

72 hours: Is your family prepared?

How long can your family survive without outside assistance? If an emergency happens in your community, it may take emergency workers some time to reach you. You should be prepared to take care of yourself and your family for a minimum of 72 hours.

What kinds of risks do we face in Alberta?

Although the consequences of various disasters can be similar, knowing the risks around your home as well as your community and region can help you better prepare. Across Canada, we face a number of hazards, such as blizzards, tornadoes and wildfires. In addition to natural disasters, there are other types of hazards, such as power outages and industrial or transportation accidents.

In Alberta a tornado can strike quickly with significant damage. Wildfires can threaten communities and restrict movement. Heavy rains can cause significant overland flooding. We all need to prepare for all hazards.

Won't the government take care of my family?

In Alberta, while municipalities respond to local emergencies, it is vital to the community that you and your family are prepared to be on your own for the first 72 hours. It can take some time for emergency workers to reach you. Emergency services will first attend to those in need of lifesaving assistance. Even if you are not injured, you need to make sure you have the water, food and supplies you need to survive. By being prepared to support yourself and your family for the first 72 hours, you free up emergency workers to assist those who have been injured.

The Government of Alberta is also there to help. The Alberta Emergency Management Agency coordinates the efforts of the government to assist Alberta communities to mitigate, prepare, respond and recover from major emergencies and disasters.

Make a plan for your family

Every Alberta household needs an emergency plan. It will help you and your family know what to do in case of an emergency. Take 20 minutes to make your plan with your family and practice it regularly.

Your family may not be together when an emergency occurs. Plan how to meet or how to contact one another. Discuss what you would do in different situations.

Disasters often cause confusion and distress, so it is important to take the time now to know the hazards and the risks to better prepare yourself and your family.

Use the list below to check off hazards that exist in your community. This will help you make a more specific emergency plan for your family and home.

- Blackouts
- Proximity to dangerous goods route
- Earthquakes
- Floods
- Proximity to major industrial site
- Infectious disease outbreaks
- Severe weather
- Landslides or avalanches
- Tornadoes

- Wildfires
- Other: _____

For more information on hazards in Alberta, contact your municipality's Director of Emergency Management or the Alberta Emergency Management Agency at 780-422-9000 (Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton) or visit www.aema.alberta.ca

Getting ready for an emergency

Every Canadian household needs an emergency plan. It will help you and your family to know what to do in case of an emergency. It will take only 20 minutes to make your plan. Disasters often cause confusion and distress so it is important to take the time now to know the hazards and the risks to better prepare yourself and your family.

Emergency planning doesn't have to be scary. Many families feel empowered after planning, knowing they can survive on their own. Remember to help children feel safe when talking about emergencies. Remind them that someone will be there to help in an emergency. Talk about people you can count on such as firefighters, police, teachers, neighbours and emergency workers.

A good first step is to put a list of emergency numbers by each telephone in your home. Tell your children what each number is for. You should also list the work and cell phone number for each person in your family or in your home.

Your household plan

Know your emergency exits. Draw up a floor plan of your home that shows all possible exits from each room, particularly the second floor. Plan a main exit route and an alternate exit route from each room. If you live in an apartment, plan to use the stairs instead of the elevators. If you are unable to use the stairs, notify emergency personnel ahead of time. Also, identify all evacuation routes from your neighbourhood in case you need to leave in a hurry and one is blocked.

Pick meeting places. Identify safe places where everyone should meet if you cannot go home or you need to evacuate.

- What is a safe meeting place near your home?
- What is a safe meeting place outside your immediate neighbourhood?
- What are two evacuation routes from your neighbourhood?
- Is there a friend outside your town that could act as a liaison?

Everyone in your home should know where to find the fire extinguisher. All adults and older children should know how to use it. See instructions regarding the lifetime of your fire extinguisher and check with your local fire department for more information.

Older children and adults should know how to turn off your home's water, electricity and gas. Make large, easy-to-see signs for water and gas shut-offs as well as for the breaker panel or fuse box. Teach children how and when to dial 9-1-1 as well as how to call the designated out-of-town contact.

Workplace emergencies

Learn about the emergency evacuation plans in the workplace and your role in the event of an emergency. You may want to have some basic supplies at work such as water and food that won't spoil. You are encouraged to have this dialogue with your employer and colleagues on an ongoing basis.

Plan for your children

Ask your children's school or daycare about their emergency policies. Find out how they will contact families during an emergency. Find out what type of authorization the school or daycare requires to

release your children to a designated person if you can't pick them up. Make sure the school or daycare has updated contact information for parents, caregivers and designated persons.

Plan for pets

In case of an evacuation, remember that pets are not allowed in some public shelters or hotels because of certain health regulations. Take steps to identify pet-friendly hotels or pet boarding facilities in and out of your local area. In case of an evacuation, be prepared to leave your pets with a relative or friend.

What if we have special needs?

Establish a personal support network of friends, relatives, health-care providers, co-workers and neighbours who understand your special needs.

Write down details about:

- Accommodation needs
- Insurance information
- Allergies
- Medical conditions
- Emergency contacts
- Medication
- Family medical history
- Recent vaccinations
- Health screenings
- Surgeries/Mobility Needs

Keep a copy of this information in your emergency kit and give a copy to your personal support network.

Talk to your doctor about preparing a grab-and-go bag, if possible, with a two-week supply of medication and medical supplies. Include prescriptions and medical documents. Remember that pharmacies may be closed for some time, even after an emergency is over.

Neighbourhood safety plan

Work with your neighbours to identify people who may need extra help during an emergency. To help make sure everyone is taken care of, assign "block buddies."

