



Be Prepared: Wildfire emergency preparedness

What to do before, during and after a wildfire

Be Prepared: Wildfire emergency preparedness | Public Safety and Emergency Services

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Overview

In Alberta, wildfire season officially runs from March 1 to October 31. While wildfire activity tends to peak during this time, fires may occur year-round, even in the winter.

Changing climate conditions means wildfire season can start earlier than March and extend beyond October, with fire bans sometimes in place before March 1. During the season, wildfire activity often peaks in the late afternoon and early evening.

Where wildfires occur

Wildfires can ignite in forests, grasslands, parks, ravines and even urban green spaces. They are most common in the spring and summer, especially when conditions are hot, dry and windy.

Wildfire causes

Wildfires are sparked by human activity and lightning strikes, and during periods of extreme heat, dry vegetation can make it easier for fires to ignite and spread rapidly. Human-caused wildfires are often the result of everyday actions like backyard debris burning, not fully extinguishing campfires, using fireworks, or operating off-road vehicles in dry areas. No matter the cause, once a wildfire starts, it can spread rapidly and with little warning.

Whether you're at home, out of town or taking a road trip, it's important to get informed about the fire conditions in your area.

We all have a role to play

While local and provincial governments take steps to prepare for wildfires and other hazards, individuals, households and organizations should be taking steps to prepare as well. When community members are better prepared for disruption, it allows emergency responders to get the situation under control more quickly, helping those impacted get back to their lives and work sooner.

Before a wildfire

Being ready to meet your household's needs for at least 72 hours, and ideally a week or more, ensures you can respond quickly and effectively if a wildfire threatens your community.

Know the risks

- Check fire danger ratings for your area and learn about your community's wildfire history. This information helps you assess current conditions, understand how common wildfire activity is in your area, and make informed decisions.
- Power outages are common during wildfires. Visit alberta.ca/PowerOutages to learn more.
- Water shortages may occur during wildfires. Visit alberta.ca/WaterShortages to learn more.

Get informed

- Download the [Alberta Wildfire Status](#) app or visit the [Alberta Wildfire website](#) for more information and to view active wildfire locations.
- Download the [Alberta Emergency Alert](#) (AEA) app for critical, life-saving alerts. Consider turning on the "follow-me" feature to receive alerts for your current location, especially while travelling in Alberta.
 - Follow AEA on [Facebook](#) and [X](#) for critical updates. These alerts are issued over cellular networks, TV, radio, social media and the AEA website. Emergency alerts may not be received in isolated areas or where cellular coverage is limited.
- Download the [511 Alberta](#) app for real-time road and traffic information such as construction, congestion and other delays.
 - Download the [WeatherCan app](#) for advisories in your chosen location(s) and visit the [Air Quality Health Index \(AQHI\) map](#) to track air quality in your community.
- Keep these apps updated on your devices so you can access information without delay when you need it most.
- Visit [FireSmoke Canada](#) for information about wildland fire weather and smoke. Monitor smoke forecasts so you can plan for poor air quality, even when fires are far away.
- Before travelling outside of Alberta, check current wildfire and smoke conditions by visiting the [Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre Active Fires Map](#) and the [Government of Canada Air Quality Forecast Map](#) so you know what conditions to expect and can adjust your plans if needed.
- Identify other trusted sources of information, such as community communication channels, local news, social media and community webpages.

It is your responsibility to know your local coverage and have alternative ways to stay informed whether you live remotely, are travelling, or spending time in the backcountry.

Make community connections

- Start a conversation with those around you about the hazards you are seeing in the news, like wildfires, severe weather or air quality advisories. Connecting preparedness to current events is an easy way to get people to think about their risks and the actions they can take to build both household and community resilience.
- Set up a buddy system with neighbours or friends; someone who can help care for pets, close windows during smoke conditions, or provide a ride during an evacuation. Strengthening these relationships before an emergency makes it easier to give and get help when it's needed most.
- Think about who around you might need extra help during a wildfire, like older adults, Elders and people with disabilities. Building relationships before an emergency can save lives.

Build emotional preparedness

- If you've experienced a wildfire or similar incident before, identify potential triggers and develop coping strategies ahead of time. A list of resources can be found here: [Mental Health and Addiction Helplines](#)
- Strengthen and practice coping skills for everyday stress like grounding, gentle movement, or slow breathing.
- Maintain regular routines as much as possible, such as meals, sleep schedules, and school or work rhythms, to support emotional well-being and reduce stress.
- Reach out for support if stress feels overwhelming. Strong emotional reactions are normal during emergencies.

Financial preparedness

- Explore your coverage. If you rent or own your own home, consider checking with your insurance provider to understand what your policy covers, the options available, the type of emergency assistance they offer and whether they offer incentives like discounts for taking prevention and mitigation measures to increase your property's resilience to wildfires.
- Lower wildfire risk where possible by taking simple mitigation steps, such as clearing debris and using fire-resistant materials. These actions reduce hazards and can help prevent costly damage over time.
- If possible, start an emergency savings fund to set aside money each month for emergency costs (i.e., if ordered to evacuate, you could expect costs for temporary housing, restaurants, laundry, fuel).
- Protect important documents and items:
 - Keep important and hard-to-replace documents such as passports, birth certificates, banking information, insurance paperwork (including policy numbers and claims contact details), an inventory list of personal belongings and recent pictures of your property's contents (take pictures annually when renewing policies) in a safe place.
 - Consider storing digital copies in a secure, cloud-based service so you can access them even if the originals are damaged or unreachable.

