



**BE  
READY  
POCKET GUIDE**

This pocket guide is intended to give you general information about how individuals can make preparations to lessen the impact of a disaster. It is not intended to be a substitute for information from official authorities (local, provincial or federal), an emergency management staff member, police officer, or fire chief on what to do in a particular disaster. Be sure to seek the advice of your doctor or another trusted professional if you think you may have unique needs and circumstances in a disaster. Remember to call your local emergency number (like 9-1-1) in case of life-threatening emergency and to follow the direction of your local officials and emergency management professionals in case of disaster or emergency.

The Canadian Red Cross makes no guarantee, warranty or other similar representation as to the quality or completeness of the information contained in this document and under no circumstance shall the Canadian Red Cross be held liable to any person relying on the information contained herein.



## **BE READY POCKET GUIDE:**

Designed to fit in your pocket or be kept in a safe place in your home or vehicle, this guide will help you respond to a wide range of emergency situations.



## **DOWNLOAD OUR BE READY APP:**

[redcross.ca/bereadyapp](http://redcross.ca/bereadyapp)



## **GET CERTIFIED:**

For official First Aid and CPR training info, visit:

[redcross.ca/learnfirstaid](http://redcross.ca/learnfirstaid)

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# STEP 1: KNOW THE RISKS

**Canadians have faced many emergency situations in the past, from floods to wildfires to power outages. Understanding the risks in your community will help you be ready.**

As a family, discuss what types of natural and technological disasters are most likely to happen in your community.

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## 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.

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## FLOODS

Floods can occur in any region, rural or urban, at virtually any time of the year. They have affected hundreds of thousands of Canadians over the years. They occur when heavy or steady rain over-saturates the ground. Hurricanes, violent storms, ice jams or dams breaking can also lead to flash flooding. The potential for flood damage is high where there is development on low-lying, flood-prone lands.



## HOME FIRES

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Home fires can happen anywhere at anytime, but are most likely to occur during winter in Canada. The most common causes are cooking (leaving the stove unattended), improperly extinguishing cigarettes and unattended candles.



## WILDFIRES

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There are thousands of wildfires in Canada each year. The regions most at risk are Western Canada, and the Boreal forest zones of Ontario, Quebec, and the Yukon and Northwest Territories. Wildfires usually occur from May to September and can cause extensive damage and put lives in danger.



## TORNADOES

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In Canada, tornadoes typically occur in the interior of British Columbia, southern Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, southern Ontario, southern Quebec, and western New Brunswick. Tornado season is usually from April to September with peak months in June and July. Winds within a tornado can reach speeds of up to 500 km/h. Regardless of size, tornadoes have the ability to uproot trees, flip cars and damage homes.



## THUNDERSTORMS

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



## POWER OUTAGES

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Power outages can happen in any place at any time, and can last a few hours or days. During a power outage, you may be left without heating or 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 ensure that the entire family is prepared and informed in the event of a disaster or evacuation.** You may not always be together when these events take place and should have plans for making sure you are able to contact and find one another.

- ✓ Determine the best ways to evacuate your home in case of an emergency such as a home fire.
- ✓ Make sure everyone in the home knows the location of your emergency kit and water supply.
- ✓ Establish a safe place for your family to meet outside your home and outside your neighbourhood.
- ✓ Include a plan for evacuating your pets.
- ✓ Practice your evacuation plan frequently.
- ✓ If you can't evacuate your home, prepare to be self-sufficient in your home for three days (or seven to 10 days in a health emergency or winter storm).
- ✓ If a member of your family has special needs that would require extra assistance, work those details into your family emergency plan and kit.



### KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

- Work with your neighbours to identify people who may need extra help during an emergency, or who you can turn to for help.
- Identify your community's emergency plan and evacuation routes.



- Identify where emergency shelters are located.
- In the event of a disaster, listen to local radio and television and follow local municipal social media. If local officials ask you to evacuate, follow the routes and go to the location specified. Do not take shortcuts as they could take you to a blocked or dangerous area.



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## **ESTABLISH AN OUT-OF-TOWN EMERGENCY CONTACT**

- Plan for each family member to call or e-mail the same out-of-town contact person in case of an emergency.
- Choose an out-of-town contact that lives far enough away that they will not have been affected by the same event.
- Ensure that the designated person knows they are your family contact.
- Ensure that you and your family members know or carry the number and e-mail address.

## STEP 3: GET A KIT

**The Red Cross recommends that you keep an emergency kit in your home with enough supplies to meet your family's needs during an emergency for at least 3 days.** The following list contains suggested items for your emergency kit. It is important that you check it every year and resupply it after every use.

