



## Personal Emergency Preparedness

By definition, a disaster requires more resources than are readily available. Public education around the role of the public during an event is highly important to a successful response. Many believe that when disaster strikes, responders will be there immediately to lend assistance to those stricken and in need of help. It is formally recognized that this is not always the case.



Often overlooked is that responders are members of the community too. This means that the local firefighter, police officer, ambulance technician or County employee, among others, are most likely going to be affected by the same disaster that is affecting you and may not be able to respond to you specifically in a timely manner. Given the County's geographic size and rural nature, this can exacerbated in many instances.

As such, it is important that residents take appropriate actions to ensure that they can sustain themselves as best as possible until formal help can arrive. To this end, the County is an advocate of the First 72 Hours Program.

This program is designed to help you prepare yourself for surviving the first 72 hours during or following an event. The program focuses on helping you help yourself and your family. For more information on this program and to download important preparedness resources, please [click here](#).

-Other Helpful Sites:

->[Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

->[Alberta Emergency Management Agency](#)

When utilizing these resources, it is important to remember that there is no "one size fits all" plan. Only you know your own personal circumstances and needs and it is important to use these resources with that in mind.

In addition to the information below regarding personal emergency preparedness, [this website](#) provides other helpful information. Please remember that this information is not exhaustive, but is meant only to help and guide you.



## Know the Risks

Have you identified the possible disasters or emergencies that could affect you and your family? Identifying what may happen is the first step in planning for it. This may range from your or a family member being snowed in for a period of time to major disasters such as floods and fires.

## Make a Plan

### Household/Family

Talk with your family about potential disasters and why it's necessary to prepare for them. Involve each member of your family in the planning process. By showing them simple steps that can increase their safety, you can help reduce their anxiety about emergencies.

- Make sure everyone knows where to find your disaster supply kit and Go-bags.
- Have a flashlight readily available to each family member.
- Plan where to meet after a disaster if your home becomes unsafe. Choose two places, one just outside your home and one further away in case you are told to evacuate. Be sure your gas tank is always at least half-full.
- Determine the best escape routes from your home. Try to identify two escape routes.
- Make sure each member knows who your family's out-of-area contact is and understands how to call this person and tell him/her where they are.
- Locate the gas main and other utilities and make sure family members know when and how to safely turn them off.
- Practice your evacuation routes.
- Teach each member of your family how to use a fire extinguisher.
- Create emergency response cards for each of your family members.
- Take into account the special needs of children, seniors or people with disabilities, family members/family visitors that do not speak English and pets.

### Home Safety

During a disaster, ordinary objects in your home can cause injury or damage. However, there are simple steps you can take to make your home safer. Start by viewing each room with a "disaster eye" and identify potential hazards such as large objects that could tip over and block exits or provide fuel for a fire.

- Install smoke detectors on each level of your home and change batteries every 6 months.
- Move beds away from windows.
- Clear hallways and exits for easy evacuation.
- Store heavy items on the lowest shelves.
- Keep ABC type fire extinguishers on each level and know how and when to use them.
- Store flammable or highly reactive chemicals (such as bleach, ammonia, paint thinners) securely and separate from each other.
- Know how and when to switch off your utilities.
- Ensure that any window safety bars have emergency releases.
- Be sure your municipal address is visible from the street so emergency vehicles can find you.

### Children Plan

- Include your children in family discussions and planning for emergency safety.
- Teach your children their basic personal information so they can identify themselves and get help if they become separated from a parent or guardian.
- Prepare an emergency card with information for each child, including his/her full name, address, phone number, parent's work number and out of state contact.
- Know the policies of the school or daycare your children attend. Make plans to have someone pick them up if you are unable to get to them.
- Regularly update your child's school with current emergency contact information and persons authorized to pick up your child from school.
- Make sure each child knows the family's alternate meeting sites if you are separated in a disaster and cannot return to your home.



- Make sure each child knows how to reach your family's out-of-state contact person.
  - Teach children to dial their home telephone number and Emergency 9-1-1.
  - Teach children what gas smells like and advise them to tell an adult if they smell gas after an emergency.
  - Warn children never to touch wires on poles or lying on the ground.
  - Role-play with children to help them remain calm in emergencies and to practice basic emergency responses such as evacuation routes and Stop, Drop & Roll.
  - Role-play with children as to what they should do if a parent is suddenly sick or injured.
  - Role-play with children on what to say when calling Emergency 9-1-1.
- Kit:
- Include a family picture and a favourite toy, game or book for each child in his/her Go-bag.
  - Include your child's emergency card and include information on reunification locations and out-of-area contact.
  - Provide comfort food and treats for each child in your family disaster supplies kit.
  - Keep a recent photo of your children in your Go-bag.