Consider keeping some cash available, since ATMs and card systems may not always be accessible during wildfire activity.

Build an emergency kit

Building a kit equips your household with the essentials to remain safe and independent for at least 72 hours to a week if a wildfire disrupts services or requires an evacuation. Emergency kits work best if they meet your household's unique needs and everyday routines. Keep one at home, work and in your [vehicle](#).

Consider these items:

- Store or keep bottled water for drinking, cooking and hygiene (four litres per person per day – gather more for pregnant women, those with illnesses and pets) and other non-caffeinated/non-alcoholic fluids
- High protein, [non-perishable foods](#) and snacks
- Three to seven days of clothing for each member
- Emotional coping items to help manage stress, which could include a list of support contacts, blankets or other specific items such as photos, books, journals, etc.
- Copies of important documents and identification for each household member
- Personal hygiene products, first aid kit, spare eyeglasses and contact lenses, medications and a copy of your prescriptions
- Personal protective equipment like respirators (e.g., N95, KN95 or P100) or high-quality medical masks (e.g., an ASTM-certified mask). Standard paper or cloth masks offer limited protection.
- An emergency blanket or fire-resistant covering to protect against embers if you're exposed to wildfire conditions
- A blanket to help stay warm during cooler temperatures or overnight evacuations

- Those with divergent needs might want to pack noise cancelling headsets, sunglasses for bright lights, or other self-soothing or self-regulating tools – whatever resources they need to manage in an unfamiliar environment
- Carry a paper map showing evacuation routes. Don't rely solely on GPS or navigation apps during wildfire, as closures can change quickly, and apps may not update without reliable data. If available, check [511.alberta.ca](https://www.alberta.ca/511-alberta-ca) for official travel information.

Youth considerations:

Plan for children and youth by packing age-appropriate items in your emergency kit. This helps them feel comfortable, occupied and supported during stressful or unfamiliar situations. Consider these items:

- Diapers, formula, baby food and medications
- Activities like books, cards, puzzles and board games
- A favourite stuffed animal or blanket
- Noise-reducing or noise-cancelling headphones

Animal considerations:

Animals have unique needs during emergencies. Having a dedicated emergency kit helps ensure they are cared for if routines are disrupted.

- If you have pets, visit [alberta.ca/PetPrep](https://www.alberta.ca/PetPrep) for more information.
- If you have farm animals, visit [alberta.ca/RuralPrep](https://www.alberta.ca/RuralPrep) to learn more.

Power supplies:

- Pack battery or hand-powered devices such as:
 - A hand-crank or battery-powered radio to receive local updates if power or cellular service is unavailable. Use two-way radios for short-distance communication or other options such as a satellite phone or CB (Citizen Band) radio.
 - Lanterns or solar lights to provide visibility during heavy smoke or overnight evacuations
 - A battery-operated fan to help manage heat if power is disrupted or extreme temperatures occur during a wildfire
- Charging cables and backup power sources like batteries, power banks and other ways to keep devices charged and working. Recharge these items regularly. Seasonal changes are a good reminder to review your kit and ensure everything is ready to go.
- [Adequate adapters](#) to ensure your electric vehicle can be charged at various locations

Store your kit in a safe, easy-to-access location so it's ready to go, even in the dark. Wildfire evacuations often happen later in the day during the night, when visibility is low and time is limited. Having it prepared can reduce stress and give you peace of mind.

Create a grab and go list:

If time or space makes it difficult to build and store a full emergency kit, create a grab-and-go list instead. A grab-and-go list is a written checklist of essential and irreplaceable items you would take with you if you had to leave quickly.

- Keep the list in a visible, easily accessible location and include irreplaceable items like hard drives, photo albums, journals, heirlooms, collectibles and culturally significant and sentimental belongings.
- Make sure everyone in your household knows where the list is and can quickly locate the items. This will ensure essentials are gathered without having to think under stressful emergency conditions.

Make a plan

Most households juggle busy schedules. Think about your own and where each household member goes and how many places are part of your daily routine.

Creating an emergency plan helps prepare your loved ones for wildfire by ensuring everyone knows where to go and how to respond, even if you aren't together when it happens.

Considerations:

- Which members of your household work outside the home? Is it located within or outside of your community?
- If you have kids:
 - Are they in childcare, school or university?
 - How will you reconnect with them?
 - Do you have a loved one or friend who can pick them up if needed?
 - Do you know the emergency plan for their facility and where they would go in an evacuation?
- Make an emergency contact list and add a copy to your emergency kit. Give a copy to each household member.
- Designate a trusted friend or loved one as your emergency contact to pick up your children or pets if you are unable to.
- Identify how you will stay connected with loved ones if communications are disrupted (e.g., create a group text message, social media group chat or shared email distribution list).
- Make community connections. Talk to the people who live around you to learn what skills, abilities and resources exist (e.g., satellite phone, solar antenna, licensed amateur radio operator, such as a HAM radio or Citizen Band Radio) that can help you stay connected. Sharing skills and resources with your neighbours can improve safety and communication for everyone.

