

Brandeis University Snow Event Monitoring and Response Policy

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Purpose

To establish clear protocols for monitoring, communication, and decision-making in response to snow-related weather events, ensuring the safety and operational continuity of the Brandeis University campus.

Scope

This policy defines procedures for **low-impact** and **high-impact** snow events, specifying the roles and responsibilities of key personnel.

Authority

The Interim AVP of Campus Operations and Public Safety will lead the coordination efforts and make final recommendations to the EVP of Finance & Administration and Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Definitions

1. **Low-Impact Snow Event:** A snow event anticipated to have minimal effects, primarily impacting facilities operations (e.g., plowing, salting, routine maintenance) without necessitating changes to campus hours or operations. (Example: a snow event of 2 inches or less or a snow event happening weekends/holidays/late at night that may not impact campus operations.)
2. **High-Impact Snow Event:** A snow event expected to affect campus operations, potentially leading to alterations in campus hours, closures, or service reductions (e.g., cancellation of classes, suspension of transportation services, University or Athletic events or other operational adjustments).

Policy

1. Monitoring and Impact Determination

Brandeis University Snow Event Monitoring and Response Policy

- The Director of Facilities Services (DoF) and Public Safety will continuously monitor National Weather Service (NWS) forecasts, regional storm models, and emergency management alerts.
 - They will give their leadership a “heads up” if something is in the forecast (approximately 1 week out).
- The DoF and Public Safety will convene at least 48-72 hours before an expected snow event to determine whether the impact is low-impact or high-impact, dictating the level of response and expectations. They will continue to reconvene if any major changes are made until the storm.
- The determination of the impact level will be based on the following:
 - Projected snow accumulation and storm severity (predicted damage).
 - Time of day/day of week and duration of the storm
 - Expected impact on roads, sidewalks, and building access.
 - Likely disruptions to essential campus services (transportation, utilities, power, food).
 - Regional and state-level emergency declarations.
 - Coordination with municipal and state emergency management agencies.

2. Low-Impact Snow Events

- **Response Expectations:**
 - The Director of Facilities Services will manage and oversee all routine snow removal, de-icing, and facilities operations as necessary.
 - The Director of Facilities Services will send updates via a weather-group email outlining the anticipated operational plan for Facilities staff, including plowing, salting, times of operation, and other mitigation efforts.
- **Communication:**
 - A targeted notification will be sent via the weather-group email by the (DoF) or the Grounds Manager to:
 - Director of Facilities Services
 - Grounds Manager
 - Public Safety leadership team
 - Interim AVP of Campus Operations and Public Safety
- No further campus-wide coordination is required unless conditions change.

3. High-Impact Snow Events ¹

¹ Note: if there is any question in regard to if low or high, treat as high until clarified

Brandeis University Snow Event Monitoring and Response Policy

- **Response Expectations:**

- The Interim AVP of Campus Operations and Public Safety will assume a lead role in campus-wide coordination and communications.
- Pre-scheduled operational meetings will be initiated to assess the impact and develop campus response plans, including potential early dismissals, delayed starts, or campus closures.
 - Depending on the storm, meetings may take place the day before or the day off.
- The Interim AVP of Campus Operations and Public Safety will begin sharing real-time NWS updates with senior leadership and the expanded operations group, ensuring all key stakeholders receive the latest information.

- **Communication:**

- The Interim AVP of Campus Operations and Public Safety will alert senior leadership and key campus operations teams.
- The expanded operations group will be activated, including:
 - Senior Leadership
 - Public Safety Leadership Team
 - Facilities Services, primarily Grounds
 - Marketing & Communications
 - Transportation Management
 - University Events
 - Parking Services
 - Dining services and other Contract Vendors (e.g., bookstore, mail service)
 - Rose Art, Library, and other impacted service areas
 - DCL
 - Athletics
 - Admissions
- The Interim AVP of Campus Operations and Public Safety will notify senior leadership (VEVP of Finance and Administration, and the EVP & Provost) regarding decisions related to closures or significant operational changes that require campus-wide communication.²
- Campus-wide communications will be coordinated to notify faculty, staff, and students via multiple platforms ([email](#), text, [Brandeis website](#), BENS, and other emergency notification systems). Communications will align with the [severe weather policy](#).

- **Ongoing Coordination:**

² Closures announcement should include the VP of HR to determine correct terminology in messaging.

