



BE READY

POCKET GUIDE

www.redcross.ca/ready

This guide is intended to give you general information about how you can increase your preparedness to lessen the impact of a disaster or emergency.

This information is designed to complement instructions from local, provincial and federal authorities, community leaders, emergency services personnel, police and fire departments. During a disaster or emergency, consult your doctor or other health care professional if you have specific needs or are experiencing a difficult or stressful situation.

If you need immediate assistance, call 911 or your local emergency number and follow the instructions of local authorities and emergency services personnel.

DISCLAIMER: The material in this document is for information only and should not be relied upon as professional advice. By accessing the information in this document, you agree that the Canadian Red Cross and its agents shall not be liable for any injury, loss, claim, or damages of any kind arising from this information, or any other claim directly or indirectly related to the use of this information.



“BE READY” PRACTICAL GUIDE

Designed to be stored in your emergency evacuation kit, or be kept in a safe place in your home. This guide will help you prepare for a wide range of emergency situations.



GET CERTIFIED

To know more about First Aid and CPR training, visit:
redcross.ca/learnfirstaid

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STEP 1: KNOW THE RISKS

Many Canadians have faced emergency situations in the past, from floods to wildfires to power outages. Make sure that you understand the risks in your area to help you be ready.

- **Talk to municipal authorities** to find out what types of hazards are common in your area and what emergency plans are in place, including the locations of emergency shelters and evacuation routes.
- **Assess your situation** and the likelihood that your household will be exposed to these hazards.



EARTHQUAKES

Earthquakes can strike suddenly and without warning.

In Canada, the areas most at risk for earthquakes are the coast of British Columbia, the St. Lawrence and Ottawa valleys, and parts of the three northern territories. Coastal British Columbia also faces the threat of a tsunami, a series of large waves caused by a significant earthquake beneath the ocean floor.



FLOODS

Floods are one of the most common and costly disasters in Canada, especially in terms of property damage. Floods can occur in any region, rural or urban, at virtually any time of the year. Floods can occur when there is heavy or steady rain for several hours or days. Hurricanes, violent storms, ice jams, or dams breaking can also lead to flooding, and urban areas on low-lying land are particularly prone to flooding.





HOME FIRES

Home fires can happen anywhere and anytime, but are most likely to occur during winter in Canada. The most common causes are leaving the stove on unsupervised, improperly putting out cigarettes, and letting candles burn unattended.



WINTER STORMS OR EXTREME COLD

Across Canada, winter storms can occur suddenly and last for multiple days. These storms can lead to heavy snowfall, dangerously low temperatures, high winds, ice pellets, and freezing rain. Winter storms can impact entire communities or regions and make roads impassable. Blizzards and ice storms are common in Canada.





HEAT WAVES

Canadian summers are often very hot, and extended heat waves can pose medical risks. Prolonged exposure to extreme heat can cause serious physical problems such as heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.



THUNDERSTORMS

Thunderstorms occur most often in the spring and summer and can strike anywhere. They can come up quickly and cause severe damage and prolonged power outages. They often include high winds, lightning, heavy rain, hail, and even tornadoes.



POWER OUTAGES

Power outages can occur anywhere and anytime, and can last a few hours or days. During a power outage, you may be left without heat, air conditioning, lighting, hot water, or even running water. In winter, a power outage can quickly make your home uninhabitable.

STEP 2:

MAKE A PLAN

It is important to know what to do in the event of an emergency or evacuation. You should also take your household and neighbours into account when making your emergency plan and share it with them.

- **Make note of the hazards** that could affect your household or community.
- **Identify any special medical, social, or functional needs**, that you may have.
- Identify actions you can take to increase your **capacity during and after a disaster or emergency**.
- **Determine the best ways to evacuate** your home in case of an emergency, such as a fire.

- **Choose a safe place to meet outside your home,** and another outside your area, and tell your friends and family.
- **Include a plan for evacuating your pets.**
- Practice your **evacuation plan.**

KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY



Find local resources that can help you prepare or be useful in a disaster or emergency.



Talk to your friends and neighbours to see who can lend you a hand.



Learn about your community's emergency plan and evacuation routes.



Find out what communication methods your municipality plans to use during a disaster or emergency.



IDENTIFY AN OUT-OF-TOWN EMERGENCY CONTACT



Choose someone who lives in an area far enough away from yours and who is therefore unlikely to be affected by the same disaster or emergency.