Plan for unique needs:

- Talk to your health care provider on how to access prescriptions outside of your community.
- If you use mobility equipment, talk with your health care provider about suitable alternatives in case you are unable to evacuate with it.
- If you require caregiver support:
 - Check whether any documentation is needed and keep copies in your emergency kit.
 - Plan for situations where your usual caregiver may not be available. Others may need guidance on how to support you safely with non-medical devices, such as how to assist with certain types of wheelchairs.
 - Keep a written record of the medical devices and assistive equipment you use.
- If necessary, wear a medical alert bracelet or carry a medical card, service animal documentation, “my first language is” card, or other relevant identification and support information.

Planning for evacuation: Reception Centres

Before an emergency, it's helpful to understand what a reception centre is and when you may be directed to one.

During an evacuation, authorities may direct you to an Emergency Social Services (ESS) facility, such as a reception centre, where you can register, receive information and access short-term support. These spaces are designed to meet immediate, short-term needs and may feel busy, noisy and unfamiliar, especially if this is your first evacuation.

Basic needs provided during an incident are intended to sustain impacted persons for the short term. Be prepared for limited or simple supplies, such as basic meals, lodging and other essential personal services.

Knowing what to expect and planning ahead can help reduce stress, make evacuations more manageable for your household, and allow Emergency Social Services to focus on those with the most urgent needs.

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Create an [alberta.ca](https://www.alberta.ca) account:

All people living in Alberta should have an alberta.ca account. Create and verify your free account before an emergency so you can quickly access information on support and services during times of uncertainty. For support, call 1-844-643-2789 between 8:15 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Plan for transportation:

Planning how you will evacuate ahead of time helps reduce delays and confusion during a wildfire, especially if you share transportation or rely on public transit.

Transportation considerations:

- Do household members share transportation or rely on public transit? How will you evacuate if you don't have direct access to a vehicle?
- If you rely on public transportation, plan for backup transportation. Use a buddy system with neighbours or loved ones to arrange a carpool.
- If you drive a gas vehicle, keep the tank at least half full as fuel services may be limited in wildfire affected areas. Refuel whenever fuel is available to ensure you have enough to make it to your destination.
- If you drive an electric vehicle, ensure it is at least half charged and plan for alternative transportation in case charging isn't available.
- Learn how to open your garage door manually in case a power outage occurs. Locate the emergency release cord and practice disengaging the automatic opener so you can safely open and close the door by hand if needed.

Animals:

Pets, farm animals and livestock need to be part of your plan too. Planning ahead can feel overwhelming, but taking small steps now can ease stress and help protect those who depend on you.

Pet considerations:

- Do you have pets that stay inside or outside during the day? Are they at daycare or away from home? Think about how and who you could rely on to grab them if you were unable to.
- Make a list of kennels, hotels, shelters, or loved ones who can house your pets if you cannot stay together during an evacuation.
- If your pet struggles with busy settings, other animals, or handling, work with them ahead of time. Crate training, muzzle training and gradual desensitization can make an evacuation less stressful and safer for both your pet and others.

Farm animals and livestock considerations:

- Connect with your municipal agricultural department or Director of Emergency Management to find out how they support livestock during wildfires.
- Create a plan for how you would evacuate with your animals, or how their needs will be met if evacuation with them is not possible.
- Use [FireSmart](#)TM¹ methods to protect livestock enclosures and barns.

Your animals rely on you. Plan ahead and ensure they evacuate safely with your household. If possible, never leave them behind or locked up outdoors. Visit [alberta.ca/PetPrep](https://www.alberta.ca/PetPrep) and [alberta.ca/RuralPrep](https://www.alberta.ca/RuralPrep) for information on how you can prepare for them.

¹ FireSmart, Intelli-feu and other associated marks are trademarks of Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre Inc.

Property considerations:

Every home is different, and wildfire risk can vary by location. Understanding the risks around your home helps you take the right steps to protect it.

Be Prepared tips:

- Familiarize yourself with the location of your utility shutoffs and how to turn them off if instructed by authorities. Visit alberta.ca/WaterShortages for more information on how to turn off the main water supply in an emergency.

Multi-storey building:

- Know your building's evacuation plan. Review stairwell locations and exits. Don't rely on elevators during emergencies as power can disrupt operations.
- Check your building's ventilation system and ask your property manager how to shut off or block central air systems to reduce smoke infiltration.

Mobile home:

- Mobile homes are more vulnerable to heat and embers because the construction materials used are often less fire-resistant.
- If your home is moveable, keep the tires inflated and fuel topped up, so you're not delayed if you need to leave quickly.
- Have a relocation plan and know ahead of time where you will go if an evacuation order is issued.

