

# Superintendent Viewpoint

By Bob McRae



## Snow, Ice Play Havoc

I consider snow and ice to be in the same category where Ebenezer Scrooge placed Christmas. It certainly causes great havoc with plans for school. In today's column I would like to inform you of what is involved in our decision making process on inclement weather days. The final choice is never easy nor one that totally pleases all concerned.

When the forecast calls for weather which could create hazardous driving conditions Dr. Larry Allen, Associate Superintendent, and I are on the road by 5:00 a.m. to check driving conditions. We are in radio contact with each other and with representatives of the Cleveland County and Shelby City Schools trying to determine what kind of schedule will best work on that particular day.

On some days all three systems will do the same thing. On other days schedules will differ due to differing conditions in various parts of the county. Our options fall into three categories. One is to have school on our normal schedule. Another is to cancel school entirely. A third is to operate on a delayed schedule. In such cases we feel that the added time gained by the delay will not only improve road conditions but also give our bus drivers additional daylight time for driving their routes.

If a decision is made to cancel school or delay the day's schedule, we immediately begin to notify nearby radio and television stations of the announcement. We have the announcement to those stations prior to 6:00 a.m. Unfortunately, the announcements are not always made correctly. This causes significant problems for us and for our patrons. I would suggest two things. Listen to more than one source to see if announcements are the same. Also, I am finding that our Cleveland County radio stations are usually the most consistently accurate with our weather information. I would recommend that one of your listening checks be with WKMT or another station in this county. Remember to listen for the announcement which deals specifically with the Kings Mountain District Schools. Do not confuse our announcement with those made for the Shelby and the Cleveland County school systems.

We try to make our decisions with the safety of our students foremost in our thoughts. There may be occasions where we cancel school based on the weather situation at 6:00 a.m., but it later becomes apparent that we could have had classes that day. Such a situation is unfortunate, but I think you would prefer that we make our decisions for children on the conservative side of the issue. Occasionally, as happened with this last snow, we may operate on what I call snow routes. If there is a day when buses can generally operate safely but some dirt roads are still in poor shape, we may choose to avoid the dirt roads which are in the worst condition. I realize that this causes a change in routine and some inconvenience with the safe operation of our buses. We will try not to implement snow route plans unless absolutely necessary. I hope you can assist us on these few occasions by getting your children to the nearest hard-surfaced road to meet the bus if you are affected. I do not feel that we should cancel school when most of our roads are usable. Again, we will try to do this only when absolutely necessary.

Changing a school system's schedules does not result in alterations to the previously announced calendar. Days missed by students must be made up. For instance, the student day we missed on Monday will be made up on June 9 thus extending the school year for students by one day. We are permitted by the state to excuse up to two days of student absence without making them up. However, we normally do that only after using all the available make-up days in the original calendar. Usually this means that we will make up three or four student days missed due to bad weather before excusing the two permitted by the state.

I hope this gives you some helpful information regarding our decision making process on days when we have ice and snow. I know that with the different circumstances which affect our patrons, it is difficult to make a decision that totally pleases everyone, especially on days after many of our roads have begun to clear substantially. We will continue to try to make our decisions with the safety of our students in mind and request your patience and cooperation in such occurrences. Also, let me take this opportunity to congratulate our bus drivers on a job well done under difficult circumstances during our recent times of poor road conditions.

## Stop Smoking Clinic Slated In Hickory

Smoking is the single largest preventable cause of premature death and disability in the United States. Every year 350,000 Americans die prematurely from diseases caused by cigarette smoking, such as lung cancer, emphysema, and coronary heart disease. Don't let this happen to you.

Kick the Habit! The American Lung Association of North Carolina, Catawba Valley Region, is sponsoring a hypnosis clinic to help you stop smoking on Tuesday, February 24 at 6:30 p.m. at CVTC auditorium in Hickory. Psychologist, Dr. Richard Lovelace, of Winston-Salem

will conduct the clinic. The cost is \$35 per person and includes a hypnosis tape and written materials for continued benefit. Proceeds will be used to help fund the American Lung Association's local programs.

