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Pocket Guide to Emergencies

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Know the Risks

Across Canada, we face a number of natural hazards, which can vary from region to region. Knowing what to do during an emergency is an important part of being prepared. Find out more about risks in your region and how to prepare by visiting [GetPrepared.ca](#). Then use this guide for information on what to do in different situations.

During an emergency

The following steps should be taken in emergency situations:

1. Make sure you are safe before assisting others.
2. Follow your emergency plan.
3. Get your emergency kit.
4. Monitor radio, television and online for information from authorities. Follow their instructions.
5. Stay put until it is safe or you are ordered to evacuate.
6. Limit phone calls to urgent messages only. Keep the lines free for emergency responders.

Severe Storms

During severe storms

- If possible, take shelter in a building and stay indoors.
- Monitor radio, television and online for weather warnings and instructions from authorities.
- If you have time, secure items that might be blown around or torn loose, such as lawn furniture.
- Stay away from windows, doors, and fireplaces.
- If you are driving, stop your car away from trees or power lines.

Blizzards

If you are inside:

- Have your emergency kit ready.
- If you have time, string a rope between your house and any outbuildings you may have to go to during the storm.

If you must go outside:

- Be aware that you can become quickly disoriented and may get frostbite and hypothermia.
- Wear a hooded jacket, hat, mittens and warm footwear.
- Do not try to walk to another building in low visibility without something to guide you.
- If you must travel, do so in daylight and let someone know your plans.

If your vehicle becomes stuck:

- Stay in your vehicle. Open the window slightly for fresh air. Run the engine for 10 minutes every half hour unless the exhaust pipe is blocked.
- To keep warm, exercise your hands and feet periodically.
- If shovelling, avoid overexerting yourself. Overexertion in the bitter cold can cause death as a result of a heart attack or hypothermia from sweating.
- Keep a lookout for traffic or searchers.

Ice Storms

If you are inside:

- Stay indoors unless you are told to evacuate.

If you must go outside:

- Pay attention to high branches or wires that could break and fall.
- Stay well away from power lines, as hanging wires may be charged (live).
- Avoid driving. Wait several hours after freezing rain ends to allow for road maintenance.

Hurricanes

If you are inside:

- Stay in a safe place; hurricane winds can quickly change in opposite direction or grow stronger.
- Avoid using a corded phone and stay away from items that conduct electricity.
- If you live on the coast or in a low-lying area near the coast, move inland and to higher ground.

If you are outside:

- Do not go to the shore to watch the storm.
- If you are on the water, head for shore immediately.

Thunder and Lightning Storms

If you are inside:

- Unplug radios, TVs, and appliances. Use a battery-operated or wind-up radio to listen for weather warnings and instructions from authorities.
- Avoid using a corded phone and stay away from items that conduct electricity.
- If there is hail, stay away from windows, glass doors, and skylights.

If you are outside:

- Find safe shelter immediately, preferably in a building with plumbing and wiring.
- If you are driving, stop your vehicle away from trees or power lines.
- If you are on the water, head for the shore immediately and find safe shelter.

Tornadoes

If you are inside:

- If you are in a high-rise, do not use elevators.
- Go to the basement or small interior ground floor room. Take shelter under a table or desk.
- Stay away from windows, outside walls, fireplaces and doors.
- Avoid using a corded phone and stay away from items that conduct electricity.
- Limit phone calls to urgent messages only.

If you are outside:

- If time permits, go to the nearest solid shelter. If not, take cover in a low lying area such as a ditch and protect your head. Beware of flooding and downpours and be prepared to move.
- Do not shelter under a bridge as winds can accelerate.
- Do not shelter in a mobile home that does not have a solid foundation.

Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear (CBRN) Incident

CBRN substances are a health risk if they are inhaled, ingested or come into contact with skin.

In all cases, consider the following:

- **Time:** minimize exposure to a CBRN substance
- **Distance:** remain as far away as possible
- **Shielding:** protect yourself from the substance

If you are in an enclosed, affected area:

- Cover exposed skin and protect your airways (e.g. by using a damp cloth) and minimize contact with the substance.
- Turn off or move away from internal air conditioning or heating vents.
- Immediately contact emergency services.
- If you experience symptoms of exposure to CBRN substances (e.g. dizziness, perspiration, vomiting, change in breathing, heart rate, or skin tone), seek immediate medical attention.