Basement suite:

- If you live in a basement suite, you may not see outside warning signs like smoke. Make sure you're signed up for local alerts to receive emergency notifications.
- Basement suites are more likely to trap smoke because they are below ground and have limited airflow. If there is poor air quality, placing damp towels around doors and vents can help reduce smoke entering your space.
- Make sure you have a secondary way out besides the main door (like an egress window). Make sure windows aren't blocked by furniture and are easy to open if you need to escape.
- Keep a headlamp or flashlight within reach so you can safely navigate dark stairwells or hallways if you need to leave quickly.
- Create visibility for responders by ensuring your suite number is clearly marked and visible from outside. If you need assistance, this will help first responders know exactly where to go, especially if it is dark or there is heavy smoke.
- If you rent, check if your unit's smoke alarms are linked to the main household's smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. If not, consider adding your own battery-operated smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

Property mitigation tips

Wildfire damage to homes often starts with flying embers, not direct flames. Taking simple steps and proactive [FireSmart](#) actions not only reduces the risk to your own home, but also lowers the chance of fire spreading to your neighbours and beyond, helping protect the entire community when wildfires occur.

- When building or renovating, consider resilient design options and materials and avoid areas at risk or prone to wildfires to better protect your property and household.
- Programs like [FireSmart](#) help homeowners and renters by providing practical guidance on how to reduce wildfire risk around your property and increase resilience by using fire-resistant materials.
 - Learn [FireSmart](#) methods to protect your [roof](#), [siding](#), [deck](#) and [yards](#).
 - Download and complete the FireSmart [Home Ignition Zone Self-Assessment](#) to see how resilient your property is to wildland fire and mitigate wildfire risk.
- Ensure gutters and areas around your property are clear of dead leaves, pine needles and other debris.
- Remove highly flammable items in and around your property.
- Install smoke detectors and [carbon monoxide](#) alarms on every floor and near sleeping areas, if possible. Test smoke detectors once a month and replace batteries every 6 months.

- Ensure your property is clearly marked so first responders can find it during poor visibility.
- Store tools like rakes, shovels and buckets in an accessible spot for last-minute property protection.
- Prevent accidental fires. Extinguish all outdoor fires completely and follow local fire bans.

Remove items that can burn from within 1.5 metres (5 feet) of your home, such as dried branches, leaves, lawn furniture, firewood and debris.

During a wildfire

During a wildfire, you may be affected in different ways, from evacuation alerts to smoke and ash drifting into your community. Conditions can change quickly, so staying informed and ready to act is important, even if your area is not directly threatened.

Be Prepared tips

- Stay informed by following directions from local authorities and monitoring trusted sources, such as community social media and local news stations for updates.
- Contact your household, loved ones, emergency contacts and/or neighbours to ensure they are aware of the current conditions and are prepared. Coordinate care and/or pick up for dependents and your emergency kit as needed if you can't get home.
- Remind loved ones of your emergency plan and where to go if you are separated or become separated. Start a group chat to stay in touch.
- Ensure your vehicle tank is half full and your electric vehicle is charged. If you need to evacuate, there likely will be increased traffic and road congestion. Ensure your vehicle is accessible and facing the road for quick departure.

Understanding evacuation alerts and orders

Wildfires can move quickly and are often unpredictable. If a wildfire threatens your area, local authorities will issue an evacuation alert or evacuation order.

- **Evacuation alerts** help you prepare to leave on short notice, sometimes within 30 minutes to a few hours. Use this time to gather your kit, check in with loved ones and monitor trusted sources for updates.
- **Evacuation orders** are issued when there is immediate danger. If you are inside the order's boundaries, follow direction and leave the area calmly and promptly.
- **Evacuation rescinded** means once the threat has passed, an evacuation alert may be rescinded (often communicated as withdrawn or cancelled) meaning you are allowed to return home.

Visit alberta.ca/Evacuation and alberta.ca/about-emergency-alerts for more information.

If you see a wildfire in a forested area, report it immediately by calling 310-FIRE (3473). If the fire is in your community, call 9-1-1 and get to a safe place. Never attempt to fight the fire yourself.

Calling 9-1-1

- Call 9-1-1 when there is an immediate threat to someone's life or property. Do not call 9-1-1 for wildfire updates, evacuation information, or road closures.

- Be ready to describe your exact location, including address, intersections, nearby landmarks, roads, markers or blue sign addresses, if you live rurally.
- 9-1-1 may experience high call volumes during a wildfire. If you experience a delay, stay on the line. Do not hang up and redial as it can delay emergency response.
- If your call does not connect, try a landline, borrow another phone, move to a higher or open area if safe, or flag down nearby emergency personnel.
- Text with 9-1-1 is available across most of Alberta, but typically only for registered users who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired. Voice calling remains the fastest and most effective way to reach 9-1-1 for everyone else.
- Visit alberta.ca/Alberta-911-Program for more information.

If you are on evacuation alert

When an evacuation alert is issued, officials may tell you how much time you have to prepare in case the situation worsens. Use this time to get ready so you can leave quickly if needed.

At home:

- Place your emergency kit, important documents and irreplaceable items in your vehicle or keep them by the front door.
- If power is available, move your vehicle(s) out of the garage in case power is lost. Disconnect automatic garage door openers so doors can be manually opened if power is lost.
- Move flammable items away from your property (e.g., fuel sources like propane tanks and firewood)
- Close windows, doors and vents to prevent embers from entering the house.
- Leave exterior lights on to help improve visibility during heavy smoke conditions.
- Only if directed to do so by local emergency authorities, turn off utilities to limit smoke damage. For guidance on how to do so, visit alberta.ca/evacuation.