#### **Seniors & Disabled Persons**

- **Set up a Personal Support Network:** Designate someone to check on you in an emergency and to help with evacuation or sheltering-in-place.
- **Prepare and carry with you an emergency health information card:** This will help you to communicate if you are found unconscious or incoherent. Include information about your medications, adaptive equipment, blood type, allergies and sensitivities, insurance numbers, immunization dates, communication difficulties and preferred treatment, as well as contact information for your health providers, personal support network and emergency contacts.
- **Personal Care Assistance:** If you receive assistance from a home healthcare agency or in-home support provider, find out how the provider will respond in an emergency. Designate backup or alternative providers that you can contact in an emergency. Remember that in some instances such as storms or heavy snowfall, this person may not be able to get to you and the County may not be able to open a route for them in a timely manner.
- **For Persons Using a Wheelchair:** Plan for how you will evacuate in an emergency and discuss it with your care providers. If you use a motorized wheelchair, have a manual wheelchair as a backup.
- **For Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired:** Keep an extra cane by your bed. Attach a whistle; in case you need to attract attention. Exercise caution when moving, paths may have become obstructed.
- **For Persons who are Hearing Impaired:** Keep extra batteries for your hearing aids with emergency supplies. Consider storing your hearing aids in a container attached to your nightstand or bedpost, so you can locate them quickly after a disaster.
- **For persons with Communication Disabilities:** Store paper, writing materials, copies of a word or letter board and preprinted key phrases in your emergency kit, your wallet, purse, etc.

#### **Pets**

##### Plan

- Keep a collar, current license and up-to date ID tags on your pet at all times. Consider having your pet micro-chipped.
- Make sure your pet is comfortable being in a crate, box, cage, or carrier for transport.
- Keep an updated list of trusted neighbours who could assist your animals in case of an emergency.
- Tighten and secure latches on birdcages. Fasten down aquariums on low stands or tables.

##### Kit

Make a Go-bag for each pet. Include:

- Sturdy leashes, pet carriers, muzzles for dogs, Food, potable water and medicine for **at least one week**
- Non-spill bowls, manual can opener and plastic lid



- Plastic bags, litter box and litter
- Recent photo of each pet
- Names and phone numbers of your veterinary hospitals and animal shelters
- Copy of your pet's vaccination history and any medical problems
- Portable fencing or baby gates

emergency contact, emergency

### **Respond**

- Remember that animals react differently under stress. Keep dogs securely leashed and transport cats in carriers.
- If your pet is lost, contact the nearest animal shelter to report your pet missing. When it is safe, return to your neighbourhood to search and distribute "Lost Pet" posters; include a current picture of your pet.

### **Evacuation**

Locate all your animals and keep them with you. Be aware that many places will only allow service animals. If you must leave your pets behind:

- Inform animal rescue workers of your pets' status: On your front door or in a highly visible window, use chalk, paint or marker to write the number and types of pets in your residence. Include their location in your home and the date that you evacuated.
- Leave plenty of water in a large, open container that cannot be tipped over.
- Leave plenty of food in timed feeders to prevent your pet from overeating.
- Do not tie up your pet in your home.

### **Livestock**

Given the County's rural nature, many residents rely on agriculture for their livelihood and recreation. It is important to think of ways to provide for the wellbeing of livestock during times of disaster. Some important considerations are:

- Is livestock identifiable as yours?
- Have a plan outlining a means of providing food, water and shelter if you have to evacuate and leave livestock behind.
- Identify a means of transporting livestock if you are forced to. Remember that third party transportation may not be available in times of disaster.
- Identify several places that you can relocate livestock to if you are forced to transport them. Arrange ahead of time solutions to issues such as food, water, medications, ailments, etc.
- Arrange with neighbours to tend your animals in case something happens and you are not able to return home.
- Keep records of your livestock in a secure off-site location.

### **Utilities**

As part of your personal preparedness, it is important to consult with your specific utility provider regarding their services and the equipment contained in your home. Gas leaks can cause an explosive and flammable atmosphere inside a building. Natural gas leaks can cause fires and explosions inside a building.