Ensure that the designated person knows that they are your out-of-town emergency contact.



Make sure your loved ones and all members of your household know how to get in touch with your out-of-town emergency contact.



STEP 3:

GET A KIT

The Canadian Red Cross recommends keeping an emergency evacuation kit and an emergency shelter-in-place kit in your home so that you are prepared for any disaster or emergency that could arise.

If you need to evacuate your home, you may only have a few minutes to gather everything you need before leaving. This is why it is important to have an **emergency evacuation kit** by your main exit that is ready to grab in an evacuation.

The **emergency shelter-in-place kit** is useful when sheltering at home is recommended. These items should ideally be put in a bag or container, but can also be kept in different places in your home. A list that shows the exact location of each item should be included in the emergency evacuation kit. This kit must contain enough supplies to meet your household's needs for at least three days.

The following lists contain suggested items for your emergency kits. Make sure to check the items in your kits every year and restock them after each use.

TO ASSEMBLE YOUR EMERGENCY EVACUATION KIT, USE THE FOLLOWING LIST:

- Copies of your car and house keys
- First aid kit
- Cash in small bills
- Important documents for each household member (copies of birth/marriage certificates, passports, health cards, driver's licences, wills, deeds, insurance)
- Copy or original of your emergency plan
- Portable cellphone charger and charging cable
- Three-day supply of medication (if needed)
- Masks and hand sanitizer
- Non-perishable food (such as energy bars and dehydrated foods)
- Water bottle, reusable if possible
- Personal hygiene items
- Paper and pens
- Whistle
- Pet food (if needed)
- List of items for the emergency shelter-in-place kit

STEP 3

If you want to be extra prepared,
here are some other items to consider:

- Emergency blanket
- Pocket knife
- Ice grips for boots
- Change of clothing and shoes

To the emergency evacuation kit, attach a list of the **items to gather in an evacuation that you use every day** and their locations in your home.

Examples of items to gather:

- Cellphone
- Vision and dental aids (glasses, dentures, contact lenses, etc.)
- Medication (if the kit does not contain a supply)
- Functional aids (cane, walker, hearing aids, respiratory aids, glucose monitor, etc.)
- Ice grips for boots (in winter)

TO ASSEMBLE YOUR EMERGENCY SHELTER-IN-PLACE KIT, USE THE FOLLOWING LIST:

- Two litres of water per person per day for three days, or the equivalent in jugs to fill for drinking
- Ready-to-eat non-perishable food for three days

- Pet food for three days (if needed)
- Manual can opener and utensils
- Flashlight with batteries
- Crank or battery-operated radio

If you want to be extra prepared,
here are some other items to consider:

- Two litres of water per person per day for three days, or the equivalent in bottles to fill for cooking and washing
- Warm blanket or sleeping bag
- Duct tape
- Scissors
- Candles and matches
- Toilet paper
- Multitool or basic tools
- Water treatment tablets, filters or drops
- Plastic tarps
- Garbage bags

Get your kits or items at

shop.redcross.ca

STEP 4:

WHAT TO DO



UNDERSTAND WEATHER ALERTS

WEATHER WATCHES

A watch alerts you to the possibility that a type of hazard or weather event may occur.

- Be alert.
- Follow weather reports.
- Start making preparations and be ready to take action as soon as conditions worsen.

WARNINGS

A weather watch can be upgraded to a warning when a type of hazard or severe weather event is about to occur or is already occurring.

- Take immediate action to ensure your safety when a warning is issued.
- Evacuate your home if the local authorities ask you to do so.



EARTHQUAKES

BEFORE an earthquake

- Identify safe places to take shelter if an earthquake occurs. This can be under furniture or against an interior wall away from windows, bookcases or tall furniture that could fall on you.
- Learn how to turn off your home's water and electricity.
- Secure top-heavy furniture to the wall to prevent tipping.
- Place beds and chairs away from chimneys and windows. Don't hang heavy pictures or items over beds.

DURING an earthquake

- Drop under a piece of heavy furniture such as a desk, table, or bed.
- Cover your head and torso to protect yourself from falling objects.
- Hold on to the furniture you are under to remain covered.
- If unable to get under a sturdy piece of furniture or object, flatten yourself or crouch against an interior wall.
- Stay away from windows and heavy objects.
- If using a wheelchair, lock the wheels and protect the back of your head and neck.