At work:

- Review your workplace's emergency procedures so you know how to act safely.
- Gather a small "go-bag" at work with water, snacks, medications, phone charger, copies of important contacts and a mask for smoke.
- Let your supervisor or coworkers know about the alert so you can leave promptly if it changes to an order.

On the road:

- Services may be disrupted. If possible, withdraw cash if you do not have any on hand.
- If you're near a wildfire or the alert affects your route, leaving earlier may reduce the risk of getting caught in heavy smoke or road closures.

If near a wildfire, follow directions from local authorities and be ready to evacuate. In serious situations, an evacuation order will be issued without a prior evacuation alert. Being prepared enables quick action, wherever you are.

If you are ordered to evacuate

Evacuation orders can be issued quickly and with little notice, depending on how conditions change. The tips below outline what to do if you are ordered to evacuate from home, work, or while travelling.

At home:

- Grab your emergency kit and important documents
- If there is time, close all windows, doors and vents to keep smoke and embers from getting inside.
- Gather all household members and pets, follow directions from authorities and leave immediately.

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- If available, go to the reception centre for support. Meals, accommodation, basic essential services will be available.
- Let a loved one or friend who is outside of the evacuation zone know where you are going and when you have made it to the destination.
- Stay away from the evacuation zone until authorities allow re-entry.
- Keep all receipts for additional expenses (meals, lodging and other expenses).

At work:

- Grab your emergency kit or the essentials (e.g., wallet, keys, phone, medications, etc.) if you don't have one.
- Avoid returning home unless authorities confirm it is safe. Roads may be closed and entering the area may increase your risk.
- Head to the designated reception centre or your household's agreed meeting spot.

On the road:

- Check [511.alberta.ca](https://www.alberta.ca) for real-time road closures, detours and traffic conditions before you travel. Conditions can change quickly during the wildfire.
- Obey all roadblocks, reduced-speed zones, pilot vehicles and directions from RCMP, flaggers or emergency officials. Entering a closed area is dangerous and delays emergency response.
- Allow for extra travel time. High traffic volumes are common during evacuations and delays can occur due to smoke, detours and emergency operations.
- Do not return home until authorities confirm it is safe. Re-entering too soon can put you and first responders at greater risk.
- Keep your fuel tank topped up to avoid running out if you need to travel a long distance or get delayed in traffic during an evacuation.
- If there is time, withdraw cash if you do not have any.
- Stay alert while driving as smoke can quickly create poor visibility. Watch out for other vehicles, pedestrians and debris.
- Use low beam headlights in smoke and fog, as high beams reflect the light back to you, creating glare. Drive slowly and keep windows and vents closed.
- If you encounter a wildfire while driving, stay in your vehicle and do not try to escape on foot. Windy conditions are common during wildfires and vehicles can offer protection from flames, heat, smoke and flying embers.
- If you must stop, avoid parking near flames and treed areas. Never abandon your vehicle in the middle of the road.

Your response to a wildfire will depend on where you are, the time of day and your household's unique circumstances. Being prepared can make all the difference in staying safe and reducing stress.

If you are unable to evacuate

When a mandatory evacuation order is issued, leaving the area is the safest action. In rare circumstances, you may be unable to evacuate due to an imminent threat or lack of time.

If you are unable to evacuate, it is important to understand the serious risks involved and take steps to protect yourself and those with you.

- Call 9-1-1 if you are trapped by flames or a fast-moving fire and cannot evacuate safely on your own.
- Gather pets and stay inside. Shelter in a room with minimal windows and doors to reduce exposure to smoke and heat. If possible, choose a building that has less exposure to burning vegetation.
- If you cannot get inside, seek shelter in an open area clear from trees, plants and flammable structures like a parking lot.
- Leave the location if it catches on fire, becomes too hot or smoky inside or when it's safer outside.

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Individuals who choose to disregard evacuation orders do so at their own risk.

Emotional preparedness

- Living through a wildfire alert or evacuation order can feel overwhelming. It's normal to experience worry, tension, or uncertainty.
- Ground yourself by taking slow breaths or using a calming phrase before acting.
- Limit information overload by choosing one or two trusted sources for updates.
- Stay connected by reaching out to loved ones, even briefly, to reduce feelings of isolation.
- Use calm, reassuring language with household members (e.g., "We have a plan. We're together.").
- If you need to evacuate, pause briefly to breathe before gathering belongings to help you think clearly.
- Access available supports like reception centres who can provide food, shelter and psychosocial care if you need.

Animals:

Evacuating farm animals and livestock takes extra time and the right equipment. You need to decide early whether you will evacuate with them or leave them. If a wildfire threatens your area, begin preparing transportation by getting trailers, cages and crates ready.

Visit alberta.ca/RuralPrep for information on what to do during an emergency.

Wildfire smoke

Wildfires in Alberta and neighbouring jurisdictions can generate heavy smoke that drifts across communities and may linger for days or even weeks.

Smoke is a mixture of gases and fine particles from burning vegetation, buildings and other materials. It is harmful to everyone's health, especially children, pregnant women, older adults, people with pre-existing medical conditions and animals.

Even if you are not evacuated, wildfire smoke can pose serious health risks and may require you to change daily activities.