The clinic is limited to thirty (30) participants. Call the

Lung Association office today at (704) 464-2413 weekdays from 9:00 to 4:00 for further information and pre-registration.

The Surgeon General has determined that second-hand smoke also causes lung cancer. If you won't quit for yourself, do it for those you love!

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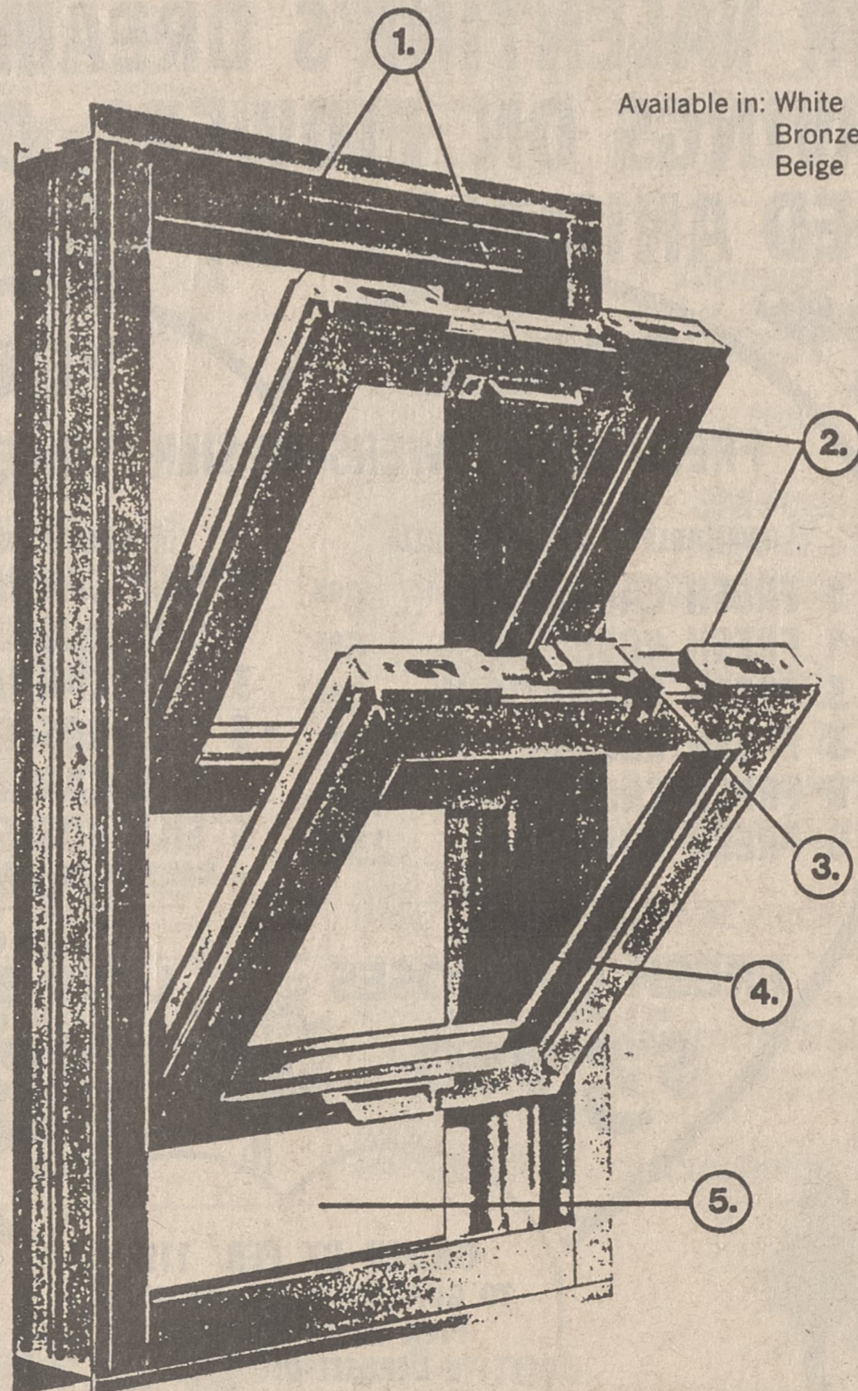


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