

	Emergency Closure & Inclement Weather Policy	Policy # OP-02
		Policy Type: Operational
		Approved Motion: 2025-34
		Review Date: 2029

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures and guidelines for unscheduled closures, inclement weather, and other emergency situations that may impact the Ramara Township Public Library's ability to operate. This policy ensures that decisions regarding closures or adjustments to operations are made with safety in mind while maintaining the Library's responsibility to the public.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Ramara Township Public Library staff and volunteers, and it governs the Library's response to situations requiring unscheduled closures or alterations to service, including but not limited to severe weather conditions, power outages, health and safety emergencies, or other emergencies.

DEFINITIONS

Designated Communication Channels – The official means of communicating operational changes, including phone, email, social media (Facebook, Instagram), the Library website, and in extreme cases, a newsletter e-blast.

Emergency Closure – A closure triggered by unforeseen circumstances, such as severe weather, building issues, power outages, or emergencies that could jeopardise the safety of staff and patrons.

Inclement Weather – Severe weather conditions, including but not limited to heavy snow, ice storms, flooding, high winds, or other weather-related events that create dangerous conditions for travel and safety.

Safe Location – Areas within the Library designated for emergency shelter in the event of dangerous conditions, such as severe weather events.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Ramara Township Public Library recognises the importance of maintaining access to services for the community while prioritising the safety of both staff and patrons. The Library will make every reasonable effort to remain open during adverse conditions. However, decisions will be made based on current weather conditions, safety risks, and the Library's ability to operate. In the event of inclement weather or other emergencies, the Library will follow established procedures to communicate closures, inform staff, and maintain the safety of those affected.

CLOSURE DECISION

The decision to close any branch or adjust services due to emergency or inclement weather conditions will be made by the CEO or their designate. The CEO will consider factors such as:

- Local weather reports and warnings issued by Environment Canada.
- Road and travel conditions.
- Safety of staff and patrons.
- Potential damage to Library facilities and equipment.
- Any orders from emergency services, such as police or fire departments.
- Closure of the Township of Ramara's Recreation Centre.
- School closures within Simcoe County.
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In cases of emergency weather or other threats, the CEO will communicate the closure decision to the Library Board Chair or designate promptly.

PROGRAM CANCELLATIONS

While the Library may remain open, scheduled programs may be cancelled during periods of inclement weather or other emergencies. The Library will make efforts to inform patrons of cancellations in advance, though the public is encouraged to use discretion when deciding whether to attend a program under such conditions.

COMMUNICATION

- **Board:** The CEO, or designate, will inform the Board Chair of closure as soon as possible.
- **Staff:** The Library will notify staff of a closure decision through designated communication channels, such as phone or email, with additional communications through other means if phone is unavailable. Staff will be contacted no later than one hour before opening. If conditions change after this time, staff will be directly informed of any change in operations.
- **Township:** The CEO, or designated staff member, will contact the appropriate Township staff and advise them of the closure.
- **Public:** The Library will inform the public of closures or service changes through the Library website, Facebook, Instagram, and in extreme cases, a newsletter e-blast. Additionally, the Township of Ramara's communication channels will be used for public updates.

THE LIBRARY AS A WARMING/COOLING CENTRE

The Ramara Township Public Library is a designated warming/cooling shelter during extreme weather conditions. The Library will make every reasonable effort to remain open for the public in emergencies, provided it is safe to do so.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Employees are expected to make every reasonable effort to attend work as scheduled. If an employee determines it is unsafe to travel, they must notify the Library as soon as possible.
- Employees who are unable to attend due to inclement weather may use vacation, lieu time, or arrange to make up the time, depending on the CEO's discretion and operational needs.
- Staff should check the designated communication channels before their scheduled shifts to verify whether the Library is open. If no closure announcement is made, employees should assume normal operations.

Compensation & Time Off

If the Library is closed due to inclement weather or emergency conditions, employees will first be considered for alternate work locations or remote work if possible. If this is not feasible, employees will be paid for their scheduled hours.

If an employee decides not to come to work or leaves early due to safety concerns, they will be allowed to use vacation or lieu time, or if applicable, make up the time within the same pay cycle, as agreed upon by the CEO.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

CEO or Designate

- The CEO or designate is responsible for monitoring weather conditions, communicating closures, and making decisions regarding the Library's operations.
- The CEO or designate will inform the Board Chair of any closure or change in service and will ensure communication is timely and accurate.

Employees

- Employees are expected to monitor communications and exercise good judgement when travelling to work or remaining at the Library in unsafe conditions.
- Employees should ensure that any absences due to inclement weather or emergencies are properly communicated to the CEO.

RELATED POLICIES