- If you smell gas, hear gas escaping, see a broken gas line, or if you suspect a leak, shut off the main valve and open all windows and doors.
- Never use candles or matches if you suspect a leak. Do not turn on electrical switches or appliances.
- Identify the main shutoff valve, located on the gas line coming into the main gas meter. This is usually on the exterior of your home or building, or in an external closet.
- Keep a crescent wrench or gas shut-off tool nearby to turn the lever.
- Never attempt to turn your gas back on. Wait for your utility company to do it. This may take several days.

### **Electricity**

Electrocution can result from direct contact with live wires or anything that has been energized by these wires.



- Locate your main electric switch. switch or pull handle on a large
- Shut off electricity when:
- Arcing or burning occurs in electrical
- There is a fire or significant water leak.
- You smell burning insulation.
- The area around switches or plugs is blackened and/or hot to the touch.
- A complete power loss is accompanied by the smell of burning material.

The panel box may have a flip circuit breaker.

devices.

### **Water**

Water leaks can cause property damage and create an electrocution hazard.

- Remember that cracked pipes may allow contaminants into the water supply in your home.
- The water shutoff is usually located in the basement, garage or where the water line enters the home.
- Remember that flooding can sometime contaminate wells, which will affect your water supply.

### **Sewer**

A disaster that disrupts water and/or sewer lines could affect the way you deal with human waste. Also, remember that the old outhouse may also not be useable during a major storm or severe weather.

- If there is no water in your toilet, but the sewer lines are intact, pour 3-5 gallons of water into the toilet bowl to flush.
- If you suspect damage to your home's water lines, do NOT flush the toilet. Turn off water at the house so contaminated water does not enter your water system.
- If sewer lines are broken, line your toilet bowl with double-bagged garbage bags to collect waste. Before discarding, add a small amount of bleach; then seal the bag and place in a tightly covered container, away from people.
- If the toilet is unusable, use a sturdy bucket with a tight fitting lid, and line it with a double-bagged plastic garbage bag.

### **Build a Kit**

Building a kit is an important piece of the personal preparedness puzzle. Your kit is what will allow you to follow your plan and sustain yourself. If you choose to purchase a manufactured kit, remember to ensure that the items contained within it will work for your personal circumstances. You will most likely need to add additional items. If building a kit seems like a complex, onerous or expensive task, one approach is to make a list of items for your list and build it a little at a time. This may involve adding several items each week/month until you have built a full kit.

In addition, give thought to items that you would not normally associate with emergencies. For example, if you and your family is trapped in your house, do you have something such as cards, colouring materials or board games that can keep you entertained (and reduce stress) and do not require electricity? Remember to store your kit in a place where it is least likely to be affected by a disaster. As an example, a kit stored on the floor in your basement may be rendered useless by flooding. When a disaster occurs, you might not have access to food, water and electricity for days, or even weeks. Store enough emergency food to provide for your family for at least 72 hours.

- It is a good idea to have food items that are familiar, rather than buying special emergency food. Consider any dietary restrictions and preferences you may have.
- Make sure that you have a safe way to prepare any food that you have stored.
- Keep a manual can opener in your kit. An electric can opener will be of little use if you do not have electricity.
- Ideal foods are: Shelf-stable (no refrigeration required), low in salt, and do not require cooking (e.g. canned fruit, vegetables, peanut butter, jam, low-salt crackers, cookies, cereals, nuts, dried fruit, canned soup or meats, juices and non-fat dry milk).
- Mark a rotation date on any food container that does not already have an expiration date on the package.
- Include baby food and formula or other diet items for infants or seniors.
- Store the food in airtight, pest-resistant containers in a cool, dark place.



- Most canned foods can safely be stored for at least 18 months. Low acid foods like meat products, fruits or vegetables will normally last at least 2 years. Use dry products, like boxed cereal, crackers, cookies, dried milk or dried fruit within six months.
- After a power outage, refrigerated food will stay cold longer if you keep the door closed. Food should generally be consumed within 4 hours. Food in the freezer will normally remain safe for 2 days.

### Water

In a disaster, water supplies may be cut off or contaminated. Store enough water for everyone in your family to last **for at least 72 hours**.

