



Winter Storm Fern - FAQs for Parents and Families

Is my student safe on campus?

Yes. Student safety remains our highest priority. All students currently on campus are safe, housed, and supported. Resident halls have electricity and heat, meals are served daily, and staff members are present to monitor conditions and assist students as needed.

Why are some utilities (hot water or Wi-Fi) limited?

Winter Storm Fern caused widespread infrastructure damage across North Mississippi, resulting in power and utility disruptions beyond the College's control. Even large institutions - such as the University of Mississippi - continue to experience outages in parts of their campuses.

At Rust College, one residence hall is temporarily without hot water due to limited electrical phase restoration. Utility crews are working diligently to restore full service. In the meantime, affected students have access to shower facilities in other residence halls.

What is being done for students affected by the hot water outage?

Students were offered the option of temporarily relocating to another residence hall or remaining in place with access to nearby shower facilities. Residential Life staff and members of the Executive Team are conducting daily wellness checks and closely monitoring conditions.

Are students receiving meals and drinking water?

Yes. Dining Services continues to operate daily as long as weather conditions allow for safe food preparation. Bottled water is available in all residence halls, and students are permitted to take meals from the cafeteria as needed.

Had the College prepared for this storm in advance?

Yes. Planning began several days before the storm's arrival. Preparations included the following:

- Executive Team discussions beginning Tuesday, January 20
- A Comprehensive Inclement Weather Preparedness meeting was held on Thursday, January 22
- Facilities were checked, supplies were stocked, and emergency protocols were reviewed
- Student briefings on emergency contacts and preparedness
- A coordinated store run to help students make personal preparations

Why is the College operating remotely?

Due to hazardous road conditions, ice-covered bridges, and highway closures across multiple counties, Rust College transitioned to remote instruction and remote work to ensure the safety of all members of the community. This decision aligns with state and local guidance advising emergency travel only.

**Should my student travel back to campus right now?**

No. Students who are not currently on campus or within the local area are strongly discouraged from traveling until conditions improve and official updates indicate it is safe to return.

How is the College communicating updates?

Rust College is sharing updates through multiple official channels:

- Official College Email Messages
- College Website: Winter Weather Updates webpage (rustcollege.edu/weather-announcement)
- Official Social Media channels
- Bearcat Portal
- 911 Alert System
- Blackboard and Cengage for academic notifications

Who is supervising students on campus?

Residential Life staff, Campus Security officers, Physical Plant personnel, Dining Services staff, and members of the Executive Team remain on campus and actively engaged. Students are not being left unattended during this period.

What if my student feels anxious, overwhelmed, or stressed?

Emotional support is available to all students.

- Mental Health Counselor (Telehealth): Mrs. Ryshine Jenkins – 601-291-4697
- Communicare Crisis Support Line: 866-837-7521

Students are encouraged to reach out if they experience stress, anxiety, or emotional distress.

When will normal operations resume?

The College continues to evaluate conditions daily. Current forecasts suggest possible improvement by mid-week(?); however, all decisions will be made with safety as the guiding principle. Families will be notified promptly of any updates.

Who can I contact if I still have concerns?

Parents and families are encouraged to monitor official communications for updates. If concerns persist, the appropriate College offices will assist once normal operations resume. We appreciate your patience as our staff manage storm-related needs and prioritize student well-being.

A Final Word to Parents and Families

We understand how difficult it is to be separated from your student during a weather emergency. Please know that your student is not navigating this situation alone. While some circumstances are beyond the College's control, our care, preparation, communication, and commitment remain steadfast.

Thank you for trusting Rust College with your student during this challenging time.