IOWA

University of Iowa

Extreme Weather Plan

Operational Considerations and Procedures

Version 4.5 E

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Introduction

This document represents a functional annex to the University of Iowa Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and is maintained by the Department of Emergency Management (DEM), Office of Campus Safety. It provides procedural guidance for changes in campus operational status due to extreme weather, including but not limited to reducing operations, class cancellations, delayed opening and/or early termination of services. Most often, this procedure will be implemented for 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 weather conditions that could impact University of Iowa 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 or as determined appropriate by the University President.

The University of Iowa is never fully closed. The residential, healthcare, research, and overall public safety aspects of UI operations make this a necessity.

Purpose

To enable a consistent, efficient, and coordinated multi-department and multi-campus response to applicable extreme weather.

Scope

This plan applies to operations at all University of Iowa campuses and sites located within Johnson County and is coordinated with all other University of Iowa campuses and sites. University campuses and sites located outside of Johnson County will follow their own established policies and procedures for inclement weather decision-making, with final approval required by the delegated authority to make operational decisions relating to extreme weather.

University of Iowa Health Care will operate within the framework of this plan, as applicable; however, it will utilize internal coordination processes to assess operational adjustments (i.e., health care closures, reduced operations, delayed openings, early closures) before submitting an operational change to the applicable authority to make operational changes relating to extreme weather.

This plan addresses roles and responsibilities, provides definitions, and outlines 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 Emergency

Operations Plan (EOP). Otherwise, this plan outlines the use of an Incident Management Team(s) in accordance with NIMS.

Authority

The authority to make University of Iowa operational decisions related to extreme weather has been delegated by the University of Iowa President to the Executive Vice President and Provost (Provost). This applies to all* University of Iowa locations and operations, including but not limited to academic, designated clinical, residential, research, athletic, and business operations.

*The authority to make University of Iowa Health Care operational decisions related to extreme weather has been delegated by the University of Iowa President to the Vice President of Medical Affairs. This applies to all University of Iowa Health Care locations and operations. University of Iowa Health Care will maintain its own operational decision-making plan in coordination and alignment with the University of Iowa.

Limitations

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

Operational Decisions

In carrying out the responsibility of operational decisions, Provost may consult with a variety of resources, including but not limited to members of the Severe Weather Advisory Group (SWAG), as appropriate. To assess current conditions and obtain real-time operational information, Provost, or their designee, may also confer with local public safety agencies and campus partners, including Campus Safety, Building and Landscape Services, and CAMBUS, as needed to support informed decision-making.

Most, but not all, inclement weather announcements may be made in response to the declaration of an Extreme Cold Emergency or a Snow/Ice Emergency.

- Extreme Cold Emergency

  Conditions: An Extreme Cold Emergency may be declared when the National Weather Service issues an Extreme Cold Warning* for applicable campus locations and timeframes. Warnings are issued when temperatures and/or wind chills of -30F or colder are expected. *Thresholds vary in different parts of the state/different campuses.

- Snow/Ice Emergency

  Conditions: A Snow/Ice Emergency may be declared when snow or ice accumulation is predicted or occurring and significantly impacts roads, sidewalks, or other travel routes on or around campus. An emergency declaration may be warranted when conditions

deteriorate to the point that safe travel is not believed to be possible and a significant threat to public safety exists.

When UI reduces operations, it could include but is not limited to transitioning applicable coursework to virtual classes, reducing on campus work to include essential operations only, closing specific facilities, suspending operations and/or other adjustments, as determined appropriate.

When UI reduces operations to essential on-campus functions only, employees who perform critical functions are expected to report to campus, as applicable. Unless otherwise specified in a department's Business Continuity Plan, critical functions are those necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public; ensure continuity of essential university operations; and maintain or safeguard university property.

Inclement weather often develops overnight and may change rapidly. Depending on conditions, every effort will be made to issue an announcement and notify media outlets by 5:30 a.m. before the start of the operational day. If inclement weather or other emergency conditions arise at any other time, the same notification procedures will be followed, and an announcement will be issued as soon as reasonably possible.

When inclement weather or emergency conditions require operational changes on two or more consecutive days, the decision-making and notification process will be repeated each day, including weekends. Unless an operational change has been officially announced for a specific day, the university will remain open and operate on its normal schedule. Because conditions can change significantly overnight, announcements regarding the next day's operations generally will not be made the evening before, except in rare circumstances.

During deteriorating weather conditions, university wide operations should be presumed to continue as normal unless an official announcement is issued through Hawk Alert and coordinated through the Office of Strategic Communication (OSC). In situations where impacts are limited to a specific campus, site, or operational unit, more targeted notifications may be issued as appropriate. Individuals attending special events should consult event organizers and applicable websites for event-specific information. Even when the university is operating under normal conditions, travel may be hazardous in some areas. Students, employees, patients, and visitors are encouraged to use caution and obtain current information regarding weather and road conditions before deciding whether to travel during periods of inclement weather. Those who commute to and from university locations should use their judgment when determining whether travel can be undertaken safely. Employees should refer to the University of Iowa Policy Manual for information regarding leave options and other human resources-related matters.

