



The Provincial Court of Saskatchewan

## PROTOCOL CIRCUIT TRAVEL SAFETY

### I GENERAL

This Protocol guides the Court’s response to severe weather conditions and other exceptional circumstances that make circuit travel unsafe.

### II DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Protocol, the following definitions will apply:

**Circuit travel** means travel of the court party by motor vehicle from a permanent court point to a circuit court point.

**Severe weather conditions** means the existence of climatic conditions that make it unsafe for the court party to travel to or from a circuit court point applying the following minimum threshold criteria:

Extreme Cold Warning	Issued by Environment Canada when the temperature or wind chill is expected to reach minus 40 degrees Celsius for at least two hours.
Roads Closed	When the relevant road(s) or highway(s) is closed.
Travel Not Recommended	When the relevant road(s) or highway(s) is designated “travel not recommended” by police or according to the Government of Saskatchewan Highway Hotline: <a href="https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/transportation/highways/highway-hotline">https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/transportation/highways/highway-hotline</a>
Blizzard Warning	Issued by Environment Canada when winds of 40 km/h or greater are expected to cause widespread reductions in visibility to 400 meters or less, due to blowing snow, or blowing snow in combination with falling snow, for at least 4 hours.
Winter Storm Warning	Issued by Environment Canada when severe and potentially dangerous winter weather conditions are expected, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A major snowfall (25 cm or more within a 24 hour period); and</li><li>• A significant snowfall combined with other cold weather conditions such as: freezing rain, strong winds, blowing snow and/or extreme cold.</li></ul>

### **III GUIDELINES**

The court party will not travel to circuit points in severe weather conditions or when severe weather conditions are forecast sooner than the court party can travel, do effective work, and return safely. Court will be held remotely via teleconference or videoconference (CCTV). Court will only be cancelled in circumstances where it is not possible to hold court remotely. The court endorsements for the day will indicate that the court party did not travel because of severe weather conditions and that Court was held by telephone, video or cancelled at the direction of the presiding Provincial Court Judge (PCJ) or Justice of the Peace (JP).

In other exceptional circumstances that render circuit travel unsafe, the presiding PCJ or JP, may decide to conduct circuit court remotely via teleconference or videoconference (CCTV) taking into consideration the length of the trip, weather conditions, road conditions, the nature of the court proceedings, and the overall safety of the court party and the public. Any decision made by a PCJ or JP to cancel circuit travel under this Protocol shall be communicated to the Chief Judge, Supervising Justice of the Peace, or designate immediately.

### **IV PROCEDURE**

The PCJ's or JP's decision whether to travel will be made in a timely manner the morning of the day travel is scheduled and prior to the time when counsel and other professional parties would normally have to leave their locations to reach the circuit point one half hour before Court is scheduled to begin. Given all parties have weather forecasts available to them, the parties will usually know when court travel cancellation may occur. Therefore, members of the court party should monitor their communication devices early in the morning for messages that bear on this question. Further, when a member can reasonably anticipate a court cancellation may occur, they should provide the relevant court registry with their contact information and their departure point the day before or sooner.

Where the presiding PCJ or JP determines that there are severe weather conditions, or exceptional circumstances under this Protocol:

- a. The PCJ or JP will direct the court clerk to notify the relevant parties in their area prior to the normal time of departure, including:
  - i. Crown Prosecutor (Provincial and Federal)
  - ii. Legal Aid
  - iii. Defence lawyers scheduled to attend
  - iv. Deputy Sheriffs
  - v. Remand Centre(s)
  - vi. Law Enforcement Agencies
  - vii. Any other stakeholders specific to the area.

All members of the court party and the others mentioned in "a" above shall be free to advise the presiding PCJ or JP of pending severe weather conditions or other exceptional circumstances. The presiding PCJ or JP shall then consider whether to apply this Protocol and, if so, when.

## V PUBLIC

When the presiding PCJ or JP decides to move court online or cancel court, the Court shall communicate with the local or closest RCMP detachment of the decision that the court party will not travel and whether court will be held by video, by telephone or cancelled. The RCMP will be asked to post a notice on the court facility door as follows:

ATTENTION: \_\_\_\_\_

COURT DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

COURT LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE CALL: (306) \_\_\_\_\_ to appear  
(*or to receive instructions*) as the Court will not be attending due to severe  
weather conditions as per the Provincial Court of Saskatchewan Circuit Travel  
Safety Protocol.

Anyone seeking information about changes to Court operations under the Protocol are advised to contact a court clerk at: <https://sasklawcourts.ca/provincial-court/about-the-court/provincial-court-offices/>.