

**Calgary**



**Is your community prepared?**

**Calgary Emergency  
Management Agency**

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# Introduction

The Calgary Emergency Management Agency (CEMA) works with more than 45 members and partners to prepare for, respond to and recover from large emergencies and disasters. CEMA also provides information about personal and business preparedness, and mitigation of hazards in Calgary.

Preparedness is a shared responsibility. During an emergency or disaster, CEMA and The City of Calgary's priorities are first, life safety (of citizens and first responders) and second, protection of critical infrastructure. Citizens can help prepare for an emergency or disaster by ensuring they are aware of risks, taking steps to stay informed, and if able, taking care of themselves and their families for the first 72 hours of an event.

Communities have a role to play in preparedness. The safest and most resilient communities:

- Know what risks exist in their communities;
- Have residents who can help themselves and each other;
- Are prepared to build back after a disaster in a way that reduces the impacts of future disasters; and
- Know that safety and resiliency is a long-term strategy and a shared responsibility.

CEMA has developed a community preparedness workshop called **READYCALGARY** that helps communities help themselves in an emergency or disaster. For more information, visit [calgary.ca/readycalgary](https://calgary.ca/readycalgary).

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# Preparedness

Wherever you live and work, you should be informed about the hazards that can lead to an emergency or disaster.

In Calgary, we face a number of hazards. Many of them are weather-related, including severe winter storms, thunderstorms, hail, tornadoes, windstorms, or floods. Other hazards include utility outages (electricity, gas, phone, network), hazardous materials release (such as sour gas incidents), civil unrest or pandemics. Some neighbourhoods may be more vulnerable than others for a particular hazard, which is why it is so important to know the risks that you may face.

There are many things that can be done to help prepare for an emergency or disaster. As a community resident, you can prepare yourself and your family, and work with your neighbours to ensure that you are better prepared and better able to withstand a disaster.

## 1 Be prepared personally.

The first 72 hours of an emergency or disaster are the busiest for first responders. If you and your family members do not require immediate assistance and are able to take care of yourselves for the first 72 hours, it allows first responders to assist those who need it most. The basic steps for personal and family preparedness are: knowing the risks; making a family plan; and getting a 72-hour preparedness kit. The kit should contain supplies for three days and include things like water, non-perishable food, a wind-up or crank radio (or a battery operated one including extra batteries) additional clothing and blankets, and personal items like prescription eyeglasses, extra medication, and pet supplies, if applicable. Your kit should be stored in a place where it is easy to move should you be instructed to evacuate. You can get more information on 72-hour kits and personal preparedness at [calgary.ca/cema](http://calgary.ca/cema).



## 2 Stay informed.

There are many ways through which local authorities like CEMA, the Calgary Police Service and Calgary Fire Department communicate with citizens to warn of dangers or give instruction about actions to take (such as an evacuation). Local television and radio are great sources of information, as is social media such as Twitter and Facebook. Alberta Emergency Alert (AEA) interrupts local broadcasting, and you can download the AEA app to ensure emergency notifications reach you on your smart phone (visit [emergencyalert.alberta.ca](http://emergencyalert.alberta.ca) for more information). Be aware of changing weather conditions and monitor local media for updates.

### 3 Know the risks in your home and mitigate hazards.

Mitigation includes any activities that lessen the impact of emergencies and disasters. Some things you can do are: ensure adequate insurance coverage (especially tenant insurance as home insurance typically does not cover the tenant's possessions); keep your home – including all appliances – in good working order; check smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms and fire extinguishers regularly; and know where utility or appliance shut-off valves are and how to use them.

### 4 Know your neighbours.

There are many reasons why it's a good idea to know your neighbours. During an emergency or disaster, it is even more important. There are likely people in your neighbourhood who face challenges like mobility issues, or hearing or visual impairments. Sometimes people with special needs require a little more assistance in an emergency. Have a buddy system, or "adopt" a neighbour. If an emergency or disaster is imminent or occurring, check with them to make sure they are okay. Should a situation arise where an evacuation is ordered, let first responders going door-to-door know that you are aware of a neighbour who may need some additional assistance. If you have been asked to shelter-in-place (staying in your home), DO NOT leave your home to check on your buddy. Attempt to reach them by phone, text or email. Alert emergency personnel if you have not been able to contact your buddy.