Coordination and approval are required before any organization or department modifies building access or limits operating hours in anticipation of or response to forecasted inclement or hazardous weather conditions.

- University of Iowa facilities, excluding University of Iowa Health Care facilities: The authorized representative must contact UI Department of Emergency Management at UI-EM@uiowa.com and advise of their request to alter operations/building hours. DEM will provide access to submit the appropriate request, including all relevant supporting information, as soon as reasonably possible. The requesting entity shall obtain approval before implementing access changes, modifying operating hours, or announcing a closure. DEM will coordinate with Provost and applicable members of the Severe Weather Advisory Group (SWAG) to assess the operational and safety implications of the requested action. As appropriate, consultation may also occur with the requesting entity's vice president-level leader, particularly if denial of the request is being considered. Provost will make the final determination, and the decision will be communicated to the requesting entity.

- University of Iowa Health Care facilities/operations: Requests to modify building access, hours of operation, or operational functions shall follow the internal review and approval processes established by University of Iowa Health Care. If health care leadership approves the proposed operational change, the Vice President for Medical Affairs (VPMA), Chief Executive Officer (CEO), or their designee, shall notify the President or their designee. Additional coordination with SWAG and other university departments should occur, as needed, to support the decision-making process as it relates to available resources.

Severe Weather Advisory Group (SWAG)

Purpose

The Severe Weather Advisory Group (SWAG) is a multidisciplinary advisory body composed of representatives from university units with responsibility for essential and critical operations, as well as other relevant areas. Membership and contact information are provided in **Annex A**.

SWAG serves in an advisory capacity to the Provost regarding severe weather conditions, operational impacts, response capabilities, and recovery considerations. The group is coordinated by the UI Department of Emergency Management (DEM) under the direction of Provost.

Responsibilities

When activated, SWAG will:

- Assess the nature, severity, anticipated impacts, and expected recovery considerations associated with a weather event.
- Provide the Provost with situational updates and operational recommendations.
- Support informed decision-making regarding all operations and other university activities.
- Implement and coordinate actions within their respective areas following any operational decisions.

- Maintain situational awareness throughout the event and recovery period.

While monitoring will be ongoing, in most cases, initial coordination will begin approximately 12 hours before the anticipated onset of a significant weather event, though timing may vary based on forecast conditions and operational concerns.

Provost maintains authority to determine the operational status of the University of Iowa, including decisions related to academic operations and the reduction, modification, or suspension of designated clinical, business, research, and all other operations including special events and other university functions, as appropriate. Such decisions may affect clinical operations, business functions, essential services, support operations, and other campus activities, as determined appropriate.

Activation and Coordination

Activation

Upon identification of a weather threat that may significantly disrupt university operations or pose a substantial risk to the health and safety of the campus community, Provost may authorize activation of SWAG.

At the direction of the Provost, DEM will activate all or selected SWAG members and request situation reports from affected operational areas.

Any SWAG member may recommend activation to DEM; however, activation authority remains with Provost.

Upon activation, DEM will:

- Notify SWAG members and designated alternates through email, text message, or other approved notification methods.
- Provide an initial weather and operations briefing.
- Establish coordination through incident management software, conference call, or other communication methods.

Incident Management Software

The university may utilize incident management software to support situational awareness, information sharing, documentation, resource tracking, and operational coordination during severe weather events. DEM may establish an event-specific workspace to allow SWAG members to share assessments, concerns, status updates, and operational information throughout the incident.

Conference Call Procedure

When conference calls are used, SWAG members and designated alternates will be notified by email, text message, or other approved communication methods.

Members unable to participate should provide updates to DEM for inclusion during coordination discussions.

Conference calls will be facilitated and documented by DEM, and generally follow this agenda:

1. Roll call and weather briefing.
2. Operational updates from participating units.
3. Discussion of impacts, concerns, and information gaps.
4. Review of operational recommendations and communication needs.
5. Establishment of next coordination meeting or call.

Between calls, DEM may distribute situation reports and other updates to maintain situational awareness and support decision-making, as well as all members are encouraged to share updates in the incident management system, as applicable.

Operational Considerations

The following factors, at a minimum, should be considered during decision-making:

- Public safety risks to students, employees, patients, and visitors.
- Forecast uncertainty and the potential for rapidly changing conditions.
- Expected duration of impacts and/or conditions
- Accessibility/impacts on roads, sidewalks, parking facilities, and pedestrian travel routes.
- Conditions on municipal roads adjacent to campus/facilities.
- CAMBUS and other public transportation operational capabilities and route accessibility.
- Transportation and parking challenges associated with decisions made after the start of the workday.
- Conditions affecting commuting students, employees, and patients in surrounding areas.
- Availability of personnel necessary to sustain essential operations.
- Potential impacts on university facilities, programs, events, and services.
- Local and/or state declarations
- Availability and reliance on external resources for emergency response

The following information should be provided, as applicable, during coordination activities.