If you are in an open, affected area:

- Follow the same steps as for an enclosed area.
- Move away from the release site as quickly as possible.

If you are in your vehicle:

- Keep vehicle vents and windows closed.
- Do not use vehicle heating or air conditioning.
- Drive away from the release site.

In all situations, monitor radio, television or online for information from authorities. They will tell you whether you need to shelter-in-place or evacuate.

Shelter-in-place

If you are told to shelter-in-place due to a CBRN incident:

- Close and lock all windows and exterior doors.
- Turn off all fans, heating and A/C systems to avoid drawing in outside air.
- Get your emergency kit.
- Go to an interior room without windows above ground level.
- Use duct tape or wet cloths to seal cracks around doors and vents.
- Limit phone calls to urgent messages only.

Earthquakes

If you are inside:

- As soon as you feel shaking, **DROP** down and crawl under furniture. **COVER** your head/neck. **HOLD ON** to the object you are under to stay covered.
- Stay away from windows and shelves with heavy objects.
- If you can't go under something strong, crouch or flatten yourself against an interior wall.
- **If you are in a wheelchair:** lock the wheels and protect the back of your head and neck.
- **If you are in bed:** stay there and protect your head with a pillow, unless you are below a heavy object that could fall on you. In that case, move to the nearest safe area.
- **If you are in a building:** stay inside.
- **If you are in an elevator:** hit the button for every floor and get out as soon as you can.

If you are outside:

- Stay away from power lines, buildings and the shore.
- **If you are in a vehicle:** pull over and stay inside. Place a HELP sign in your window if you need assistance.

When the shaking stops:

- Be prepared for aftershocks.
- Stay calm. Help others if you are able.
- Place a HELP sign in your window if you need assistance and call 9-1-1.
- Do not light matches or turn on light switches. Any flame or spark can cause an explosion if there are gas leaks.
- Exit your home and check for damage. If you suspect the structure is unsafe, or there is a gas leak, evacuate your home.
- If you feel it is safe to stay where you are, monitor radio, television and online for weather warnings and instructions from authorities.
- If tap water is available, fill bathtub or containers in case supply gets cut off.

Floods

If flooding is imminent:

- Turn off basement furnace and main gas valves. Unplug appliances and electronics.
- Shut off electricity only if flooding has not yet begun and area around electrical panel is dry.
- Move furniture and important belongings above ground level.
- Plug basement sewer drains and shut off toilet connections.

If flooding has already begun:

- If you have not already shut off electricity, do not attempt to do so once water has entered your home.
- Do not enter a flooded basement that may contain live wires or appliances.

After a flood:

- Do not return home until authorities advise it is safe.
- If the main power switch was not turned off prior to flooding, do not re-enter your home until a qualified electrician has determined it is safe.
- Use extreme caution when returning to your home after a flood.

Power Outages

- Check if the power outage is limited to your home. If your neighbours have power, check your circuit breakers.

- If your neighbours' power is also out, contact your electrical supply company.
- Turn off all tools, appliances, electronics, and all but one light inside and outside.
- Use your thermostat to turn off heating or air conditioning.
- Avoid opening your freezer or fridge.
- Do not use barbeques, camping heating equipment, or home generators indoors. They can produce dangerous levels of carbon monoxide.
- Monitor a crank or battery-powered radio and online for weather warnings and instructions from authorities.
- If possible, use a battery or crank-powered light source. If you must use candles, use proper candle holders. Never leave lit candles unattended. Always extinguish candles before going to bed.

When the power returns:

- In cold weather, turn heating back on first, then wait 10 minutes before reconnecting everything else.
- Check food supplies. If a freezer door has been kept closed, food should stay frozen for 24-36 hours. Food contaminated with bacteria does not necessarily smell or look spoiled. When in doubt, throw it out.

Tsunamis

- Do not go near the shore to watch a tsunami. Move inland to higher ground. If you can't get to higher ground, stay inside on the landward side of the building, away from windows.
- If you are in a safe place when a tsunami hits, stay put.