It is also helpful to know what resources your neighbours might have. For example, if one neighbour has a wood-burning fireplace, it may be necessary to shelter in that residence short-term if there is no power or natural gas to heat homes.

**TOP TIP:** WIMBY stands for "What's in my backyard?" It's a handy way to remind neighbours to think about what resources they might have that can be used to help their neighbours, like snowblowers to clear heavy snow, or chainsaws to cut up downed trees.

## 5 Help each other be prepared.

If you and your neighbours are prepared and able to take care of yourselves and your families, first responders can concentrate on those who need assistance most. You can encourage your neighbours by sharing this brochure with them. CEMA produces many information pieces on preparedness that are available as PDF downloads from [calgary.ca/cema](http://calgary.ca/cema) or by calling 311 and requesting copies of the information.

CEMA also provides information on preparedness for those with special needs. If you are aware of a neighbour with special needs, see if you can assist them with their own preparedness. You can get more information on preparedness for those with special needs at [calgary.ca/cema](http://calgary.ca/cema).

## 6 Get First Aid certified.

Take a First Aid and CPR course so you know what to do in the event of an emergency. This can apply not only in your neighbourhood during an emergency or disaster, but wherever you go. Encourage others to get certified as well – group sessions for training are often more affordable and can be completed over a few sessions. Certification is offered through The City of Calgary Recreation and other agencies.

## 7 Know the hazards and risks in your neighbourhood.

While there are hazards that can occur anywhere, such as thunderstorms or tornadoes, there may be other hazards that are more specific to particular communities. This could include proximity to major transportation corridors (road and rail), industrial centres, gas or oil wells and pipelines. Knowing all the risks – general and specific to your neighbourhood – will help you be better prepared. Often residents are unaware of risks or don't know how to prepare for them. By knowing the risks and sharing information, everyone in your neighbourhood can be stronger and better prepared.

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## Know evacuation routes in your neighbourhood.

Evacuations are very disruptive, but it is very important to evacuate if you are told to do so. Evacuations are ordered because there is a very real danger to your safety and that of your fellow residents. If you are told to evacuate, do so in an orderly and calm manner. Take your 72-hour kit with you. Knowing all the ways out of your neighbourhood can help prevent congestion at common exit locations.

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## If you live in a condominium or apartment, know who your condo board representatives and property manager are, and most importantly, know how to reach them.

Knowing the responsibilities of the condominium board (representatives are elected from residents in the building or complex), building owners and property managers can save valuable time and stress. Know if the property manager will arrange alternative accommodation should you be required to evacuate due to a concern in the building or complex. Check if your building or complex has an emergency response plan. This is a plan that may include evacuation procedures, safety features, and the locations and operation of devices such as fire extinguishers and automated defibrillators (AEDs). If your building has such plans, you should familiarize yourself with them and encourage your neighbours in the building or complex to do so also. If there are no such plans, ask your building owner or property manager to create the plans and share them.

Not all emergencies or disasters occur while you are at home. You may be at work, or a social event. If you are at work, your place of employment should have emergency plans that include information about evacuations, muster points, and locations and operation of devices like fire extinguishers and AEDs.

Consider having a 72-hour kit at work as well. You may be unable to leave your workplace, or you may not be able to return home to get your kit. Your workplace kit should be fitted with most of the same supplies that you have in your home 72-hour kit.

One of the biggest sources of stress in an emergency or disaster is not knowing the whereabouts of your loved ones and if they are safe. This stress can make it difficult to remember even routine information, like phone numbers. Have your family's contact numbers written down and accessible. You can access family contact forms at [calgary.ca/cema](http://calgary.ca/cema).

Have an out-of-town contact where all family members can "check in." Pick a person in a location unlikely to be affected by the same emergency or disaster that you are facing. That person can relay messages as family members call in. Local phone lines may be jammed but text messages or long distance calls may go through.

Ensure you know how your child's school or daycare will deal with an emergency or disaster. Ask about their policies and how they will contact you in an emergency. Consider giving a trusted friend or relative authority to pick up your child in an emergency if you cannot. Always make sure the school or daycare has up-to-date contact information for you on file.

**TOP TIP:** Water heaters and toilet tanks are a great source of clean water if the water supply to your home is compromised or shut off during an emergency or disaster.

## 11 Check your insurance policy.

Insurance policies can vary considerably as to what may be covered and what isn't. You should review your policy on a regular basis (your annual renewal is a good time to do this). Make sure you understand your policy, and if you have questions, contact your representative or broker.