Be Prepared tips:

- Monitor local air quality conditions and follow the directions of air quality alerts.
- Health warnings and recommendations can change quickly in a wildfire. Be sure to monitor [Disaster resources | Alberta Health Services](#) for up to date and current health advisories and health information.
- If you smell smoke or see ash, assume the air quality is not safe. Unseen smoke can irritate the eyes, nose and throat.
- Wildfire smoke can cause [various symptoms and health effects](#). If you experience symptoms of wildfire smoke, talk to a healthcare provider or seek medical attention if they are severe.
- Stay in touch with at-risk loved ones and provide assistance and access to supports when necessary.
- When possible, reduce your exposure by minimizing your time outdoors. Cancel or reschedule activities.
- If you haven't been evacuated, but smoke is forecasted for your area, stock up on essentials such as medications, food and water, to reduce the need for last-minute trips outside.
- [Protect indoor air quality](#) by keeping windows, doors and fresh air intake vents closed.
- Avoid activities that increase fine particles indoors, such as frying or boiling water, burning candles, spraying aerosol products, using natural gas, propane or wood-burning stoves and furnaces and smoking/vaping.
- Fit your ventilation system with the highest-quality air filter it can handle, as recommended by the manufacturer. If possible, use a certified portable air cleaner to remove fine particles from the air and replace filters regularly.
- During periods of heavy wildfire smoke, contact local authorities to locate clean-air locations. Public spaces, including malls, libraries and recreation centres, can provide temporary relief.

- While driving, keep your windows closed and set the ventilation system to recirculate, turning it off regularly, to refresh the air inside your vehicle and prevent the buildup of carbon dioxide. Use low beam headlights in smoke and fog, as high beams reflect the light back to you, creating glare.

Animals:

- Keep an eye on animals and monitor for signs of distress (e.g., excessive panting, drooling, vomiting). Seek veterinarian help immediately if your animals experience any of these symptoms.
- Wipe or brush your animals off once they're inside to remove smoke and particles that could cling to their fur.

Visit myhealth.alberta.ca to learn more about the potential health impacts of wildfire smoke.

Wildfire ash:

Wildfire ash can travel far beyond the fire itself. Even if your community isn't directly impacted by flames, winds can carry ash from nearby or distant wildfires and cause local impacts.

Protect your household by:

- Avoiding direct contact with ash and wearing long sleeve shirts, long pants, socks and closed toes shoes, N95 mask and protective eyewear.
- Changing your clothing and shoes when you are done around ash to avoid tracking it into other places.
- Sealing windows with tape to minimize smoke particles coming through cracks.
- Changing the air filters more frequently
- Lightly misting areas covered with ash with water to reduce dust before sweeping it up. Follow with wet mopping. Use as little water as possible since contact with wet ash may result in chemical burns.
- Washing all homegrown fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating, as wildfire ash may have settled on them.
- Having your [well water](#) tested, as wildfire ash can contaminate it and make it unsafe. Always consult a professional before using the water.
- Not using a leaf blower to clean up ash, as it can become airborne.
- Not allowing children to do any cleanup work and keep them away from the damage to prevent trauma and health risks.
- Consider having your air ducts cleaned after a fire in your community to remove ash and fine particles that may have entered your ventilation system.

After a wildfire

When a wildfire is no longer a threat, evacuation orders will be rescinded, and authorities will allow residents to return when it is safe to do so. Returning after a wildfire can be challenging, so it's important to take precautions to protect your safety and well-being.

Know the risks

- Air quality may still be poor when you return. Monitor the [Air Quality Health Index \(AQHI\)](#) and plan your day accordingly.
- Do not re-enter any structures that have been damaged until authorities confirm it is safe to do so.
- Use extreme caution, especially if there are holes in the floor, broken glass or dangerous debris.
- Check for hazards like asbestos, chemical spills, exposed wires and small embers that may still be burning.
- If you smell gas, leave the premises immediately and contact your natural gas provider.
- Be aware that ash, charred debris and other contaminated materials from burned structures may contain hazardous chemicals and heavy metals.
- If you see downed power lines, stay at least 10 metres (33 feet or the length of a city bus) and report them to the power provider in your area. Call 9-1-1 if there is an immediate threat to life or property.
- After 24 hours of no power, all refrigerated medication should be thrown out, unless the label says otherwise.

- For extended periods of power outages, all white goods (e.g., fridges, freezers, etc.) will likely require proper disposal due to spoiled foods contained within. Follow guidelines created by your municipality for proper disposal of these appliances.
- Be aware that curbside waste may become wildlife attractants, so be sure to follow your municipality's waste management plan for proper waste disposal upon re-entry.

Utilities

- If utilities were turned off, or if you suspect there is damage, do not attempt to turn utilities back on until your utility provider has told them it is safe to do so.
- Follow directions given by local authorities and utility providers for service restoration.
- Devices should be plugged in slowly to prevent power surges.
- Contact your utility provider for assistance with restoration steps, or if you are unsure if the utilities are safe to use. Do not use any natural gas or electrical appliances or equipment that may have been affected by fire until assessed and cleared by licensed professionals.