STEP 4

- If outside, go to an open area away from buildings, power lines, trees, and streetlights and drop to the ground.
- Avoid bridges, buildings, overpasses, underpasses, or anything that could collapse.
- Stay away from downed power lines.
- If in a tsunami risk area, go inland and to higher ground immediately. Tsunamis can occur minutes after an earthquake or several hours later.

AFTER an earthquake

- Remember that aftershocks are common.
- If you had to evacuate your home or area due to a tsunami threat, wait for authorization from authorities before returning home.
- Make sure that your home has no structural damage or hazards. If your home is unsafe, do not re-enter.
- If you have to evacuate your home, take your emergency evacuation kit with you.
- Wear sturdy shoes and protective clothing when clearing debris.
- Do not light matches or turn on lights until you are sure that there are no gas leaks or flammable liquid spills.
- If you still have running water, fill your bathtub and clean containers in case the supply gets cut off.
- If you need assistance, place a sign that says “Help” in your window.



FLOODS

BEFORE a flood

- Talk to your loved ones and all members of your household about what you would do in the event of a flood.
- Obtain home insurance with flood coverage.
- Talk to your insurance provider about your risk and additional steps you can take to protect your home.
- Protect your valuables by storing them in waterproof containers placed above potential water levels.
- Follow local news and weather reports to be aware of flood alerts.
- In the event of a warning, follow the directions of local authorities.



DURING a flood

- Follow local news reports to stay up to date on flood warnings and the latest developments. Follow safety instructions.
- Be prepared to evacuate at a moment's notice.
- Head for higher ground and stay there if a flood or flash flood warning is issued for your area.
- Place your valuables on the top floor.
- Remain on the top floor and wait for instructions from local authorities.
- Avoid walking and driving through floodwaters, which could be deeper than you think. Turn around, don't drown! Be especially cautious at night, when it is harder to recognize flood danger.
- Keep children and pets away from floodwaters.



AFTER a flood

- Continue to take precautions and follow directions from local authorities.
- Notify your insurance company.
- Only return home once local authorities have advised you that it is safe to do so.
- Do not use food or water that may be contaminated. When in doubt, throw it out!
- When cleaning your home, maintain good hygiene by minimizing contact with floodwater or anything that may have come in contact with it. Wear protective clothing, such as rubber/sturdy boots, safety glasses, a hard hat, rubber gloves and a dust mask.
- Do not use any appliances or heating, pressure, or sewage systems until their electrical components are dry and have been inspected by an electrician.
- Check with local authorities or community leaders about how to properly dispose of damaged or contaminated items.
- Check with local authorities to see whether you are eligible for a disaster financial assistance program.



HOME FIRES

BEFORE a home fire

- Learn fire safety methods. Make sure that you are familiar with “stop, drop, and roll” in case your clothing catches fire.
- Keep flammable items such as clothing, towels, and plastic at least a metre away from heat sources, such as space heaters and stovetops.
- Do not smoke in bed.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in an accessible location.
- Never leave lit candles unattended.
- Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors on each level of your home. Test them twice a year.
- Create a fire evacuation plan. Mark the locations of primary and secondary exits and choose a meeting place near your home.
- Practice your evacuation plan.



DURING a home fire

- Follow your evacuation plan. Get out and stay out.
- Call emergency services from a neighbour's home.
- While exiting your home, crawl under the smoke.
- If smoke, heat, or flames block your exit, stay in the room with the door closed. If possible place a wet towel under the door and **call 911**. Open a window and wave a brightly coloured cloth or use a flashlight to signal for help.

AFTER a home fire

- Have injuries treated by a medical professional.
- Check with the fire department to make sure that your residence is safe to enter.
- When cleaning up, protect yourself by wearing sturdy boots, safety goggles and rubber gloves.





WINTER STORM OR EXTREME COLD

BEFORE a winter storm or extreme cold

- Winterize your home by insulating the walls and attic, caulking and weather-stripping doors and windows, and installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic film.
- Prepare your vehicle for winter weather.
- Winterize your home and car emergency kits with warm clothing and blankets.
- Buy rock salt and sand to melt ice and improve traction.
- Make sure that you have a shovel and snow removal equipment handy.
- Have an alternative heat source, such as a space heater, gas fireplace, wood stove, or generator so that you can heat one room in your home.
- Keep a fire extinguisher on hand and make sure that you know how to use it.
- Talk with your loved ones and all members of your household about your emergency plan in the event of a winter storm at home or in the car.
- Make sure that you have ice grips for your boots in case the ground freezes.
- Prepare for the possibility of a power outage, downed power lines, or damaged trees.

