



## Winter weather preparedness is ‘snow’ problem at Virginia Tech

When winter weather approaches Virginia Tech’s campuses, units across the university begin critical preparedness procedures that ensure the safety and well-being of students, employees, and visitors.

Learn more about the university’s winter weather preparedness procedures and the comprehensive collaboration that goes into winter weather planning and deployment.

### Gather the stakeholders

In the fall, stakeholders from across the university and surrounding community review the university’s Authorized Closing Policy, make policy updates, and discuss lessons learned from the prior year. Units represented include:

- Enterprise Administrative and Business Services
- Virginia Tech Police Department
- Virginia Tech Emergency Management
- Transportation Services
- Division of Campus Planning, Infrastructure, and Facilities
- Student Affairs
- Services for Students with Disabilities
- Housing Services
- Dining Services
- Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost
- Office of the University Registrar
- Communications and Marketing
- Human Resources
- Athletics
- Town of Blacksburg
- Blacksburg Transit

These stakeholders also examine how Virginia Tech will communicate its winter weather response effectively across all university locations in the commonwealth.

### Watch the forecast

As the potential for a winter storm increases, university officials start watching forecast models and communicating with the National Weather Service to monitor weather across all Virginia Tech locations. This information is shared among university leadership and units across the university. Given conditions will vary across the state, university employees work carefully to monitor the needs and conditions of each Virginia Tech location.

The Virginia Tech community can monitor the latest weather conditions via the weather resources shared on the University Status page for locations across Virginia. Among these resources is WeatherSTEM, Virginia Tech’s own weather monitoring network that provides current weather conditions, updates, and live on-campus cameras.

### Declare snow emergency routes

Depending on the forecast, a snow emergency route notice may be declared on the Blacksburg campus before the storm hits. This means designated roads on campus must remain open for emergency vehicle use and plows. All vehicles parked along these roads must be removed or risk being towed. Snow emergency routes include:

- Alumni Mall, inbound lane only (the outbound lane will remain unaffected)
- Beamer Way, between Washington Street and Southgate Drive
- Kent Street, between Washington Street and Drillfield Drive
- South Drillfield Drive, between Kent Street and West Campus Drive (both sides of the road)
- Wall Street
- Washington Street, between Kent Street and Duck Pond Drive

### Make the call for inclement weather

The university’s goal is to make decisions as far in advance as available information will allow in order to facilitate subsequent planning and decision-making to impacted operations.

Vice President for Enterprise Administrative and Business Services Lynsay Belshe collects road-condition and readiness reports from university and community organizations including Virginia Tech Police Department and the Division of Campus Planning, Infrastructure, and Facilities. Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Amy Sebring then decides if any modifications are necessary to university operations on the Blacksburg campus and Virginia Tech facilities in the immediate Blacksburg area.

Modifications to operations in Roanoke, Northern Virginia, Richmond, and other Virginia Tech locations are determined on an individual basis by local police, university emergency management leaders, Communications and Marketing, and other partners.

### Communicate

Communications and Marketing notifies the campus community through the University Status page, VTx Daily News email, social media, and

the weather/emergency hotline at 540 231-6668. Virginia Tech Emergency Management will also notify the campus community through the VT Alerts system.

During the storm, the university community is asked to frequently monitor the University Status page for the latest updates impacting all Virginia Tech locations. The university community is also encouraged to download the Hokie Ready App to have fast access to pertinent emergency information and to report emergencies. Those who do not have access to the internet may call the weather/emergency hotline at 540-231-6668.

Employees who have a fully remote or hybrid schedule would be expected to work their normal work schedules at their alternate work sites and would not be eligible for authorized closing leave. Employees should refer to the Authorized Closings Leave and Compensation Policy for questions about working when the university is impacted by inclement weather.

#### Clear the snow

Once winter weather starts, Division of Campus Planning, Infrastructure, and Facilities employees plow roads, loading docks, and service drives in 12-hour shifts. Sidewalks, stairs, parking lots, and streets are also treated when possible before and during the storm with a 23 percent salt brine solution obtained from the tanks at the Virginia Tech Power Plant.

#### Staff on-campus student services

Even if the Blacksburg campus is closed for the day or on a delayed opening, residential students still need essential services. This is when Dining Services kicks into high-gear to deploy teams to meet on-campus needs. In an effort to keep students and employees safe, dining centers are strategically selected to operate when inclement weather occurs. Students can check [dining.vt.edu/hours](https://dining.vt.edu/hours) for any updates on dining center hours.

If the Blacksburg campus is closed due to inclement weather, Schiffert Health Center will open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. for urgent care only. If there is a delay, Schiffert Health Center will also operate on a delay.

If the Blacksburg campus is closed, Squires Student Center will maintain an operating schedule of 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. depending on weather and road conditions.

The Graduate Life Center and G. Burke Johnston Student Center are also closed if the Blacksburg campus is closed.

Students should refer to [vt.edu/status](https://vt.edu/status) for a full list of campus updates, including Cook Counseling Center, Recreational Sports, and Student Engagement and Campus Life.

#### Clean up after the storm

Once the storm is over, teams work tirelessly to widen paths on sidewalks and roads. Contract crews clear

parking lots. (Virginia Tech teams try to keep parking lot drive lanes plowed during the storm.) Assigned team members report early, sometimes for days at a time, after a storm to treat any melt that has refrozen.

#### Deepest 24-hour snowfalls in Blacksburg

- 20.4 inches, Jan. 28, 1998
- 17.8 inches, Jan. 7, 1996
- 14 inches, Dec. 26, 1969 and March 3, 1960 (tie)
- 13.4 inches, Jan. 8, 1996
- 13.3 inches, Dec. 9, 2018
- 13 inches, March 23, 1981
- 12 inches Jan. 30, 1966 and March 13, 1993 (tie)
- 11.3 inches, Feb. 12, 2014
- 11.2 inches, Dec. 30, 1997
- 11 inches, Jan. 22, 2016

To access the article or find article links, visit <https://vtx.vt.edu/articles/2022/11/snow.html>.

#### Plan now to use your annual leave

It's important to take time away from work for your mental health and wellness, so we encourage all employees to plan ahead and schedule time off. The deadline to use annual leave exceeding the maximum carryover balance will be Jan. 9, 2023.

For information on upcoming university holidays, visit the updated holiday and winter closing schedule at <https://www.hr.vt.edu/benefits/leave/holiday-closing-schedule.html>. Employees will need to cover Dec. 27–30, 2022, with appropriate leave types during the university's Winter Closing. For example, a full-time employee working eight hours Monday through Friday will need 32 hours of leave for these four days. The most common types of leave used for this period are annual, family personal, and compensatory (holiday comp, overtime comp). Sick leave is not appropriate to use for these days unless you have a documented illness or doctor's appointment during that time.

We encourage you to work with your managers or supervisors now to plan ahead and ensure you can use your leave and reduce your annual leave balance before the deadline in January 2023.

More information about leave carryover limits for different position classifications is available on the HR Leave website at <https://www.hr.vt.edu/benefits/leave.html>. For more information on Virginia Tech holidays please refer to University Policy No. 4315: Guidelines on Holidays at <https://policies.vt.edu/assets/4315.pdf>. Questions about leave and leave usage, contact your college/department HR representative or the HR Leave Team at [hrlleave@vt.edu](mailto:hrlleave@vt.edu).

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