



## Market Cancellation and Closure Protocols

**Overview:** NFM is committed to operating the markets in all weather while also addressing safety issues for staff, vendors, and the public. Our orientation is to ask

*“How can we reduce risk while opening markets to support our vendors and the people who rely on them for food?”* This approach requires training, proven procedures, and a willingness to learn and document what works during times of uncertainty. On rare occasions, we will need to close the markets early or proactively cancel them in order to protect public safety.

**What are some reasons for early closure or cancellation?** Early closure or cancellation might be due to:

- Extreme weather
- Declared States of Emergency, public emergencies, or widespread protests
- An event that would endanger public safety *or be perceived to endanger* public safety

**Who is responsible for monitoring weather conditions?** Market Managers, the Director of Farmers Market Operations, and the Director on Duty own the week-to-week responsibility for considering how weather might impact our ability to run upcoming markets. A simple best practice includes naming upcoming weather forecasts or other potential causes of market disruption during weekly Operations meetings.

**What else should be taken into account when addressing potential market closure or cancellations?**

From past experience and feedback from our vendors, we know the impacts of last-minute cancellations on farmers and shoppers are greater if they occur within 48 hours of the market. If the market is not pre-emptively canceled by this time, we are moving forward on the assumption that the market will run.

- Market closures and cancellations occur on an individual basis; we do not assume that if one market closes another market will also close.
- It is the responsibility of NFM staff, and ultimately the Executive Director, to make the final decision about market cancellations or closures. Vendors and Board members are consulted and provide oversight and guidance as requested.

**Steps NFM Staff Must Take When Considering Cancellation:**

1. **48 Hours or more in advance: assessment & mitigation planning.** Name and problem solve the barriers to holding the market. If there is a reasonable chance that closure or cancellation will be considered, exploring options as far in advance as possible is crucial. In the event of known disruptions, the Director of Operations, Executive Director, and affected Market Managers who are running affected markets should convene and address the following:

- What is the feasibility to, and impact on, the market, our vendors and shoppers, and our staff of a last-minute cancellation (versus an advance cancellation)?
- What can be done to *reduce the barriers to holding a safe and successful market day?* Successful tactics are included in Extreme Weather protocols.
- The decision to go forward or to pre-emptively cancel a market is held by the Executive Director in consultation with the staff and the board. In the ED’s absence, this decision is held by the Director of Operations.

**2. 48-hours to the morning of market: monitor & mitigate.** Establish daily operations stand up to monitor changing conditions and adjust our plans. The daily stand-up should include the Executive Director, Director of Operations, Communications Director and Coordinator, and Market Managers whose markets are affected. If the event happens quickly or emerges after the Ops meeting, the stand-up group should convene via phone. The following should be addressed:

- Changing conditions based on trusted weather or news sources
- Confirm progress on mitigation plans
- Confirm communications to vendors, staff and shoppers
- Confirm go-forward plan or adjustments based on new information
- If time allows, the ED or DoFMO to consult with Board Chair and/or Vendor Board Members to ensure their recommendation is sound
- If time allows, the ED or DoFMO to consult with other Seattle Farmers Markets organizations potentially impacted including the SFMA Director, Pike Place Farm Program Manager, and the Queen Anne Farmers Market Director.
- In the event that the market is pre-emptively cancelled or reduced hours are instated, the “Cancellation or Modified Hours” procedure (below) is followed.

After this stand up, an advisory email should be sent to all vendors scheduled at that market. This email will alert vendors to the possibility to market closure and be prepared for further communication from NFM. It should include:

- The nature of the advisory (weather forecast, public emergency/safety risk etc).
- Links to the resources we are monitoring (NOAA, media sources etc).
- Any relevant vendor-facing protocols should be attached to the email.

*If a market is not determined to close before 48 hours of market opening, then the market will open unless an emergency is in place. Otherwise, markets may open late or close early. Many vendors will likely not receive cancellation communication the day of or even night before.*

**3. Cancellation or closure procedure.** In the event that the market is either pre-emptively cancelled or cancelled on the day of, the procedure and approach to decision-making is similar:

**Cancellation or Modified Hours Procedure (before the day of market):**

- The Executive Director communicates the closure or modification of hours to NFM staff and board, including the reason for cancellation/modification and what (vendors/staff/shoppers) can expect (via email and using the staff phone tree)
- Market Managers are responsible for communicating the change to vendors via phone as soon as the decision is made, beginning with the vendors who travel from the furthest location and the vendors who harvest/specifically for market
- Communications Coordinator is responsible for posting the closure or updated schedule on social media and communicating the change via MailChimp to the Ripe & Ready Audience
- Market Managers, in coordination with the Personnel Specialist if requested, are responsible for ensuring signage is posted at the market site. All markets operating between November and April should have an available A-Board and “Market Closed” sign.