Group/Area	Focus
Emergency Management	• Weather briefing • Local impacts and updates • Johnson County and State of Iowa status • Iowa DOT travel conditions • Closure requests and operational status changes
Facilities Management	• Roads, sidewalk and grounds conditions • FM staffing levels • Critical service disruptions • Snow and ice removal timelines • Operational concerns
Campus Safety/Police	• Public safety Concerns • Roads and grounds conditions • Emergency responder staffing • Building access considerations • Operational considerations • NITE RIDE status
Business Services **Parking and Transportation** **Risk Management**	• Purchasing and procurement needs • Receiving operations • P&T reported road and grounds conditions • CAMBUS schedule/status • Parking lot status • Risk management concerns
Office of General Counsel	• Legal considerations
Office of Provost	• Academic operations • Clinical operations outside of UI Health Care • Instructional impacts • Messaging
Student Life	• Housing and Dining operations status • Student activities and events • Iowa Memorial Union operations

Human Resources	• Employee reporting considerations • Workforce impacts
Health Care	• Hospitals, clinic and other UI Health Care operations • Staffing status • Incident command or emergency activation status • Health Care messaging
Information Technology Services	• Technology service availability • Critical system status • Relevant operational monitoring metrics
UI External Relations and Office of the President	• Events (Hancher, etc.) • Local impacts • Messaging
Communication Teams (Office of Strategic Communications, Office of the Provost, and Campus Safety)	• Message development and coordination • Communication dissemination • Public information considerations
Athletics	• Athletic events and operations
All members	• Additional updates, concerns, and recommendations

Communication Process

In accordance with Clery Act requirements, UI will issue Hawk Alerts in response to severe weather that presents a confirmed threat to the health and safety of campus. This includes emergency notification upon NWS issuance of the following: Tornado Warning, Severe Thunderstorm Warning that includes 70+ mph winds and/or 1.75" hail, Extreme Cold Warning and/or as otherwise determined necessary.

UI Health Care may share enterprise-wide subject specific notification relating to the following NWS issued products, in addition to those requiring Hawk Alerts: Tornado Watch, Severe Thunderstorm Warnings. Any additional messaging that is required for specific units' operational continuity should be handled at that level.

When an announcement is made to reduce campus operations, the campus community and public should refer to **emergency.uiowa.edu** and/or departmental/or organizational webpages for information regarding specific operational updates or events.

If operational changes are being considered or implemented, designated communication representatives will prepare messaging using approved templates or as otherwise approved by Provost in coordination with the SWAG communications teams.

University of Iowa Health Care, Dental Clinics, and Speech, Language, and Hearing Clinic communications related to severe weather and resulting operational changes will be coordinated with the Office of the Provost and/or designated university communicators to ensure consistent, institution-wide messaging while accommodating the unique operational requirements of patient care and other essential services.

Message Development

Primary partners may include:

- Office of the Provost
- Office of Strategic Communication (OSC)
- Campus Safety

All messaging shall be approved by the Provost or designated authority before distribution.

Communication Responsibilities

Communication Task	Assigned To
When possible, provide advance notice of messaging to President, Cabinet, Counsel of Deans, and SWAG	Office of the Provost
Issue Hawk Alert	Campus Safety
Social media dissemination	All communication teams, with OSC as lead coordination
Share messaging with campus communicators	OSC (lead coordination), Campus Safety and Office of the Provost
Post situation updates to UI emergency webpage	Campus Safety

Additionally, OSC and Health Care Marketing & Communications will review scheduled mass communications and coordinate adjustments or cancellations of messages that may conflict with operational changes.

Additional communication considerations:

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 organization leadership and final approval from Provost. In these situations, departments and units must ensure adequate services through coordination with Facilities Management, Campus Safety, and other units expected to support such operations and then submit their request to the UI Department of Emergency Management (DEM) via **UI-EM@uiowa.edu** or following other provided instructions. DEM will coordinate with 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 should provide meal plan service even when the university changes operations for inclement weather. However, the department may delay opening and/or may opt to close early if weather conditions impact operational capabilities. Meal plan participants will be notified by email of any changes in daily operations. Up-to-date information should 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 but must be coordinated and approved by Provost.

Resumption of Normal Operations

Unless otherwise announced, classes and university operations will resume according to the next regularly scheduled academic or business day.

Additional communications will be issued if operational changes, extensions, or continued restrictions are necessary.

After-Action Review

Significant weather events may be reviewed following conclusions of response activities. The scope of the review will be determined based on the severity and impacts of the event.

After-action observations and recommendations should be submitted to **UI-EM@uiowa.edu** or as otherwise directed. DEM will compile after-action items and distribute findings and improvement recommendations, as appropriate.

Annex List

A: Severe Weather Advisory Group Contacts

Annex A: Severe Weather Advisory Group Contacts

This annex is not available via this public access document