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Unscheduled Closure Policy

Due to the location of the Southgate Public Library, it is recognized that inclement weather, emergency conditions, infrastructure failure, staffing shortages, or other unexpected circumstances may impact the library's ability to operate safely and may affect employees' ability to attend work safely. This policy outlines procedures for employees, the CEO or designate, and the Library Board during unscheduled closures, delayed openings, early closures, cancellations of services, and situations where staff may be unable to safely report to or remain at work.

Section 1: Guidelines

The determination to close, delay opening, close early, temporarily suspend services, or cancel programs shall be made by the CEO or designate in consultation with the Library Board Chair where appropriate. Where the closure relates to broader municipal operations, road closures, public safety concerns, or inclement weather affecting Township facilities and services, the CEO or designate will make reasonable efforts to align the library's decision with the Township of Southgate and will consult with the Township CAO, Department Head, or appropriate municipal contact where practicable. Immediate action may be taken where evacuation is essential for staff and public safety or closure is directed by police, fire officials, emergency services, the Township of Southgate, or another authority responsible for public safety.

Section 2: Conditions Warranting Closure

Inclement Weather:

Severe weather conditions including, but not limited to, tornadoes, flooding, snow and ice storms, dangerous road conditions, extreme temperatures, and other hazardous weather conditions.

Emergency Evacuations:

Building or site conditions resulting in a clear and present danger to employees, volunteers, and/or patrons, including fire, suspected gas leak, noxious or toxic fumes, hazardous spill, severe building damage, medical emergency, violent incident, criminal investigation, or any other event requiring immediate evacuation, shelter-in-place, lockdown, or direction from emergency services.

Power Outages:

In some cases, such as temporary power outages, brief system outages, or facility issues, the library may be closed temporarily to the public while staff remain on site only if it is safe to do so. The CEO or designate will determine whether staff should remain on site, relocate within the building, work remotely, or leave the premises based on safety, available information, and the expected resolution timeline.

Non-Openings, Delayed Openings, or Early Closures:

The decision to close, delay opening, close early, cancel programs, or suspend services will be based upon:

a) Current and projected road and visibility conditions, providing by Ontario 511, Township of Southgate road closure notices, Grey County updates, and Ontario Provincial Police advisories where available.
b) Availability of staff to open and operate the library.
c) Requests for closure by local or provincial agencies.
d) Weather warnings, watches, advisories, or special weather statements issued by Environment Canada.
e) Condition of library parking areas, sidewalks, entrances, and accessible routes, including whether they can be cleared and maintained safely.
f) Closure of municipal facilities, schools, or other community facilities where those closures indicate broader public safety or travel concerns.

When the library is closed, delayed in opening, closed early, or otherwise unable to operate as scheduled employees who have the capability to work from home are required to do so as directed by the CEO or designate and in accordance with applicable Township work from home expectations. Employees are responsible for bringing laptops and other required equipment or resources home when poor weather or other foreseeable closure conditions are forecasted. Scheduled employees whose work cannot reasonably be performed from home will be paid their wages based on their regular scheduled workday. Employees who are on vacation, planned leave, or lieu time will record their time as originally scheduled.

Where a closure is anticipated before the start of the workday, every attempt will be made to communicate the decision to scheduled staff before 7:00 a.m. or, where the library opens later in the day, as early as practicable and ideally at least two hours before the scheduled opening time. The CEO or designate will notify the Township of Southgate CAO or appropriate municipal contact of the unscheduled closure and

request that the closure be shared through available municipal communication channels, such as the Township website, social media, or other public notice systems.

Section 3: Staff Responsibilities

During periods of poor weather or other emergency conditions, employees are expected to make every reasonable effort to report for work as scheduled while giving first consideration to their personal safety. Employees are responsible for checking messages prior to travelling on inclement weather days and should assess current and projected travel conditions, road closures, weather warnings, and their own ability to travel safely. The following protocol shall be observed:

1. An employee may determine that they cannot safely report to work, or may need to leave early, when a public road required for travel is closed, police or public authorities advise against travel, a major storm is imminent, or a severe weather warning or other significant alert applies to Southgate or the employee's place of residence.
2. The employee is expected to contact the CEO or designate at the earliest possible time if they are unable to report to work safely or need to leave early. If the library remains open and an employee chooses not to report to work, or chooses to leave early without a closure decision, the employee must receive approval from the CEO or designate and use vacation, PTO, banked time, or an approved work from home arrangement, where applicable. If the library is closed and the employee has the capability to work from home but chooses not to do so, the employee will be required to use PTO, vacation, or banked time, unless otherwise approved.

Section 4: Closure Notification

When a closure, delayed opening, early closure, program cancellation, or service disruption is determined before or during regular operating hours, the CEO or designate will communicate the decision to library staff, the Library Board Chair, and the Township of Southgate CAO or appropriate municipal contact as soon as possible. Public notice will be posted through available channels, which may include the library website, Township of Southgate website, social media, signage at the library entrance, and municipal public notice channels. Staff will assist patrons in exiting safely and, where possible, will notify affected program registrants, room-booking contacts, volunteers, and partner organizations.

Section 5: Information Resources Impacting Unscheduled Closures

Ontario 511 Road Conditions: http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/traveller/conditions/

Environment and Climate Change Canada Weather Alerts: https://weather.gc.ca/canada_e.html

Weather Forecasting: https://www.theweathernetwork.com/ca

101.7 The One Weather: https://1017theone.ca/weather/

Township of Southgate Notices and Road Closures: monitor current municipal notices, road closure updates, and service disruption notices through Township communication channels.

Section 6: Related Policies and Documents

Township of Southgate HR Manual – Inclement Weather Policy