Water source

- Check your and your animal's water source before using it to make sure it is safe. Ash, fire retardants and other contaminants can affect water quality.
- Follow any [boil water advisories](#) or use bottled water and test [well water](#) before use to ensure it has not been contaminated.
- If you live in an evacuated area but your well was not damaged by the fire, inspect your well, pumping system and the ground surface immediately surrounding it to check for any damage. See [Water Wells that Last – Chapter 5](#) for additional information.
- If your wells or pumping systems were damaged by fire or fire suppression activity, do a quick visual inspection to determine if the pump is safe to operate. See [Protecting Your Well from Disasters](#).

Property cleanup

- Be cautious working around buildings and structures by wearing appropriate personal protective equipment. Ash that has settled onto flat surfaces likely contains contaminants. Follow your municipality's guidance for cleanup.
- Photograph any damage to your home and belongings before cleaning up to support insurance or assistance claims. Do not throw away damaged items until you speak with your insurance provider.
- Contact your insurance provider to start the claims process. An adjuster will be assigned to walk you through the next steps in the claims process. You can also contact the Insurance Bureau of Canada at 1-844-2ask-IBC (1-844-227-5422) or askibcwest@ibc.ca with any general insurance questions.
- Document any damage caused by authorized responders, such as cut fences, fire guards, water bomber impacts, or damage from heavy equipment. Contact your municipality to report the damage and discuss repair or restoration.
- Visit [Returning to Your Home after a Wildfire](#) for health and safety items to think about as you restore your home.

Prevent wildfires from restarting

- Check for hot spots, like smouldering stumps and vegetation. Saturate these spots with water and monitor them closely.
- Check the roof and all exterior areas for sparks and embers.
- Check the attic and the house for hidden burning, sparks and embers.
- Monitor problem areas for several days.

[Psychosocial support](#)

Wildfires can be physically and emotionally overwhelming, especially for youth, older adults and those facing mental health challenges. Prioritizing mental health and accessing psychosocial support during and after a wildfire can help you manage stress, reduce anxiety and maintain your overall well-being.

To learn more about psychosocial supports, visit the Government of Canada's [Evacuations and Mental Health webpage](#).

Mental health and addiction support:

- 211 Alberta is a 24/7 crisis line and a single point of contact for local mental health and addiction supports. Call or text INFO to 211 or visit ab.211.ca.
- Counselling Alberta provides affordable virtual and in-person counselling services to Albertans in need with no wait. Call 1-833-827-4230 or visit counsellingalberta.com.
- The Indigenous Support Line helps First Nations, Metis and Inuit people throughout Alberta. Call 1-844-944-4744 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday or visit [Indigenous Support Line | Alberta Health Services](#)
- Recovery Alberta's [Virtual Opioid Dependency Program](#) offers same-day treatment for Albertans struggling with opioid addiction, including opioid agonist treatment medications. Call 1-844-383-7688 seven days a week, from 6 a.m. to midnight or visit vodp.ca.
- Albertans experiencing non-opioid substance and behavioural addiction concerns can contact the Virtual Rapid Access Addiction Medicine at 1-844-383-7688 for rapid, low-barrier access to treatment.
- [Health Link](#) is a single point of contact for health advice and information on health services. Call 811 or 1-866-408-LINK (5465).

Youth-specific support:

- [Kickstand Connect](#) is a virtual clinic for young Albertans aged 11 to 25 to access free, confidential mental health and substance use counselling, peer support, employment services, workshops and support groups. Visit mykickstand.ca/connect.
- [Kids Help Phone](#) provides free, 24/7 access to multilingual counselling and crisis services for children, youth and young adults. Call 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868.

Coping techniques:

- Reduce exposure to wildfire news and images to help prevent additional stress and avoid triggering anxiety.
- Connect with those around you to seek comfort, share emotional support with each other and reduce isolation.
- Focusing on what you can control, like immediate, manageable actions, can ease stress and keep you from feeling overwhelmed. This could include securing water bottles, grabbing masks to protect against lingering smoke, or organizing important documents and belongings.
- Practice breathing exercises and other calming strategies to reduce stress and anxiety.
- Practice self-compassion and gratitude with yourself and others. Be patient with those around you. The time it takes to mentally heal varies from person to person and is often linked to the severity of the disaster.

More information

For more information, visit alberta.ca/BePrepared or scan the QR code for the Be Prepared program.



Useful links

Before an emergency

- Preparing for secondary risks:
 - Visit the Be Prepared program's page on power outages for more information on how to prepare for outages
 - alberta.ca/PowerOutages
 - Visit the Be Prepared program's page on water shortages for more information on water shortages and how to turn off the main water supply in an emergency
 - alberta.ca/WaterShortages
 - Carbon monoxide:
 - www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/air-quality/pollutants/carbon-monoxide.html#4
- Stay informed by downloading apps and visiting webpages:

