

FEATURE

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The Rocket

Safety major concern when cancelling school

by Courtney Alexander

Since January 18, Rockcastle County has experienced several episodes of bad weather resulting in the cancellation of school, not only for us, but also for numerous counties across the state.

On some occasions school was cancelled when all roads appeared to be clear. So just why did we miss?

Obviously, there are more factors to be considered when cancelling school than the roads that are mainly traveled.

After talking to the Directors of Transportation for several of the surrounding counties, including Pulaski, Lincoln, Madison, and Jackson, the picture of just why they cancel school so often became clear.

Unanimously, safety was the major concern among all of the schools I spoke to.

"Even if there's a chance something could go wrong on one of

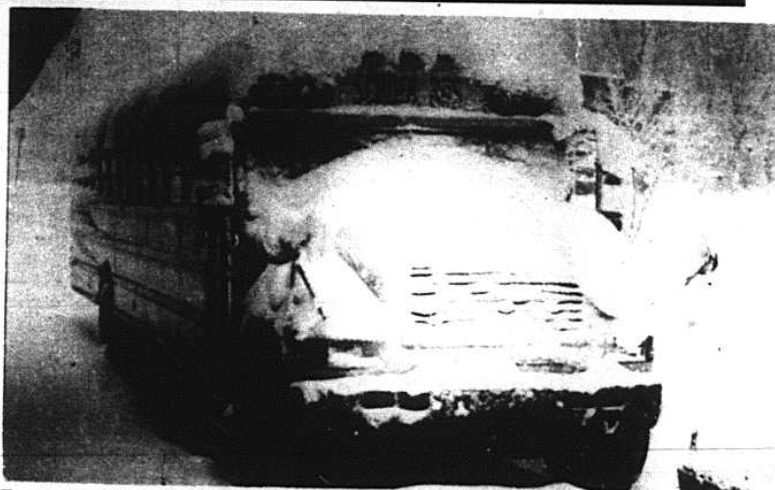
our roads, we call it off. It's better to be safe than sorry," stated the Director of Transportation from Lincoln Co, Larry Lewis.

"There's not much you can do with a 25,000 pound bus," Lewis joked.

Each county has its own procedure for cancelling school according to the terrain of the county, but most county officials must get up by 3 AM in order to check all the roads before kids wake up.

Larger counties like Pulaski and Madison have to consider the flat lying and mountainous areas, not just the besides to cities of Somerset and Richmond.

Around Rockcastle, you'll find numerous north hillsides where sunlight usually doesn't reach. Therefore the school system is not willing to risk safety to travel on certain roads. Students are always excused if they are absent due to lack of transportation.



From our archives: Heavy snows shut down the Rockcastle County School System in February, 1998. Snows like this seem to be becoming increasingly rare in Rockcastle County.

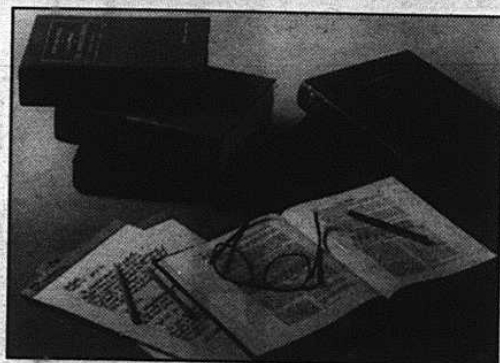
Attendance is a major concern for schools, but at the same time it's important to make it convenient for the public. Each of the school systems, including Rockcastle, reiterated that it upsets people's schedules to go on a 1-2 hour delay.

On the average, schools in this region have missed around 8 days, with the exception of Jackson, which has missed 14 days due to weather.

Rockcastle has missed more days due to bad weather this year than the previous two years. As

of March 3, Rockcastle has missed a total of 10 days, but it's not unusual to see a blizzard in March around Kentucky, so don't put away the snow shovels just yet.

The Value Of A Good Education Can Not Be Overestimated.



*"Education is a social process,
Education is growth.
Education is not a preparation for life,
It is life itself."*

John Dewey

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