- Programs Coordinator is responsible for contacting any scheduled food banks and non-profit organizations scheduled in the market to notify them of the cancellation.

**Closure Procedure (during market operations).** In the event that weather or an emergency closure (anticipated or in-the-moment) the following should occur:

- In the event of anticipated weather or political situations that may cause day-of cancellation, a Director on Duty should be on site at one of the markets to help with decision making
- Market Managers are responsible for assessing changing conditions and mitigating them according to Extreme Weather procedures
- In the event that changing conditions poses a new and significant risk to personal or public safety, Managers should first consult with the Director on Duty and/or Vendor Board Members who are on site at their market
- Managers should communicate to the DoD: changing circumstances, mitigation attempts, effect/risk to public safety
- The Director on Duty and Market Manager are responsible for including the Executive Director in the conversation and together they are responsible for deciding on early closure or day-of cancellation
- The ED/DoD or Communications Coordinator should post the market closure to social media and send a notification via the Ripe & Ready list in MailChimp (details below)
- Market Manager should post market closure signs at market sites.
- For early closure ensure the following with vendors:
  - Have vendors focus on leaving the market safely and helping each other
  - Pass out invoices for vendors to pay the following week (collect vendor sales figures only if situation allows)
  - Advise vendors who choose to remain on or near the market site to avoid selling or creating lines in the typical street closure or right-of-way

**Day-Of Market Closure Communications Procedure.** After making the decision to shut down the market, the Executive Director or Director on Duty should either assume responsibility for or delegate communication to the public to NFM marketing/communications staff listed below:

- Director of Communications & Development
- Marketing & Communications Coordinator

Marketing & Communications Staff:

- *After* NFM Vendors have started to receive notification of the cancellation or adjustment, communicate a relevant message to NFM market shoppers via social media, the NFM website, and the Ripe & Ready Newsletter email list.
- Use the Mailchimp “[Emergency Closure TEMPLATE](#)” to send out an email to all R&R subscribers.
- Change the announcement bar on the website to read: “Emergency Closure Alert:” followed by details of the closure. (which markets are closed, what the updated market hours are, etc.)
- Use the “[Emergency Closure](#)” or “[Adjusted Market Hours](#)” images to create a social post. The caption should include details about the closure, including which markets have been affected and the reason for the closure. Fill in the blanks and highlighted portions in the social post template below:
  - EMERGENCY CLOSURE ALERT: Due to \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ Farmers Market(s) will be canceled on \_\_\_\_\_ day, MM/DD. The safety of our vendors, staff, and shoppers is always our number one priority, and with that in mind, we have made the difficult decision to cancel the market(s) today. We

appreciate all of your support and understanding, and we will be back to our regularly scheduled markets as soon as we are safely able! Stay tuned to our social channels for more updates.

- o ***If the closure occurs on a Saturday, include some information about Sunday markets:***  
***Tomorrow's Farmers Markets will be*** <<OPEN with regular hours>> <<open with adjusted hours>>  
<<CANCELED>>
- o ADJUSTED MARKET HOURS ALERT: Due to \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ Farmers Market(s) will be OPEN with ADJUSTED HOURS on \_\_\_\_\_ day, MM/DD. The safety of our vendors, staff, and shoppers is always our number one priority, and with that in mind, we have adjusted the market hours as follows:
  - University District Farmers Market, xx am – xx pm
  - Columbia City Second Saturdays Market, xx am – xx pm
  - West Seattle Farmers Market, xx am – xx pm
  - Capitol Hill Farmers Market, xx pm – xx pm
- Check social media regularly and be available to field comments and questions from shoppers. (Every 30 mins for the first 3 hours and about every hour after that).
- AFTER the last closure: remove the alert banner on the website

### 3. Follow up after closure:

- The Director of Farmers Market Operations and Director of Finance, in consultation with Market Managers in markets affected by early closure should determine the market fees to be charged the following week
- Send follow up email to vendors for booth stall fees to be charged the following week
- Collect fees the following week at market

### Sources We Consult:

[Air Quality](#)

[NOAA Hourly Weather Forecast](#) (Search Seattle, click on hourly weather forecast)

[Winter Weather Response Map](#)

[Seattle Snow Plow Routes Map](#)

[City of Seattle Winter Weather Response](#)

[WSDOT Snoqualmie Pass Report](#)

[Seattle Traffic Camera Map](#)

[City of Seattle](#)

[WA State Governor's Office](#)

[Alert Seattle](#)