**Use this checklist to ensure you are prepared.**

- Water
- Food (non-perishable)
- Manual can opener
- Crank/battery-operated flashlight and extra batteries
- Extra keys for your house and car
- First aid kit
- Cash in small bills
- Special needs items (i.e. medications, infant formula)
- Personal hygiene items
- Important documents (i.e. copies of: birth/marriage certificates, passports, licenses, wills, deeds, insurance)
- A copy of your emergency plan
- Extra cellphone charger
- Crank- or battery-operated radio

**Additional items to consider:**

- Extra clothing/footwear for each household member
- Plastic sheeting
- Scissors & pocket knife
- Whistle
- Hand sanitizer

- Pet food & pet medication
- Garbage bags and twist ties
- Toilet paper
- Multi/basic tools (i.e. hammer, wrench, screwdriver etc.)
- Duct tape
- Sleeping bag/blanket for each household member



## VEHICLE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS KIT

**An emergency can happen at any time when you are in your car.** Be prepared to help yourself and your family if you are ever stuck in your vehicle. In addition to your emergency kit, you should also keep the following items in your car:

- Water
- Food (non-perishable)
- Blanket
- Extra clothing and shoes
- Crank/battery operated flashlight and extra batteries
- Road maps and flares
- Work gloves
- Windshield washer fluid
- Jumper cable or battery pack
- Sand, salt or kitty litter
- Shovel and ice scraper
- De-icer (methyl hydrate)

*It is important to store these supplies together in a sturdy and easy-to-carry bag, such as a backpack that can easily be used in an emergency situation. Get your kit at **shop.redcross.ca**.*

# STEP 4: WHAT TO DO



## EARTHQUAKES

### Before an Earthquake

- Identify safe places to stand or stay if an earthquake occurs. Make sure everyone has their own place. This can be under furniture or against an interior wall away from windows, bookcases or tall furniture that could fall on you.
- Teach everyone in your family how to turn off your home's water and electricity.
- Secure top-heavy furniture to 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 object you are under to remain covered.
- If unable to get under something sturdy, flatten yourself or crouch against an interior wall.
- Stay away from windows and heavy objects.
- If in a wheelchair, lock wheels and protect the back of your head and neck.

- 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 or to higher ground immediately in the event of a large earthquake. Tsunami waves could arrive at shore minutes after an earthquake or many hours later.

### **After an Earthquake**

- Remember aftershocks are common.
- If you have evacuated due to a tsunami threat, wait for authorities to give the "all clear" before returning to your home.
- Check your home for structural damage and hazards. If your home is unsafe, do not re-enter.
- Take your emergency kit and essential items with you if you have to evacuate your home.
- Wear sturdy shoes and protective clothing when clearing debris.
- Do not light matches or turn on light switches until you are sure there are no gas leaks and no flammable liquid spills.
- If tap water is still available, fill your bathtub and other containers in case the supply gets cut off.
- Place a "Help" sign in your window if you need assistance.



## FLOODS

### Before Floods

- Listen to local news and weather reports for any potential flood warnings in your area.
- When a flood warning is issued, listen to local authorities for further directions.

### During Floods

- Turn off power and gas lines in your home.
- Place your valuables on the upper floor.
- Remain on the upper floor and wait for instructions from local authorities.
- Stay away from swollen streams and rivers.  
If outside, head to an elevated area.
- Remain in a visible and safe area. Be careful when driving—puddles can be deeper than you think.
- If you are near a flooded area, park your car in an elevated location. Turn off the engine, get out of your vehicle and wait.

### After Floods

- Stay away from fallen power lines.
- Return home once officials have declared it safe.
- Look outside for damage, such as loose power lines, damaged gas lines, foundation cracks etc., before entering your home.
- Approach entrances carefully as parts of your home may be damaged.
- Discard food items that may have been in contact with flood waters. When in doubt, throw it out!

- Do not use water that may be contaminated for washing, cleaning, drinking or food preparation.
- Wear protective clothing—such as rubber boots and gloves—during cleanup.
- If you smell natural/propane gas or hear a hissing noise, leave your home immediately and call 9-1-1.
- Contact your insurance company, if necessary.
- Check with local authorities to see if you are eligible for disaster financial assistance.



## HOME FIRE

### Before a Home Fire

- Learn fire safety techniques and teach them to your family regularly. Everyone should be familiar with the technique STOP, DROP, and ROLL in case clothing catches on fire.
- Keep items that can catch on fire, such as clothing, towels and plastic, a minimum of three feet away from heat sources, such as space heaters and stove tops.
- Do not smoke in bed.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in an accessible location.
- Do not leave candles unattended.
- Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home. Test them twice a year.
- Create a fire escape plan, including a list of emergency exits and a place outside for your family to meet.
- Practice your plan every few months.

## During a Home Fire

- Follow your escape plan. Get out and stay out.
- Call for help from a neighbour's house.
- While exiting the building, crawl under low smoke.
- If smoke, heat or flames block your exit, stay in the room with the doors closed. Place a wet towel under the door and call 9-1-1. 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 your residence is safe to enter.
- Wear protective gear, including boots, safety glasses and rubber gloves when cleaning up.