- Store one gallon of water per person, per day. Three gallons per person per day will give you enough to drink and for limited cooking and personal hygiene. Remember to plan for pets. If you store tap water:
  - Tap water from a municipal water system can be safely stored without additional treatment.
  - Store water in food grade plastic containers, such as clean 2-liter soft drink bottles. Heavy duty, reusable plastic water containers are also available at sporting goods stores. Empty milk bottles are not recommended because their lids do not seal well and bottles may develop leaks.
  - Label and store in a cool, dark place.
  - Replace water at least once every six months.
- If you buy, commercially bottled "spring" or "drinking" water:
  - Keep water in its original container, and don't re-store a bottle once it's been opened.
  - Store in a cool, dark place.
  - If bottles are not marked with the manufacturer's expiration date, label with the date and replace bottles at least once per year.

**Treating Water after Disaster:** If you run out of stored drinking water, strain and treat water from your water heater or the toilet reservoir tank (except if you use toilet tank cleaners). Swimming pool or spa water should not be consumed but you can use it for flushing toilets or washing. **Treatment Process:** Strain any large particles of dirt by pouring the water through layers of paper towels or clean cloth. Next, purify the water one of two ways:

- **Boil** - bring to a rolling boil and maintain for 3-5 minutes. After the water cools, pour it back and forth between two clean containers to add oxygen back; this will improve its taste.

### First Aid

In any emergency, you or a family member may be cut, burned or suffer other injuries. Keep the following basic first aid supplies so you are prepared to help when someone is hurt.

- Two pairs of disposable gloves
- Sterile dressings to stop bleeding
- Cleansing agent/soap and antibiotic towelettes to disinfect
- Antibiotic ointment to prevent infection
- Burn ointment
- Adhesive bandages in a variety of sizes
- Eye wash solution to flush the eyes or as general decontaminant
- Scissors
- Over-the-counter medicines such as Aspirin or other pain reliever, laxative, anti-diarrhea medication
- Prescription medications you take every day such as insulin, heart medicine, or asthma inhaler
- Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose monitoring equipment or blood pressure monitors

### Go-bags

A component of your disaster kit is your Go-bag. Put the following items together in a backpack or another easy to carry container in case you must evacuate quickly. Prepare one Go-bag for each family member and make sure each has an I.D. tag. You may not be at home when an emergency strikes so keep some additional supplies in your car and at work, considering what you would need for your immediate safety. The idea behind a Go-bag is that it is something that you can just pick up and take with you on your way out the door. Items that you may wish to consider for your Go-bag are:

- Flashlight



- Battery operated radio
- Batteries
- Whistle
- Dust mask
- Pocket knife
- Emergency cash in small denominations and quarters for phone calls (remember that ATMs, debit machines, etc. may not be operational during or after a disaster)
- Sturdy shoes, a change of clothes, and a warm hat
- Local map
- Some water and food
- Permanent marker, paper and tape
- Photos of family members and pets for re-identification purposes
- List of emergency point-of -contact phone numbers
- List of allergies to any drug (especially antibiotics) or food
- Copy of health insurance and identification cards
- Extra prescription eye glasses, hearing aid or other vital personal items
- Prescription medications and first aid supplies
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Extra keys to your house and vehicle
- Any special-needs items for children, seniors or people with disabilities. Do not forget to make a Go-bag for your pets.
- Cards, books, paper and crayons, etc. Items that can entertain you and your family that do not require electricity.

It is also important to have access to other information like important documents including identification documents (driver's license, passport, etc.), medical documents, insurance documents, marriage certificates, SIN numbers, account numbers, etc. When making copies and storing this information remember to keep it secure as you do not want this important information falling into the wrong hands.

### **Phone**

Plan for how you will communicate with loved ones after a disaster.

- Long-distance phone lines often work before local phone lines, so identify an out-of-state contact and provide this person with the contact information of people you want to keep informed of your situation. Share this information with your family and friends locally.
- Avoid making non-urgent phone calls after a disaster even if phone lines are un-damaged, increased phone traffic can jam phone circuits.
- Cordless phones or phone systems require electricity; make sure you have a backup phone that requires no electricity.
- Keep coins in your Go-bag. Payphones may work before other phone lines.
- Do not count on your cell phone - increased traffic on cell phone networks can quickly overload wireless capacity.
- Record an outgoing message on your voicemail so that callers can be re-assured of your safety status.
- Learn how to use text messaging. It uses a different part of the cell phone network and it might be possible to send and receive text messages when voice channels for mobile phones and landlines are jammed.
- Check all your telephones to be sure they are not off the hook and tying up a line.

### **Specific Event Information**

The information found [here](#) for specific events is very valuable. In addition to that, information, you may also wish to consider some of the following events. Remember that these are only guidelines and are meant to help you. Only you know your specific circumstance.

