



Waipu Primary School Emergency Policy & Procedure

Severe Weather: Met Service Red Warning (Bream Bay Area)

1. Purpose & Authority

To ensure the safety of all tamariki, staff, and visitors at Waipu Primary School during an extreme weather event.

- **Authority:** Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, the School Board holds the primary duty of care. The authority to close the school is delegated to the **Principal** (in consultation with the Presiding Member of the Board), or may be mandated by the **Ministry of Education / Civil Defence**. Should the time of a decision not be practicable or need to be made quickly, the BoT delegates the decision making to the Principal who will then provide an update to the BoT.

2. MetService Red Warning Trigger

A **MetService Red Warning** signifies significant, immediate, and disruptive severe weather (e.g., extreme rain, destructive winds). It signifies that people need to **act now** as **immediate action is required** to protect people, animals, and property from the impact of the weather. Upon issuance of a Red Warning covering the Whangārei/Northland district, this protocol is instantly activated.

3. Action Procedures

Scenario A: Red Warning Issued Before the School Day Starts

The primary goal is to make the decision early to prevent families and buses from traveling on hazardous roads.

[MetService Red Warning Issued]



[Principal assesses regional risk & consults Board Chair]



[Decision to CLOSE made as soon as possible the day before or by 6:00am on the day of the event as a last resort]



[Notify Community via HERO App] [Notify Staff & Bus Operators]

- **Timeline:** The decision to close should be made **no later than 6:00 AM**.
- **Communication Channels:**
 - BoT informed via 'BoT' **WhatsApp Chat**.

- Broadcast alert sent immediately via the **HERO App** (both app alert & SMS text message activation).
- Staff alerted via the 'Staff Coms' **WhatsApp Chat**.
- Update posted to the official **Waipu Primary School Facebook page**.
- Notice sent to local rural school bus operators.
- **Ministry Notification:** The Principal must notify the Ministry of Education Tai Tokerau regional office immediately to secure an Emergency Closure approval (ensuring operational funding continuity).

Scenario B: Red Warning Issued / Weather Deteriorates *During* the School Day

If an emergency closure must happen during school hours, the paramount objective is the **orderly and safe reunification** of students with their whānau.

Planning

- Set up a staff register of those likely to be subjected to flooding/slips.
- Set up a HERO group of families likely to be subjected to flooding/slips & who live in areas prone to severe weather events.

Step 1: Immediate Assessment & Decision

- The Principal monitors local conditions, road closures (particularly State Highway 1 / Brynderwyn alternatives and local rural roads), and Civil Defence updates.
- If a closure is triggered, the office & principal work together to activate the emergency contact system:
 - Staff via WhatsApp + follow up in-person coms (if staff on site at school)
 - BoT via WhatsApp
 - Whānau via HERO (both app alert & SMS text message activation) + Facebook
 - MoE via email

Step 2: Communication & Bus Coordination

- **HERO App & SMS (text function in HERO):** Send an urgent notification: *"Waipu School is closing early due to severe weather. The buses will be running at **Text** the school phone on 0276 126 694 if your child can go on the early bus. If we don't hear from you or you say no, your child will be kept at school and will need to be collected. "*
- **Bus Students:** Contact rural bus providers immediately.

If roads are compromised, buses will **not** run. A HERO post & SMS text message will be sent along with a follow up phone call to instruct parents to collect students from school.

If it is safe to do so, buses will run at an earlier time (before 12:30pm so as not to impact on other schools).

Parents of bus students will be contacted directly via a HERO post and asked to reply by SMS text message to the school mobile if their child can go on the bus and parents are able to meet the bus

at the earlier time. **If we don't hear back from parents via SMS, students will be kept at school.** We ask that parents don't phone the landline in order to keep the phone line free.

Step 3: Student Management & Sign-Out (Crucial)

- **Assembly:** Students remain in their classrooms or assemble in the designated safe zone (school hall) depending on wind/rain severity.
- **Strict Sign-Out:** No child may leave the school grounds unless they are signed out face-to-face by a primary caregiver or an explicitly authorised emergency contact. Signing out takes place in the office unless otherwise stated.
- **The "No Child Left Alone" Rule:** Staff will remain onsite to supervise tamariki until the very last child is collected.

4. Specific Northland Considerations to Note

- **The Rural Factor & Isolation:** Many Waipu families live on rural roads prone to slips, fallen trees, and flash flooding. WPS will respect a parent's right to keep their child home or collect them early if they feel their travel route is unsafe, regardless of whether an official school closure has been declared.
- **Power & Comms Infrastructure:** Northland storm events frequently knock out cell towers and power grids. If the HERO App, internet, and landlines fail:
 - The school will utilize battery-powered/cellular backup devices (office mobile + principal mobile phone).
 - Staff will pivot to a pre-printed, hard-copy emergency contact register and sign-out sheet.
 - A clear physical sign will be safely posted at the main school entrance (6 Argyle Street) indicating the school status.
- **Property Check:** Before staff fully evacuate the site, a designated warden (Principal) will ensure that all windows are secured, electronics are unplugged to prevent surge damage, and loose outdoor equipment is tethered.

5. Post-Event Debrief and Reopening

- The school will remain closed until the Red Warning is lifted and a thorough property inspection is completed to ensure the grounds are safe (no dangling branches, exposed wiring, or flood contamination). This decision will be made by the principal in consultation with the BoT.
- Reopening notices will be broadcast via the **HERO App** and Facebook.

Note for Whānau: Please ensure your emergency contact details, alternative pickup guardians, and HERO app notifications are kept completely up to date. In a severe weather event, communication is our strongest tool.