

Estacada School District Transportation Department

March 30, 2011

The Estacada School District covers over 750 square miles. The Transportation Department provides service to over 1100 students on 14 regular routes and 4 special needs routes. The department will travel over 400,000 miles during the 2010/2011 school year. The 26 employees in the department have over 338 years of combined experience in Pupil Transportation. One of our drivers has been on the same route for 26 years. He is now transporting the 3rd generation of 4 different families.

One of the most challenging aspects of the Department is advising the Superintendent about the decision to cancel or delay the start of school during inclement weather. These decisions are not arrived at without a great deal of thought and early morning road inspections. On any given day, there is a minimum of 200 District staff who commute to work, a large number from outside the District. There are also at least 250 students who drive cars to school each day and an unknown number of parents drive their students to school. Elevations in our District range from 250 feet in some lower areas to over 2,000 feet in others. Estacada High School is at 500 feet. When the snow level is around 1,000 feet, half our District may be covered in snow while the lower half is covered in a cold wet rain. We are in a small niche between the Willamette Valley, the Cascades and the Columbia Gorge, and our weather can be a mix of weather from all three.

Our District is definitely unique from the surrounding districts. If it looks like conditions may get to the point where they could be a problem, it is time to head out and start driving roads throughout the District and checking conditions such as: temperature, snow/ice amounts, the temperature ranges, etc. Sometimes this may require calling additional help to check out specific areas quickly to determine if a problem is just in one area or throughout the District. It is important to make a decision by 5:30 AM at the latest on mornings where there may be a problem because parents and staff need time to make arrangements for the day if there is a change in the normal schedule. The first bus leaves the bus garage by 6:00 AM and District staff is on the road before then trying to make it to work. Sometime before 5:30 AM the Transportation Supervisor and the Superintendent are on the phone comparing notes trying to make the best decision for all involved for the day. If there is a change in schedule, the news media are alerted via the internet on <http://www.flashnews.net/pdx.html>. From there, the radio and TV stations pick it up and broadcast the information. It is also posted on the District website <http://www.esd108.org/>. Staff and parents can watch or listen for reports on local TV and radio stations or go to either of the above websites for the information.

We all hope that you will not need the above information until next winter!

Marty Hopper

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