditions, projected forecast for worsening conditions, condition of the Library's parking lot and walkways, and/or a state of emergency declared by local or state officials.

If, on a regular school day, the Hamilton-Wenham Public Schools are closed, the Library will automatically have a two-hour delay. The Director, in consultation with the Chair of the Board of Trustees, will reevaluate the conditions through the morning and either close if conditions continue to deteriorate or open after the delay.

The Library may have a delayed opening if weather conditions are predicted to improve through the day or an early closing if weather conditions are predicted to deteriorate through the day/evening.

On Saturdays or any other non-school day, the decision to close or postpone the opening of the Library due to inclement weather will be at the discretion of the Library Director.

If there is a weather-related closing or delay the public will be notified via the Library's website and social media channels. If possible, signage will be posted on the front doors. All programs will be cancelled as will any scheduled meetings for the day. Groups with booked meetings will be contacted by Library staff. The Director will contact town officials and the Facilities Manager to inform them of closings and/or delays.

Power Outage

If the Library loses electrical power before scheduled business hours the Library will be closed until power can be restored. If power is lost during open hours, staff will alert patrons in the building that they must complete their transactions and leave the building. If power is not restored within an hour or by normal closing time (whichever comes first), the Library will be closed. The senior staff person should notify the Director and the Facilities Manager that the building is closing, if they are not on site.

Other Emergencies

The decision to close the Library will be made with the health and safety of the Library staff and community as a top priority. The following additional emergency situations may call for closure of the Library: local or state declaration of a State of Emergency, loss of heat, water damage, fire, hazardous spill, lockdown/shelter in place, active shooter, and/or public health crisis.

Other emergencies may occur that cannot be planned for. The Director will handle such situations in accordance with this policy and will coordinate response efforts in the best interest of the library facility, staff, and community.

Extended Closure

In the event that the Library needs to be closed for an extended period of time the Library will follow any mandated order or recommendation for closure issued by public health or government officials on the local or state level.

In a situation where the Library is closed to the public for an extended period of time, patron services will be modified or temporarily suspended during the closure. Any changes or suspension of Library services will be at the discretion of the Director in communication with the Board of Trustees and local town officials. The Library's website will be maintained and updated to reflect the most accurate information on Library services, closures, or reduced/modified hours. The following services will be suspended or modified during an extended closure: programs and outreach, meeting room bookings, circulation and holds, inter-library loan, in-person reference and technology assistance, volunteer program.

Minimum Staffing

The Board of Trustees is committed to providing sufficient staffing of the Library in order to maintain a high level of quality services to all patrons and to protect the personal safety of Library staff. During operating hours, there must be a minimal staffing level of 4, at least one of which will be a full-time employee. The only exception to this is for lunch/dinner breaks where there may be 3 staff members in the building for a short period of time (under one hour).

If the minimum staffing level can't be met the building will be closed to the public either for the entire day, or will have a delayed opening or early closure (depending on circumstances) at the discretion of the Library Director in collaboration with the chair of the board of trustees.