Tenants (or renters) should have insurance to cover their belongings. The owner's insurance will cover the building but it won't cover your personal belongings. Tenant insurance is very affordable compared to the cost of replacing all your belongings at your own expense. Tenant insurance will often cover your living costs if you are evacuated and can't return home for a period of time. Check with your representative or broker to better understand your coverage.

You can find more preparedness information online at [calgary.ca/cema](http://calgary.ca/cema).





**Emergency  
assembly  
point**

# Community response

With the hazards we face in Calgary (such as severe storms, utility outages, etc.), the two most likely scenarios for residents in an emergency or disaster are evacuation or shelter-in-place.

# Evacuation

Evacuations are undertaken when there is a very clear risk to life safety. Evacuations are very disruptive, time consuming and require many resources. They are never undertaken lightly. **If you are instructed to evacuate, you must leave the area.** People who refuse to leave put not only their safety at risk, but also that of first responders. During the June 2013 flood, over 400 rescues were performed after the evacuation order for people who initially refused to leave. It is often not possible for first responders to assist people who have refused to leave because it is too dangerous to enter the area, or those who refuse to evacuate may not be able to request assistance if phone lines and other communications are compromised by the disaster.

The decision to order an evacuation is based on safety and the risk to citizens remaining in their homes. There are situations where it may be safe to remain in your home, but it may not be comfortable to do so (such as a power outage). You should be aware of how your insurance coverage covers out-of-pocket expenses should you choose to leave your home voluntarily (i.e. without an evacuation order).

# Shelter-in-place

You may be asked to shelter-in-place. If you are asked to shelter-in-place, it is because it is more dangerous to leave your home than to stay in it. This could occur in situations like a hazardous material release. You should take these actions:

- Remain in your home, and close all windows and doors.
- Turn off all air intake devices (furnaces, air conditioners, etc.).
- Close the fireplace damper(s), if you have one.
- Go to an interior room (if possible, one without windows) that is above ground level.

- Take your 72-hour kit into the room with you.
- Monitor local media (television and radio) or Calgary.ca, Alberta Emergency Alert, or The City of Calgary on Facebook or Twitter, for further instructions or until you are given the all-clear.
- If the odour is strong, seal the room with wet towels at the base of the door. Cover all registers, air openings and windows in the room.
- You should remain in your home until an all-clear is given.

In both of these cases, it is very important to heed the instructions of emergency personnel. Instructions may be provided through mass and social media or by responders going door-to-door.

## How can I help my community?

CEMA wishes to strengthen community resiliency through planning and preparedness efforts. Community leaders can assist by:

- Providing insights and perspectives reflecting their community (for example, people with vulnerabilities, local schools, communities with language or cultural diversity, small businesses, socio-economically disadvantaged community members, and faith communities).
- Identifying and integrating appropriate resources into community plans.
- Ensuring facilities, participants and community members are provided, trained and practiced in preparedness information and actions.

**TOP TIP:** Have a list of certified babysitters (those with training) in your neighbourhood. If parents are busy assisting neighbours during an emergency or disaster, babysitters can play games or coordinate activities for children.



Preparedness is a shared responsibility. All community members should consider:

- Learning about community risks and hazards, evacuation routes, and how to get critical information when needed.
- Taking available training and be knowledgeable about preparedness, First Aid, and other skills.
- Practicing skills and personal plans regularly.
- Networking to know neighbours and be prepared and able to help others.
- Participating in community feedback and outreach opportunities.
- Reporting any suspicious activity to the police.
- Volunteering and donating.

CEMA offers a community-based preparedness program called **READYCALGARY**. Participants will learn important information about emergency preparedness, response and recovery for individuals, families and communities within Calgary. After training, these individuals may choose to organize a Community Support Team. It is expected that team members will share information from **READYCALGARY** with their neighbours and communities.

**READYCALGARY** covers a number of steps that will help communities be better prepared and able to limit the impact of emergencies and disasters. This includes knowing how to identify hazards and risk in a community; how to map a community; emergency and business continuity planning; emergency communications planning; emergency exercise design; volunteerism; and training opportunities.

Visit [calgary.ca/readycalgary](https://calgary.ca/readycalgary) for more information.