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## WILDFIRES

### Before Wildfires

- Know the fire risk situation and response plans for your community, and practice your fire evacuation plan.
- Set aside household items that can be used as fire tools: rake, ax, hand saw or chain saw, bucket, and shovel. Keep fire extinguishers and hoses accessible.
- Learn fire safety techniques and teach them to your family regularly, such as STOP, DROP, and ROLL.

### During Wildfires

- Close all windows and doors in your house.



- Cover vents, windows, and other openings of the house with duct tape and/or pieces of plywood.
- Pack your valuables and park your car positioned forward out of the driveway.
- Turn off propane or natural gas.
- Turn on the lights in house/porch/garage/yard.
- Inside the house, move flammable materials such as curtains and furniture away from windows.
- Stay tuned to local radio station for up-to-date information on the fire and road closures.

### **After Wildfires**

- Let your family know you are safe.
- Contact your local government office for help in finding temporary housing if you can't return home.
- Contact your insurance company, if necessary.
- Check with local authorities to see if you are eligible for disaster financial assistance.
- Only re-enter your home if you are authorized by officials to do so.
- Wear protective gear, including boots, safety glasses and rubber gloves when cleaning up.



## **TORNADOES**

### **Before a Tornado**

- Find a gathering place for your family if there is a tornado warning. Keep this spot clutter free.
- If you are in a high-rise building, identify a place in a hallway in the centre of the building. Check if there is a building emergency plan.

## During a Tornado

- Watch for danger signs:
  - Dark, often greenish or orange-grey skies
  - Large hail
  - Large, dark, low-lying, rotating or funnel-shaped clouds
  - Roaring noise
- Move your family to your safe location, such as a basement or lower level of the building.
- Lie flat in a ditch or a low-lying area if you are outside and there is no shelter nearby.
- Get out of your car or mobile home immediately as they are unsafe.

## After a Tornado

- Stay away from damaged areas/fallen power lines.
- Listen to the radio for information and instructions.
- Inspect your home for damage once your home has been declared safe to re-enter.



## THUNDERSTORMS

### Before a Thunderstorm

- Pay attention to weather warnings.
- Keep trees/shrubs trimmed to make them more wind resistant, and remove damaged branches.
- Make sure your roof is in good condition.
- Learn the rule of 30/30. If you count less than 30 seconds between lightning and thunder, seek shelter immediately as there is potential for a strike in your area.

## During a Thunderstorm

- Use battery-operated devices such as flashlights. Avoid using electrical equipment and telephones.
- Close and stay away from doors and windows.
- Avoid things that could attract lightning. Stay away from objects that conduct electricity, 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.
- Stay away from water, a conductor of electricity. Avoid swimming. If you are in a boat, get to land as quickly as possible. Stay cautious around creeks and rivers that may be subject to flash flooding during a severe storm.
- Find a safe place to pull over and park if you are driving. Stay in the car, with your emergency flashers on, until the heavy rains subside.
- Do not touch metal or other surfaces that conduct electricity inside or outside the vehicle.

## After a Thunderstorm

- Avoid driving through puddles or pools of water; they could be deeper than you think.
- Stay away from fallen power lines and report them immediately.
- Avoid storm-damaged areas/flooded waterways.
- Always keep track of kids and pets.
- If someone is struck by lightning, immediately call for medical assistance. If trained, administer first aid treatment.



## POWER OUTAGES

### Before a Power Outage

- Keep a flashlight handy.
- Get a battery-powered or wind-up radio.
- Protect all your sensitive electrical appliances with a surge-protecting power bar.

### During a Power Outage

- Check whether the power outage is only in your home. If it is just your house, check your circuit breaker panel or fuse box. If that's not the problem, contact your hydro company.
- Turn off all your appliances and electronic equipment, and turn your heating thermostats down to prevent damage from a power surge.
- 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 is necessary. A freezer will keep food frozen for up to 36 hours if the door remains closed.
- Never use barbecues, camping heating equipment, or home generators 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 tools and appliances. Turn the heating system thermostats up first. After a couple of minutes, reconnect the fridge and freezer. Wait 10 to 15 minutes before reconnecting all other tools and appliances.
- Close the drain valve in the basement.
- Turn on the water supply.
- Make sure that the hot water heater is filled before turning on the power to it.
- Check food supplies in refrigerators, freezers and cupboards for signs of spoilage.



## **LEARN MORE:**

**[redcross.ca/ready](http://redcross.ca/ready)**



For more information about disasters and services in your community contact your local Red Cross office. Find your local office at **[redcross.ca/in-your-community](http://redcross.ca/in-your-community)**

## **OUR MISSION**

The Canadian Red Cross mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity in Canada and around the world.

### **In Canada:**

We respond to the needs of communities across the country. Whether helping people evacuated after a major flood, educating youth about bullying prevention, or teaching people vital lifesaving skills, we are there to ensure that basic needs are met regardless of who you are and where you live.

### **Around the World:**

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



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