



Office of P-12 Education

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Office of School Operations
Room 874 EBA

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To: District Superintendents
From: Chuck Szuberla
Subject: Recovering from Hurricane Sandy
In reply to: Questions from the Field

Date: November 6, 2012

I want to express my concern and sympathy for the extreme difficulties many of you are experiencing due to the recent storm and flooding. As we are starting to come to a more complete realization of the impact of Hurricane Sandy, we are seeing the devastation that has affected your districts, communities and some of you and/or your staff members. Please know that your health and safety is of paramount concern to us.

If you require assistance, please call our Education Desk at the State Emergency Operations Center at 518-301-2023. The Education Desk will be manned 24/7 and is able to help you reach key Department Staff after normal working hours.

If you need assistance in expediting approval of temporary facilities please call the Office of Facilities Planning at 518-474-3906.

We have received many inquiries regarding waiving 180 day attendance requirement. The commissioner is authorized to waive up to five days of lost instruction. We are tracking missed days of instruction and for all districts that missed more than five days due to the storm and could not reasonably provide 180 days of instruction.

The following are guidelines for determining if a school is safe for reopening:

- Buildings must have normal electrical power. Generators are generally not designed to power full facility functions. Power is needed for heating, lighting, emergency lighting, exit lighting, fire alarm systems, public address systems, hot water, kitchen facilities, and communication with parents.
- Buildings must have potable water and functioning toilets. Potable water is required for all building occupants to drink, and for kitchen purposes as well as hand sanitizing. Bottled water is an allowable source of potable water. Buildings with low or no water pressure (as a result of municipal water plants without power or emergency power) are inappropriate to occupy.
- Buildings must have communication capabilities. Districts without adequate telephone, cell phone and internet capability will be unable to contact parents in the event of any additional emergency.

Finally, school administrators should coordinate school opening with their local emergency management office to ensure that local emergency responders such as fire, police and ambulance services will be able to respond to any emergency.

I trust your judgment and have confidence in your ability to reopen schools which are safe for children and staff.