# Identifying Hazards

Assessing a community's vulnerability to hazards allows the community to prioritize preparedness measures and target effective actions. Begin by identifying the most common hazards and risks in your community. These hazards can be natural, technological or human-induced. Remember that this can differ from location to location. Prioritize those risks with the most severe impact by considering recent and historical information. Identify any vulnerable buildings, infrastructure or populations.

# Map your Community

After considering the hazards in a community, map these features. This will help create awareness of vulnerable populations, emergency services, community centres and evacuation routes. By showing these items on a map, you can develop alternative plans and procedures (for example, if a particular community exit is unavailable, residents can evacuate by another exit instead).

# Community Emergency Action Planning

Creating a community Emergency Action Plan (EAP) is a five-step process.

- 1** **STEP ONE:** Analyze your neighbourhood or community.
- 2** **STEP TWO:** Analyze the hazards and risks.
- 3** **STEP THREE:** Develop strategies to limit impacts.
- 4** **STEP FOUR:** Write an emergency action plan (EAP).
- 5** **STEP FIVE:** Exercise your plan (and adjust as needed).

## 1 Analyze your Neighbourhood

This first step involved gathering the information about critical infrastructure in and around your area. For example, make sure you know the locations of things like schools, fire stations, police stations, medical facilities, community association buildings and commercial areas. It is also important to know where all the community exits are, if there are oil and gas lines or wells in the area and if your community has transportation corridors such as rail lines or dangerous goods routes.

## 2 Analyze the Hazards and Risks

Understanding the potential hazards and risks will help you determine resource requirements and develop specific plans and procedures to mitigate these hazards.

## 3 Develop Strategies to Limit Impacts

Make sure that procedures and processes are established, dedicated resources are available and actively involved individuals in your community are prepared, informed, updated and appropriately trained.



## 4

### Write an Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

A good EAP will outline the specific risks or hazards and how to deal with them. For example, in the case of evacuation, your EAP can outline who can go door-to-door checking if neighbours require assistance, the areas or streets for which they are responsible, and communication of information to emergency responders.

## 5

### Exercise your Plan (and adjust as needed)

Community members should exercise plans on a regular basis. There are several ways to do this:

- Drills – operations-based and usually used to exercise and validate a single specific operation or function, such as a fire drill.
- Workshops – normally conducted in a classroom-style setting.
- Tabletops – usually guided by a facilitator in an informal environment.
- Functional – a fully simulated interactive exercise that tests the capability of an organization to respond to an event.
- Full-scale – an exercise which attempts to simulate a real emergency and involves actual equipment and personnel.

# Business Continuity in your Community

The resumption of business activities is a critical component of recovery after a disaster. Business continuity is about understanding the risks your business could face and develop strategies to ensure continued operation during and after a disaster. CEMA has developed a business continuity template and reference guide. These are available at [calgary.ca/cema](http://calgary.ca/cema).

## Emergency Communications Planning

In an emergency or disaster, communications can be compromised. Consider how you will both give and receive information. Know that direct contact with emergency personnel or local authorities may not be possible during a disaster. Mass communication is the most effective way for emergency personnel and local authorities to reach the most number of people, so be sure you are monitoring local media (traditional and social media, Alberta Emergency Alert) for the most up-to-date information and instruction.

Community members should know how to reach each other and decide the most appropriate methods to do so. This can include having home and cell phone or alternate numbers of community members. You should discuss communication methods and how you reach one another with your Community Support Team members.

## Emergency Exercise Design

Once created, your plans should be reviewed and practiced on a regular basis to ensure that they can meet the needs of the community. **READYCALGARY** Community Support Team members can use exercises to familiarize themselves with their roles and responsibilities.

# Volunteerism

Calgary has a remarkable community spirit that shows in the huge numbers of volunteers who wish to help their community, especially after a disaster. Before organizing or accepting volunteers, consider whether there are liability issues. You can learn more about how to reduce liability through volunteer job descriptions, screening and training volunteers at [volunteer.ca](http://volunteer.ca).

Informal community-based groups that have no legal status cannot get insurance in the organization's or community's name. Volunteers with this kind of group should review their own personal insurance coverage to see if and what volunteer actions are covered. Community Associations may have a different legal status and should check that they have appropriate and required insurance coverage.



