



**BILL LEE**  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
NINTH FLOOR, ANDREW JOHNSON TOWER  
710 JAMES ROBERTSON PARKWAY  
NASHVILLE, TN 37243-0375

**LIZZETTE REYNOLDS**  
COMMISSIONER

## Via Electronic Mail

May 13, 2024

Lisa Ventura, Director of Schools  
Maury County Schools  
501 West 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
Columbia, TN 38401

Dear Director Ventura:

I am in receipt of your waiver request of Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3004(a)(6) as it pertains to the required 180 days of instruction. Specifically, you have requested to waive May 13, 2024 and May 14, 2024 as instructional days due to storm damage your school district sustained from severe weather occurring on May 8, 2024. Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3004(a)(6) only authorizes waivers of the instructional day requirement to be granted in the event of a natural disaster or a serious outbreak of illness affecting or endangering students or staff during a school year.

This provision was added to the law after the catastrophic flooding that occurred across Tennessee in May of 2010. The flooding created a situation where at the very end of the school year local education agencies (LEAs) were unable to address the lost instructional time due to the flooding through the use of stockpile days or by adhering to the Tennessee Department of Education's [Attendance Manual](#) on making up instructional days missed.

The waiver authority granted to the commissioner of education in the law is narrow. Merriam-Webster defines "natural disaster" as a sudden and terrible event in nature (such as a hurricane, tornado, or flood) that usually results in serious damage and many deaths. The waiver authority is only available for events of nature that cause substantial damage or disruption to property or critical infrastructure impacting the community and school operations that are beyond regular inclement weather.

Your request includes information confirming your community suffered substantial damage or disruption to property or critical infrastructure that impacted the community and school operations beyond regular inclement weather. Pursuant to the commissioner's authority under Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3004(a)(6)(A) to waive instructional days in the event a district experiences a natural disaster, your request is hereby granted.

Sincerely,

Lizzette Reynolds  
Commissioner

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**From:** Lisa Ventura <lventura@mauryk12.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 13, 2024 11:25 AM  
**To:** Commissioner of Education; Nikkie Kiene  
**Cc:** Keith Stacey  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] FW: WAIVER FOR TORNADO

Dear Commissioner Reynolds,

On 5/8/2024, disaster struck in Maury County in the form of an EF3 tornado. Over 245 homes were destroyed or damaged and power outages continue to be problematic. Due to the impact of the storm, as well as the usage of our schools as Red Cross Relief centers, OEM staging areas & storm shelters, as well as limited law enforcement, Maury County Public Schools closed on Thursday 5/9/2024 and continue to be closed. After discussion with Maury County Office of Emergency Management & TEMA, we plan on reopening schools on Wednesday 5/15/2024. This means we will need a waiver of two additional inclement weather days. I humbly ask you for a waiver of two additional inclement weather days for Maury County Public Schools.

Lisa Ventura  
Superintendent  
Maury County Public Schools  
931-388-8403 x8128