- Familiarize yourself with home delivery services to meet your essential needs if you have to shelter at home for an extended period (grocery stores, pharmacies, Meals on Wheels, community organizations, etc.).
- Make sure that you know who can help you clear your home's entrance, emergency exits, and stairs in the event of a heavy snowfall.

DURING a winter storm or extreme cold

- Follow local news and weather reports for current weather conditions.
- Avoid going outside or travelling unless absolutely necessary.
- If you have to go out in the storm:
 - Dress warmly to protect yourself from the elements.
 - If possible, avoid going alone.
 - Do not overexert yourself or work outside for extended periods.
 - Tell someone that you are going out and for how long.
- Keep your pets indoors.
- Never use propane, a barbecue, or a generator indoors! Carbon monoxide kills.

AFTER a winter storm or extreme cold

- Avoid travelling if possible and follow local news and weather reports for current road, sidewalk, and weather conditions.
- Check the wind chill, which combines the temperature and wind to indicate how cold it feels to the average person. Avoid unnecessarily exposing any part of your body to the cold.
- Be careful when clearing snow around your home. Take your time and avoid overexerting yourself. Take regular breaks to warm up and rest.





HEAT WAVES

BEFORE a heat wave

- Follow local news and weather reports for heat warnings.
- Find ways to keep cool before the hot weather starts. For example, get air conditioning and fans to help keep your home cool.
- Make sure that your pets have enough water and a shady place to rest.

DURING a heat wave

- The most important precaution you can take is to drink plenty of cool fluids, even if you don't feel thirsty. In general, seniors feel less thirsty.
- Close windows and blinds to keep the heat out of your home.
- Avoid going outside during the hottest part of the day (typically between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.).
- Know the humidex rating, which combines the temperature and humidity to indicate how hot it feels to the average person.
- Dress for the heat and your activity level. Wear light, loose clothing.
- If you don't have access to air conditioning or fans, spend the day in air-conditioned places such as the library or mall.

STEP 4

- When going outside, always put on a hat and sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher).
- Slow down your activities as it gets hotter. Move indoors and don't work, exercise, or play outside for extended periods.
- If you need to be outside, take frequent breaks in a cool or shady area and use a buddy system.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol, which can cause dehydration and prevent your body from controlling its temperature properly.
- Watch for symptoms of heat emergencies, such as:
 - Dizziness or fainting
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Rapid breathing and heartbeat
 - Extreme thirst
 - Decreased urination (very dark yellow colour)
 - Behavioural changes in children
- Check on your pets regularly and make sure that they have enough water and a shady place to rest.

AFTER a heat wave

- Open windows and blinds to let fresh air circulate in your home.
- Ask for help from neighbours, friends, and family if needed.
- Continue drinking water.



THUNDERSTORMS

BEFORE a thunderstorm

- Keep an eye on weather reports.
- Keep trees and shrubs trimmed to make them more wind resistant and remove damaged branches.
- Make sure that your roof is in good condition.
- If you hear thunder, go indoors.

DURING a thunderstorm

- If someone is struck by lightning, call for help immediately. If trained in first aid, provide first aid.
- Avoid using electrical equipment and landlines. Use battery-operated devices instead, such as flashlights.
- Close and stay away from outside doors and windows.
- Avoid things that could attract lightning, such as goal posts, fences, tractors, and bicycles. Avoid sheltering under tall objects like trees.
- If you are caught in an open field, kneel on the ground with your feet together, your hands on your knees, and your body bent forward.

STEP 4

- Stay away from water, which conducts electricity. Avoid swimming. If you are in a boat, get to shore as quickly as possible. Be careful around creeks and rivers that may be subject to flash flooding during a severe storm.
- If you are driving, find a safe place to pull over. Stay in the car, put on your hazard lights, and wait for the rain to subside.
- Avoid touching metal or other conductive surfaces inside or outside the vehicle.