# Resources and Additional Training

**READYCALGARY** is an all-hazards emergency management program that empowers community members to be more prepared and resilient to future challenges in Calgary. Participants who have taken the training may wish to increase their knowledge and skills. Other training could include:

- Advanced First Aid
- CPR and AED
- Basic Emergency Management (BEM)
- Incident Command System (ICS) 100





# Recovery

After a disaster is over, thoughts naturally return to recovery and getting back to normal. The community can be a great source of support for those who were directly affected by the disaster. There are many things that community members can do to help.

# Donate

The financial costs of assisting those affected by a disaster can be significant. Consider donating money to a non-profit or charitable organization that assists affected residents. Often individual donations are matched by different levels of government or private companies. There are many worthy organizations that assist in a disaster – choose one you feel comfortable supporting.

After a disaster, many people are moved to donate items. Before donating supplies, ensure you confirm what is needed. Though well-intentioned, unsolicited donations of supplies and materials take up valuable time, manpower and storage for an aid agency.

# Volunteer

There are usually many opportunities to volunteer after a disaster. Ensure your efforts are required before simply showing up at an affected site. Some agencies require only trained volunteers – if you have particular skills that you feel would be beneficial, contact the agency to see if your skills are required.

The City of Calgary may set up Community Support Centres in affected areas. These are intended to provide support and resources for affected residents. A Community Support Centre typically has representatives from or information about City services, provincial services, social services and mental health, utility providers, and aid agencies. The Community Support Centre may also serve as a dispatch centre where volunteers can “check in” and be assigned to a particular task or location.

If a City-designated Community Support Centre is not set up, other organizations may provide coordination of volunteer and other services. Staff and volunteers from these organizations are usually identifiable by their attire or badges. Check with the organization to explore volunteer opportunities.

Those eager to help often come long distances to an affected area. In order to prevent traffic congestion and overcrowding in any given location, volunteers may be asked to come to a central point and be provided transportation to an affected area. Listen for instructions from volunteer agencies or local authorities – they will let prospective

volunteers know if a volunteer coordination point has been set up. Volunteers – from any community – need to be respectful of those who have been affected by a disaster.

## Coping with a disaster

When the immediate danger has passed, it is often difficult for people to return to their normal lives. This includes those personally affected by the disaster, by such things as injury to or loss of a loved one, or damaged or lost property. Residents may feel devastated and unable to cope, or feel guilty because they didn't suffer any losses and others close to them did. They may feel they have to be strong for other members of their family and community. There are many possible reactions and all of them are valid. It is important to care for each other and watch out for signs that a loved one or neighbour may be having difficulty coping.

- Their normal sleeping pattern changes significantly (they are sleeping much more or less than normal).
- They have trouble concentrating and cannot complete routine or usual tasks.
- They have withdrawn from usual and previously enjoyable activities.
- Their intake of alcohol or drugs (prescription, over-the-counter, or illicit) has increased.
- They appear distressed, irritable or agitated much of the time.
- They are engaging in high-risk activities such as driving too fast, fighting or confrontations with law enforcement.
- Their eating habits have changed significantly (eating too much, not enough, or eating too much unhealthy food).
- They have hurt themselves or others physically.

Some people may show some of these symptoms, and others may show none at all. If you need assistance, or if you think someone else does, there are resources available to help. Sources can include your family doctor, pastoral care counsellor, licensed counsellor or other trained mental health provider, social worker or your local health centre. You can also call 211 to access available services. The 211 service is confidential and available in several languages.

# In an emergency, dial 911.

Stay informed. Knowledge is power.

## Calgary Emergency Management Agency

[calgary.ca/cema](http://calgary.ca/cema)

## Alberta Emergency Alert

[@AB\\_EmergAlert](https://twitter.com/AB_EmergAlert) | [emergencyalert.alberta.ca](http://emergencyalert.alberta.ca)

Alberta Emergency Alerts are issued to warn people about potential risks to their health and safety.

## The City of Calgary

[@cityofcalgary](https://twitter.com/cityofcalgary) | [calgary.ca](http://calgary.ca)

In the event of an emergency, The City of Calgary website, Facebook and Twitter are a great source of information.

## Calgary City News blog and mobile app

[calgarycitynews.com](http://calgarycitynews.com)

Stay on top of what's happening in Calgary with The City of Calgary news app.

## Calgary Police Service

[@Calgary\\_Police](https://twitter.com/Calgary_Police) | [calgarypolice.ca](http://calgarypolice.ca)

Calgary Police Service tweets regularly about potential dangers in Calgary and will help keep you informed in an emergency situation.