- Visit the Alberta Wildfire website for more information and to view active wildfire locations. The link to download the app is found at the bottom of the main webpage:
 - www.alberta.ca/alberta-wildfire
- Download the Alberta Emergency Alert (AEA) app for critical, life-saving alerts. App, Facebook and X links are found at the bottom of the main webpage:
 - www.alberta.ca/alberta-emergency-alert.aspx
- Download the 511 Alberta app for real-time road and traffic information:
 - 511.alberta.ca/#:Alerts
- Download the WeatherCan app for advisories in your chosen location(s):
 - www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/weather-general-tools-resources/weathercan.html
- Visit the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) map to track air quality in your community:
 - airquality.alberta.ca/map/
- Visit FireSmoke Canada for information about wildland fire weather and smoke:
 - firesmoke.ca/
- Check current wildfire and smoke conditions by visiting:
 - Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre Active Fires Map:
 - ciffc.net/
 - Government of Canada Air Quality Forecast Map:
 - weather.gc.ca/firework/firework_anim_e.html
- Access mental health and addiction helplines for a list of resources to support emotional preparedness:
 - www.recoveryalberta.ca/Page14060.aspx
- Create an alberta.ca account so you can quickly access information on support and services during times of uncertainty:
 - www.alberta.ca/alberta-ca-account-available-services
- Build an emergency kit:
 - Find checklists for your vehicle, pets and more on the Be Prepared program's web page:
 - alberta.ca/BuildAKit
 - Ensure you have adequate adapters for your electric vehicle so they can be charged at various locations:
 - natural-resources.canada.ca/energy-efficiency/transportation-alternative-fuels/electric-vehicle-charging/25049
- Animal preparedness:
 - If you have pets, visit alberta.ca/PetPrep for more information
 - If you have farm animals, visit alberta.ca/RuralPrep to learn more
- FireSmart:
 - Learn FireSmart for methods on how to protect your farm animals and livestock:
 - www.alberta.ca/agri-news-reducing-the-wildfire-risk-around-your-farm-or-acreage
 - Tips to FireSmart your property. There are factsheets available for your roof, siding, deck, and yard from the At Home webpage:
 - firesmartalberta.ca/at-home/

During a wildfire

- Visit alberta.ca/Evacuation and alberta.ca/about-emergency-alerts for more information
- Visit alberta.ca/Alberta-911-Program for more information
- Check 511.alberta.ca for real-time road closures, detours and traffic conditions before you travel. Conditions can change quickly during the wildfire
- Visit alberta.ca/RuralPrep for information on what to do during an emergency
- Wildfire smoke:
 - Wildfire smoke overview:
 - myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/Pages/wildfire-smoke-health.aspx

- Learn about wildfire smoke, air quality, and your health. Links regarding health effects, and protecting your physical and mental health (protecting indoor air quality, etc) are available at the top of the main page:
 - www.canada.ca/en/services/health/healthy-living/environment/air-quality/wildfire-smoke.html
- Monitor Alberta Health Services for up to date and current health advisories and health information:
 - www.albertahealthservices.ca/services/page13152.aspx
- Learn how to test your well water, as wildfire ash can contaminate it and make it unsafe. Always consult a professional before using the water:
 - www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/environment/drinking-water/well/test.html

After a wildfire

- Monitor the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) and plan your day accordingly:
 - www.alberta.ca/about-the-air-quality-health-index
- Water source:
 - Follow any boil water advisories or use bottled water and test well water before use to ensure it has not been contaminated:
 - open.alberta.ca/publications/water-shortage-preparedness
 - www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/environment/drinking-water/well/test.html
 - Visit Working Well – Resources for how to protect and maintain a water well:
 - www.alberta.ca/lookup/working-well-resources.aspx
- Property cleanup:
 - Contact the Insurance Bureau of Canada at 1-844-2ask-IBC (1-844-227-5422) or askibcwest@ibc.ca with any general insurance questions
 - Visit Returning to Your Home after a Wildfire for health and safety items to think about as you restore your home:
 - myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/Pages/wildfire-restore-your-home.aspx
- Psychosocial support:
 - Visit the Government of Canada's Evacuations and Mental Health webpage:
 - www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/healthy-living/evacuations-mental-health.html
 - 211 Alberta offers a 24/7 crisis line and a single point of contact for local mental health and addiction supports:
 - ab.211.ca
 - Recovery Alberta's Virtual Opioid Dependency Program offers same-day treatment for Albertans struggling with opioid addiction, including opioid agonist treatment medications:
 - Call 1-844-383-7688 seven days a week, from 6 a.m. to midnight
 - Visit yodp.ca/
 - Indigenous Support Line | Alberta Health Services - The Indigenous Support Line helps First Nations, Metis and Inuit people throughout Alberta:
 - Call 1-844-944-4744 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday
 - Visit www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page18213.aspx
 - Health Link is a single point of contact for health advice and information on health services:
 - Call 811 or 1-866-408-LINK (5465)
 - www.albertahealthservices.ca/811/811.aspx
 - Kickstand Connect is a virtual clinic for young Albertans aged 11 to 25 to access free, confidential mental health and substance use counselling, peer support, employment services, workshops and support groups:
 - mykickstand.ca/connect.
 - Kids Help Phone provides free, 24/7 access to multilingual counselling and crisis services for children, youth and young adults:
 - Call 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868
 - kidshelpphone.ca/

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 - Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas
 - Ministry of Forestry and Parks
 - Ministry of Indigenous Relations
 - Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction
 - Ministry of Primary and Preventive Health Services
 - Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Services
 - Alberta Emergency Management Agency (Alberta First Responders Radio Communications System; Recovery; Public Alerting, Communications and Technology; Alberta 911 Program; and Emergency Social Services)
 - Ministry of Tourism and Sport
- Alberta Electric System Operator
- Alberta Energy Regulator
- Alberta Health Services
- Environment and Climate Change Canada
- Insurance Bureau of Canada