AFTER a thunderstorm

- Turn around, don't drown! Avoid driving through flooded areas. They could be deeper than you think.
- Stay away from downed power lines and report them immediately.
- Keep an eye on kids and pets.





POWER OUTAGES

BEFORE a power outage

- Keep a flashlight handy.
- Get a battery-powered or wind-up radio.
- Protect all your electrical appliances with a surge protector.
- Contact your hydro company to discuss your needs. For example, find out whether you can use alternative energy sources to power your home. They may also be able to consider you a priority customer when restoring service in an emergency, particularly if you use electrical equipment that is essential for your health.
- If you use medical equipment that requires electricity, ask your doctor whether it can be used in a power outage and if it needs to be operated differently than usual. If it cannot be used in a power outage, ask your doctor for an alternative solution.



DURING a power outage

- Check whether the power outage is only in your home. If your neighbours have power, check your breaker panel or fuse box. If that's not the problem, contact your hydro company.
- Turn off and unplug all your appliances and electrical equipment and turn the heat down to prevent damage from a power surge when the power is restored.
- Turn off all your lights, except one inside and one outside, so that both you and hydro crews outside know when power has been restored.
- Don't open your freezer or fridge unless it's necessary. A freezer will keep food frozen for up to 36 hours if the door remains closed.
- Never use a barbecue, camping heating equipment, or a generator indoors, because they give off carbon monoxide.
- Never leave lit candles unattended.



AFTER a power outage

- Give the electrical system a chance to stabilize before reconnecting appliances. Turn the heat up first, and after a couple of minutes, reconnect the fridge and freezer. Wait 10 to 15 minutes before reconnecting all other appliances and electrical equipment.
- Close the drain valve in the basement.
- Turn on the water supply.
- Make sure that the hot water heater is full before turning it back on.
- Check food supplies in the fridge, freezer, and pantry for signs of spoilage.



PREPARING EMOTIONALLY FOR DISASTERS AND EMERGENCIES

Emergencies can be stressful and challenging. It is quite common to have unpleasant physical, psychological and emotional reactions to these types of situations.

PREPARATION MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

- During a difficult or stressful emergency, having an emergency plan will help you know exactly what to do to take care of yourself. Your preparations will also help you stay calm and reduce stress.
- An emergency can bring on the following common physical, psychological, and emotional reactions:
 - Stomachaches
 - Insomnia or fatigue
 - Sadness or depression
 - Excessive anxiety
 - Irritability or anger
 - Confusion or disorientation
 - Memory problems
 - Difficulty concentrating

- Losing track of time
- Withdrawing from others
- A worsening of chronic medical conditions like arthritis, diabetes, or high blood pressure

YOUR SUPPORT RESOURCES

- You have abilities and life experience that you can lean on in an emergency. Think about how you have dealt with stressful situations in the past and reflect on how you can reuse those same coping methods in an emergency. Remind yourself of your strengths and encourage yourself with a positive attitude.
- Having support from others is important, and it's essential to get help when you need it. Resources are available, whether that may include your family, your friends, your neighbours, community organizations, or a health care provider.
- The effects of stress can last several weeks. If they persist and prevent you from functioning normally for a long period of time, or aggravate pre-existing mental or physical health issues, seek help.
- For example, you can call a help line or obtain health information by calling **Info-Santé at 811**, or get support from **community organizations by calling 211**. Don't hesitate to reach out and express your needs.

TIPS TO HELP YOU COPE DURING A STRESSFUL SITUATION

- Get enough rest
- Do as much physical activity as possible
- Stay hydrated and eat regular, nutritious meals
- Accept help from others
- Find a support network
- Take time to do an activity you enjoy

LEARN MORE

redcross.ca/ready

For more information about disasters and services in your area, contact your local Canadian Red Cross office.

Find your local services or office at
redcross.ca/in-your-community.

OUR MISSION

We help people and communities in Canada and around the world in times of need and support them in strengthening their resilience.

In Canada

We respond to the needs of communities across the country. Whether helping people who had to evacuate after a major flood, to train children to stay home alone, or teaching people vital lifesaving skills, the Canadian Red Cross is there to ensure that basic needs are met regardless of who you are and where you live.

Around the world

We work with Canadian Red Cross partners around the globe, focusing on improving the health of mothers, newborns, and young children, as well as responding to the needs of communities impacted by disasters, conflicts or public health emergencies.