After a tsunami hits:

- You may encounter flood waters. Before going anywhere, pay attention to radio, television or online for information or evacuation instructions.
- Be aware that you may get hypothermia from being in cold water.

Wildfires

- Be prepared to evacuate at any time. If told to evacuate, take your emergency kit with you.
- Monitor radio, television or online for up-to-date information on the fire, possible road closures and instructions from authorities.

If you have time:

- Close all windows and doors.
- Move combustible materials such as light curtains and furniture away from windows.
- Turn onlights in the house, porch, garage and yard to aid visibility.
- Turn off propane or natural gas.

- Move all combustibles outside away from the house, including firewood, propane barbecues and lawn furniture.
- Cover vents, windows, and other openings of the house with duct tape and/or precut pieces of plywood.
- Park your vehicle positioned forward out of the driveway. Keep windows closed and pack valuables and your emergency kit in the vehicle.

Evacuation Order

If ordered to evacuate:

- Follow instructions from authorities.
- Take your emergency kit, plan, medications, wallet, identification, and cell phone.
- Shut off water, electricity and gas if instructed to do so.
- Notify your out-of-town contact and leave a note inside indicating when you left and where you are going (if time permits).
- Lock your home.
- Use specified routes and pay attention to information on road closures. Stay off any identified “disaster response routes” which are for emergency responders only.
- Do not cross a flooded area by foot or in a vehicle. If your vehicle stalls in fast-rising waters, abandon it.
- Register with a local reception centre in person or by phone.
- Do not return home until authorities advise it is safe.

Make a Plan

Every household needs an emergency plan. It will help you and your family know what to do in an emergency – and it only takes 20 minutes. Make the plan part of your emergency kit.

Visit GetPrepared.ca to complete an emergency plan online. Then, fill in key information in this booklet for quick access.

Emergency Numbers

During an emergency monitor radio, television and online for information from authorities. Call 9-1-1 (where available) to report a fire, a crime, or to save a life. For non-emergency calls, use the 10-digit number in your local phone directory:

Ambulance:

Police:

Fire:

Family Contact Information

Name:

Phone:

Name:

Phone:

Name:

Phone:

Out-of-Town Emergency Contact

Name:

Home:

Work:

Cell:

Email:

Street address:

Other Emergency Contacts

Doctor:

Veterinarian:

Poison control:

Pharmacy:

Get a Kit

In an emergency you will need some basic supplies. You may need to get by without power or tap water. Be prepared to be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours. Make sure your kit is easy to carry and everyone in the household knows where it is.

Emergency Kit List

- Water – at least 2 litres per person per day
- Food that won't spoil, such as canned food, energy bars and dried foods
- Manual can opener
- Crank or battery-powered flashlight (and extra batteries)
- Crank or battery-powered radio (and extra batteries)
- First aid kit
- Extra keys (vehicle and home)
- Cash in smaller bills, and change for payphones
- A copy of your emergency plan and contact information
- Special items such as prescription medication, infant formula, and equipment for people with disabilities

My emergency kit is located:

Next update (one year from now):

Emergency Preparedness for Children

Helping kids prepare for emergencies

- Teach them about natural hazards like earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, ice storms, and blizzards --and what to do when they occur.
- Make a family emergency plan, and preparing an emergency kit together.
- Teach your kids what to do in case of a fire.
- Make sure your kids know what to do at school if an emergency happens.

Helping kids cope

Children in particular can feel the stress deeply -- and may react in different ways. The key to helping your children cope is simply by being there and making them feel safe.

- Take their fears seriously and tell them that it's okay to be scared.
- Explain the events as best you can and acknowledge what's frightening about what happened.
- Tell your kids what you think and feel. Doing so helps them feel less alone if they know that their feelings are similar to yours.
- Maintain familiar routines, like mealtimes and regular bedtime hours.
- While parents can play a huge role in helping children deal with anxiety, it may be helpful to talk to a professional such as a psychologist or social worker, who can help children understand and cope with their emotions.

Did You Know...

Younger children may cry, whine or wet the bed in emergency situations. Older children may experience an intense fear of injury or separation anxiety. Other common reactions include a fear of the dark, physical pain and eating or sleeping problems.

Pets and Service Animals

Preparing for emergencies

The following steps will help keep pets safe.

