

Inclement Weather & Library Closures

Policy

The OU Libraries seeks to balance its role as a major service provider and as key campus facilities for the academic community with ensuring the safety of our patrons and library employees. In the event of inclement weather, the OU Libraries may elect to close the library when the weather makes it unsafe to travel.

In general, the OU Libraries will follow campus directives related to the closing of the University. Designated library administrators may close the OU Libraries because of unsafe weather conditions even if the University has not announced a closing. This situation occurs most frequently during evening and weekend hours when University offices are already closed.

All library employees are expected to sign up for the OU Emergency Alert service so that they will receive phone calls and text messages alerting them to University closures and emergencies. Employees can sign up for this service or update their contact information online at: <https://account.ou.edu/>.

The Dean of Libraries has final authority for approving library closures due to inclement weather. In the absence of the Dean, the Associate Dean for Finance, Administration, and Human Resources is responsible for making this decision.

The procedures that follow provide direction for essential staff at the Bizzell Memorial Library, non-essential staff at the Bizzell Memorial Library, and all staff in special collections or branch libraries. Designations are as follows:

- **Essential staff:** Within Bizzell, Circulation Services (including supervisors and student library employees scheduled to work) Facilities and Security.
- **Non-essential staff:** All departments, including the Library Service Center, special collections and branch libraries, but excluding Circulation Services, Facilities and Security.

Procedures for the Work Week

In cases of inclement weather, OU administration decides whether or not to close the University. The OU President announces closures via e-mail and the OU Emergency Alert system as well as local media. Following a University closure or delayed opening, the Associate Dean for Finance, Administration, and Human Resources will provide instructions to staff on how to report administrative leave time.

During the work week, the OU Libraries make decisions about library closures based on university announcements as follows:

OU Closes Early (Monday through Friday)

- **For non-essential employees:** When OU closes early (cancels classes, closes its offices, and releases students, faculty, and staff to leave campus), all libraries will close at the same time the University closes. Non-essential employees should follow the directive given by the University. Those employees who wish to leave work prior to the designated University closing must receive approval to do so by a supervisor.
- **For essential employees:** The Dean of Libraries and/or the Associate Dean for Finance, Administration, and Human Resources are responsible for making the decision to close the libraries *after the university announces a closure for the Norman campus*. When a decision is made to close the library, the Circulation Services will alert Circulation Services staff who will do the following:
 - Post paper signs on all entrances to Bizzell Memorial Library;
 - Ensure Security makes a building-wide announcements and initiate the closing of Bizzell Memorial Library;
 - Work with Security to secure and close the building.

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OU Closes in Advance of Opening

- **For all employees:** If the University announces an all-day closure for the following day, all libraries will close for that entire day.

OU Announces a Delayed Opening

When the University announces a delayed opening, the announcement will include the time that the University will open. All libraries will observe delayed openings as follows:

- Circulation, security and facilities will strive to open Bizzell Memorial Library 30 minutes prior to the announced time.
- Branch libraries and special collections will open at the same time as the University.
- All other employees will report to work at the delayed opening time announced by the University.
- If the University announces a delayed opening time after library staff have left home and/or reached campus, the Circulation Services Librarian (or the Associate Dean for Finance, Administration, and Human Resources) will determine if staffing is sufficient to open the library prior to the delayed opening time announced by the University. This same decision will be made at the discretion of the branch librarians or designated staff. No library will open prior to its stated opening time for the day.

Procedures for Evenings and Weekends

In cases of inclement weather that occur during evening and/or weekend hours, OU may or may not make an announcement to close the University. If weather conditions are deemed unsafe, and if the University has made no announcement regarding closure, the Dean of Libraries and/or the Associate Dean for Finance, Administration, and Human Resources are responsible for making the decision to close the libraries.

During evenings and weekends, decisions to close the OU Libraries will be made as follows:

- The Circulation Services personnel and the Associate Dean for Finance, Administration, and Human Resources will monitor inclement weather situations. If weather conditions warrant concern, the Circulation Services or security personnel will telephone or email the Associate Dean for Finance, Administration, and Human Resources to discuss a developing weather situation and seek advice and/or make a recommendation for closing Bizzell Memorial Library.
- Personnel may contact their supervisor to discuss a developing weather situation and seek advice and/or make a recommendation for closing a branch library, special collection or public service area. Supervisors will notify the Associate Dean for Finance, Administration, and Human Resources of any service desk closures.
- The Associate Dean for Finance, Administration, and Human Resources and/or the Circulation Services Librarian will consult the Dean of Libraries and make a recommendation regarding a closure and prior to making a formal announcement to the public and to library staff.
- Once closure is approved, the Associate Dean will send emails to the Circulation Services Librarian (who will inform staff who will initiate the closure) and to the Communications Coordinator for OU Libraries, who will post the announcement on the library website and social media channels.
- The Associate Dean and/or Circulation Services Librarian will then send an email to all library employees indicating specifics related to the closure. This email is the alert for all library staff and student employees. Supervisors may initiate their own announcements to their employees if desired.