### **Storm / Flooding**

Among other things, severe storms can cause landslides, flooding, uprooted trees, and downed utility lines. Entities such as the Weather Network offer services that can send weather information, including warnings directly to your email or wireless device.



- If water has entered a garage or basement, do not walk through it because it may contain hazardous materials.
- Do not try to drive over a flooded road. Even a small amount of flowing water is capable of carrying a vehicle away. If your car stalls, abandon it immediately. Attempting to move a stalled vehicle in flood conditions can be fatal.
- If you are asked to leave your property, disconnect all electrical appliances.
- Do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you must walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.
- Stay clear of water that is in contact with downed power lines.
- Do not allow children to play around high water, storm drains or any flooded areas.
- If you are asked to leave your property, shut off electric circuits. If advised by your local utility, shut off gas service as well.

#### **Evacuation**

Immediate risk: If you smell gas, smoke or see fire or otherwise fear for your safety, evacuate household occupants immediately. From a safe location, call 9-1-1 and report the incident.

General evacuation orders:

If local officials issue evacuation orders, use the evacuation routes and methods specified; If time allows:

- Wear sturdy shoes, long-sleeve shirts and pants.
- Bring car keys, credit cards, road maps, cell phone, charger and important phone numbers.
- Bring your Go-bag.
- If you have a pet, make sure it is wearing a collar, bring it in a pet carrier labelled with your name and the pet's name. Bring your pet's Go-bag.
- Lock your home and shut off the water and electricity, but leave gas on unless instructed otherwise.
- Leave a note or tell a neighbour where you are going.
- Once you arrive at a safe location, call your out-of-area emergency contact.

#### **Disaster Shelters**

The County or other agencies may set up suitable shelters based on areas of need and estimated numbers of displaced persons. Each site must be inspected for safety prior to being opened to the public. Therefore, it is not possible to say with advance certainty, which sites will actually operate as disaster shelters. As soon as disaster sites have been formally designated, this list will be announced through local media to the public. If it is unsafe to shelter-in-place, and you do not have an alternative, evacuate to a designated emergency shelter.

- Tell your out-of area-contact where you are going.
- Take your Go-bag with you to the shelter.
- Initially, emergency shelters may not be able to provide basic supplies and materials. Consider bringing extra items (e.g. blanket, pillow, air mattress, towel, washcloth, diapers, food and supplies for infants.)

#### **Shelter-in-Place**

One of the instructions you may be given in an emergency is to shelter-in-place. This means you should stay indoors until authorities tell you it is safe or you are told to evacuate.

- Select a small, interior room, with no or few windows.
- Close and lock all windows and exterior doors. Ensure that you are able to seal them and have the material to do so.
- Turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems. Close the fireplace damper.
- Retrieve your family disaster supply kit and make sure the radio is working.
- Bring your pets.



- It is ideal to have a hard-wired select (cellular telephone or damaged during an emergency)
  - Use duct tape and plastic sheeting cracks around the door and any vents into the room.
  - Listen to your radio or television for further instructions or updates.
  - If you are in your car, close windows and turn off vents and air conditioning.
- telephone in the room you  
equipment may be overwhelmed  
(heavier than food wrap) to seal all

### **Power Outage**

Power outages can occur due to rolling blackouts, extreme weather conditions, or can accompany other disasters. If there is no power in your area:

- Turn off and unplug appliances and computers. Leave one light on to indicate when power has been restored.
- Use candles with caution, as they are fire hazards.
- Do not use a gas stove or BBQ for heating or operate generators indoors (including the garage.) All could cause carbon monoxide poisoning.
- If a traffic signal is not working, treat it as a stop sign.
- See the Food section to learn about food safety when your refrigerator's power is off.

### **Fire**

If your smoke alarm goes off or you see a fire:

- Remain calm and get out.
- If you see smoke under the door, find another way out.
- Feel the door with the back of your hand before you open it. If it is hot, find another way out.
- Drop to the floor to avoid smoke and fumes. Crawl to safety.
- If your clothes catch on fire, STOP where you are, DROP to the ground and ROLL repeatedly to smother the flames.
- Call 9-1-1 from a safe location. Stay on the line until the operator hangs up.
- If you are trapped in a burning building, stay near a window and close to the floor. If possible, signal for help.
- Do not go back inside the building unless instructed that it is safe to do so.