- **Identify your pet.** If you become separated from your pet during an emergency, their identification may be the only way to find them. Make sure each animal wears a collar and identification tag at all times.
- **Pet emergency kit**
 - A sturdy crate or carrier
 - A strong leash or harness

- ID tag and collar
- Food and water for at least 72 hours (4L/day per average dog, 1L/day per average cat)
- Bowls and can opener for food
- Newspaper, paper towels, plastic bags, litter, and/or litter box
- Special medications, dosage, and veterinarian's contact information
- Pet file (including recent photos of the animal, your emergency numbers, contact information for friends who could house your pet, copies of any licenses, and vaccination records)
- A pet first-aid kit
- Blanket and toy
- **Plan for evacuations.** The best way to protect your pet in an emergency is to bring it with you. Most evacuation shelters will only accept service animals. Make a list of where your pet can be taken in case you need to evacuate. This list can include:
 - Hotels that accept animals even during emergencies
 - Boarding centres and animal shelters
 - Animal clinics
 - Family members and friends
- Include your pet in your family emergency plan exercises.

During an emergency

- **Keep your pet inside during severe weather.** Animals are very sensitive to sudden changes in temperature and often isolate themselves when scared. Never leave a pet outside or tethered during a storm.
- **Separate cats and dogs.** Keep smaller pets such as hamsters away from larger animals. Stress can lead to unusual behaviour.
- Keep newspaper inside for hygiene purposes and feed your pet wet food in order to reduce the amount of water it may need.
- **If ordered to evacuate**, try to take your pet with you. If you must leave your pets in the house, do not tether or cage them. Leave a sign in the window and a note on the door indicating what animals are inside. Provide water and food in timed dispensers. Leave toilet seats up.

Keeping in Touch in Emergencies

Being able to communicate with family, friends and emergency responders during an emergency is critical. However, keep in mind that everyday communication devices may not work properly during an emergency.

- If possible, use non-voice channels like text messaging, email or social media, as these use less bandwidth than voice communications and may work even when phone service has been disrupted.
- If you must use a phone, keep your conversation brief and convey only vital information. Keeping your calls short also saves the battery life of your mobile phone.

- If you are unable to complete a call, wait 10 seconds before redialing to help reduce network congestion.
- Keep extra batteries or a charger for your mobile device in your emergency kit. Consider getting a solar-powered, crank, or vehicle phone charger, or if you do not have a cell phone, keep a prepaid phone card in your kit.
- If you have been evacuated and have call-forwarding on your home phone, use it to forward calls to your cell phone.
- If you do not have a hands-free device in your car, stop driving or pull over to the side of the road before texting, making a call or using the device.
- Keep your contacts up to date on your phone, email and other channels.
- Note, cordless phones rely on electricity and will not work during a power outage. If you have a landline, keep at least one corded phone in your home.

Additional tips for smartphones

- Save your safe meeting location(s) on your phone's mapping application.
- Conserve your battery by reducing the screen's brightness and closing apps you are not using.
- To reduce network congestion immediately after an emergency, avoid using your mobile device to stream videos, download entertainment, or play video games.

Side tip (Technology in emergencies)

- Sign up for Direct Deposit and electronic banking through your financial institution so you can access your funds and make electronic payments from wherever you are. For more information on how to stay safe online, visit GetCyberSafe.ca.

Information Sources

- Opt-in to a notification system if offered by your local emergency management offices. To find out if your community offers such services, contact your local emergency management organization.
- Include these sites in your emergency plan and bookmark them for quick access:
- **Public Safety Canada's** website on emergency preparedness, GetPrepared.ca and the mobile version, m.GetPrepared.ca
- **Canadian Red Cross:** www.redcross.ca
- **Environment Canada:** www.ec.gc.ca
- **St. John Ambulance:** www.sja.ca
- **The Salvation Army:** www.salvationarmy.ca
- **The Canadian Hurricane Center:** www.ec.gc.ca/ouragans-hurricanes
- Your local emergency management agency
- Sign up to receive regular safety tips from GetPrepared.ca.
- Follow Public Safety Canada and GetPrepared on Twitter:
 - **Public Safety Canada:** @Safety_Canada
 - **GetPrepared:** @Get_Prepared

- Your local emergency management organization may also use Twitter

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