In an emergency

- Follow your emergency plan.
- Get your emergency kit.
- Make sure you are safe before assisting others.
- Listen to the radio or television for information from authorities. Local officials may advise you to stay where you are. Follow their instructions.
- Stay put until all is safe or until you are ordered to evacuate.

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Your family's emergency kits

All families should have two emergency kits: a ready-to-stay kit and a ready-to-go kit. These two kits will help you survive 72 hours, whether you stay in your home or need to evacuate.

Ready-to-stay kit

Your ready-to-stay kit should include the items you will need to stay safe at home for a few days. You can keep these things at home in a plastic tub or a special cabinet.

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.

You may have some of the items already, such as food, water and a battery-operated or crank flashlight. The key is to make sure they are organized and easy to find. Ask yourself, would you be able to find your flashlight in the dark?

Basic emergency kit

- Water – at least two litres of drinking water per person per day; include small bottles that can be carried easily in case of an evacuation order
- Food that won't spoil, such as canned food, energy bars and dried foods (replace food and water once a year)
- Manual can opener
- Crank or battery-powered flashlight (and extra batteries)
- Crank or battery-powered radio (and extra batteries)
- First aid kit
- Extra keys to your car and house
- Some cash in smaller bills, such as \$10 bills and change for payphones
- A copy of your emergency plan and contact information
- If applicable, other items such as prescription medication, infant formula, equipment for people with disabilities, or food, water and medication for your pets or service animal (personalize according to your needs)

Recommended additional items

- Two additional litres of water per person per day for cooking and cleaning
- Candles and matches or lighter (place candles in sturdy containers and do not burn unattended)
- Change of clothing and footwear for each household member
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each household member
- Toiletries
- Hand sanitizer
- Utensils
- Garbage bags
- Toilet paper
- Household chlorine bleach or water purifying tablets
- Basic tools (hammer, pliers, wrench, screwdrivers, work gloves, dust mask, pocket knife)
- Small fuel operated stove and fuel (follow manufacturer's directions and store properly)
- A whistle (in case you need to attract attention)
- Duct tape (to tape up windows, doors, air vents, etc.)

Pre-packaged kits

Canadian Red Cross kits are available at www.redcross.ca. St. John Ambulance and Salvation Army emergency kits can be purchased at www.sja.ca or from retailers across Canada. Visit www.GetPrepared.ca or call 1 800 O-Canada (1-800-622-6232) for a listing of retailers by province and territory.

Ready-to-go kit

Keep ready-to-go kit items in a backpack, duffle bag or suitcase, in an easy-to-reach, accessible place, such as your front-hall closet. Make sure your kit is easy to carry and everyone in the household knows where it is. Take it with you if you have to leave your home so you can be safe.

Recommended items for ready-to-go kits

- Two (2) litres of water for each person
- Food that you don't have to keep cold and a manual can opener
- Plastic or paper plates, cups, and utensils
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Radio with batteries
- A change of clothes
- A card with emergency contact information and the number of someone to call who lives out of town
- Pet food and supplies for at least three days
- Small first aid kit
- Personal identification card
- Personal hygiene items, soap and hand sanitizer
- Store medicine you usually take near your ready-to-go kit
- Cash in smaller currencies

It is also important to have an **Emergency Vehicle Kit**. The basic kit should include:

- Blanket
- Candle in a deep can and matches
- Extra clothing and shoes
- First aid kit with seatbelt cutter
- Flashlight (crank or battery-powered)
- Food that won't spoil (such as energy bars)
- List of contact numbers
- Radio (crank or battery-powered)
- Small shovel, scraper and snowbrush
- Warning light or road flares
- Water
- Whistle

Recommended additional items

- Antifreeze
- Windshield washer fluid
- Fire extinguisher
- Road maps
- Sand, salt or cat litter (non-clumping)
- Tow rope and jumper cables

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What is Shelter-In-Place?

Shelter-In-Place is the practice of going or remaining indoors during a sudden outdoor release of a hazardous substance. It has been demonstrated to be the most effective response during the first few hours of a substance release. Sheltering indoors creates a buffer between you and any toxic hazard that may be in the outside air.

The goal of Shelter-In-Place is to reduce the movement of air into and out of the building until the hazard has passed. It is based on using a building that is constructed tightly enough to withstand typical Canadian winter weather conditions.

An event such as a fire, motor vehicle crash, train derailment, industrial incident, or a natural disaster may cause a substance release. As a result, emergency responders may request that you Shelter-In-Place.

When asked to take shelter, you need to take the following steps:

1. Immediately gather everyone indoors and stay there.
2. Close and lock all windows and outside doors. If convenient, tape the gaps around the door frames.
3. Extinguish indoor wood burning fires. If possible, close flue dampers.
4. Turn off appliances or equipment that either blow out inside air or suck in outside air such as:
 - Bathroom and kitchen fans
 - Built-in vacuum systems
 - Gas stoves
 - Fireplaces
 - Clothes dryers
 - Air conditioners
5. Turn down thermostats by about five degrees Celsius to minimize the on-time of furnaces.
6. Leave open all inside doors.
7. Avoid using the telephone, except for emergencies, so that you can be contacted by emergency response personnel.
8. Stay tuned to local radio, television and Alberta Emergency Alert (click here for brochure: <http://www.emergencyalert.alberta.ca>), for possible information updates.
9. Even if you see people outside, do not leave until told to do so.
10. After the hazardous substance has passed you will receive an "all-clear" message. You may receive instructions to ventilate your building by opening all windows and doors; turning on fans and turning up thermostats. Once the building is completely ventilated, return all equipment to normal.

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