Brandeis University Snow Event Monitoring and Response Policy

- During the storm and/or snow clearing, DoF and/or the Grounds Manager will send a text to the group below with periodic updates on road/sidewalk status.
 - EVP, Finance, and Administration
 - Public Safety
 - Interim AVP of University Services
 - Interim AVP of Campus Operations and Public Safety
 - Communications
- The Interim AVP of Campus Operations and Public Safety will lead ongoing coordination meetings throughout the storm to assess evolving conditions and adjust response plans as needed to provide further guidance on extended closures, transportation disruptions, or emergency conditions.

4. Other Weather-Related Events

- All non-snow-related severe weather events (e.g., hurricanes, flooding, extreme cold) will follow the existing Brandeis Emergency Management Plans and do not fall under this policy.
- This policy serves only to define snow-related impact categories and response protocols.

Review & Compliance

- Public Safety, Emergency Management, and Facilities Services will review this policy annually as part of the inclement weather review process.
- Updates will be made based on lessons learned from prior storms, operational effectiveness, and best practices.

Related Policies and Resources

- [Winter Storm and Weather Response Policy](#)
- [Severe Weather and Other Emergency Cancellations](#)
- [Brandeis Emergency Communications](#)

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Brandeis University Snow Event Monitoring and Response Policy

University Weather Closure Decision Matrix

Purpose: This decision matrix guides university leadership to determine appropriate responses to adverse weather conditions, ensuring safety while maintaining academic and operational continuity.

Decision Factors:

1. **Weather Severity** (Snow, Ice, Extreme Cold, Flooding, Wind)
2. **Timing of Impact** (Overnight, Morning Commute, Mid-Day, Evening Commute)
3. **Road & Public Transportation Conditions**
4. **Campus Safety** (Sidewalks, Parking Lots, Facilities Accessibility)
5. **Academic & Operational Impact** (Classes, Exams, Essential Services)
6. **Benchmarking Peer Institutions**

Additional Considerations:

1. **Essential Staff:** Public Safety, Facilities, Dining Services, and Residence Life may operate regardless of closures.
2. **Remote Operations:** When possible, shifting to virtual instruction or work-from-home is an alternative to full closure.
3. **Communication Timeline:** Decisions should be made and communicated no later than:
 - a. 5:30 AM for morning closures or delays
 - b. 10:30 AM for mid-day adjustments
 - c. 3:00 PM for evening impacts
4. **Coordination with Peer Institutions:** Benchmark against similar universities to maintain regional consistency in response.

Approval Process:

1. **Initial Assessment** – Public Safety, Facilities, and Emergency Management review forecasts and conditions.
2. **Consultation** – Stakeholder input from transit authorities, peer institutions, and essential campus services.
3. **Recommendation** – The leadership team (VP of Operations, AVP of Public Safety, Emergency Management) presents options.
4. **Final Decision** – The University President (or designee) approves the action plan.
5. **Notification** – Messaging is distributed via email, website, and emergency alert systems.

Brandeis University Snow Event Monitoring and Response Policy

The decision matrix will consider factors like:

- **Severity of weather conditions** (snow, ice, extreme cold, flooding, wind)
- **Timing of the storm** (overnight, morning, mid-day)
- **Road conditions and public transportation availability**
- **Campus safety (sidewalks, parking lots, facilities)**
- **Academic impact (exams, class schedules, faculty and staff travel)**
- **Peer institutions' actions** (benchmarking against similar universities)

Condition	Impact on Roads & Transit	Campus Safety	Academic Impact	Recommended Action
Light Snow (<2 inches)	No significant impact	Walkways and lots treated	Normal class schedule	Normal operations
Moderate Snow (2-6 inches)	Some delays; major roads treated	Some walkways/lots require additional clearing	Possible class disruptions	Consider delayed opening if the storm ends by early morning
Heavy Snow (>6 inches)	Major delays, transit disruptions	Campus pathways hazardous	Significant class disruptions	Full closure or remote learning
Freezing Rain/Ice	Extreme road hazards, transit suspensions	High risk of slips and falls	Class disruptions likely	Full closure or delayed opening
Extreme Cold (<-10°F wind chill)	Minor impact but hazardous exposure risk	Safe with proper precautions	Minimal class impact	Normal operations or modified schedule