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2023

Emergency Preparedness Guide

Be Ready! Be Safe!



Contents

[Message from Mayor Bentley 5](#_Toc133844072)

[Message from Fire Chief Jason Gallagher, Manager of Emergency Services 6](#_Toc133844073)

[Haldimand County’s Emergency Plan 7](#_Toc133844074)

[What You Should Know 7](#_Toc133844075)

[What You Should Do BEFORE an Emergency 8](#_Toc133844076)

[Be Prepared 8](#_Toc133844077)

[Safe Home Instructions 8](#_Toc133844078)

[Develop a Plan 8](#_Toc133844079)

[When Creating Your Home Emergency Plan, You Will Need to Think About 9](#_Toc133844080)

[Creating a Home Escape Plan 9](#_Toc133844081)

[Prepare an Emergency Kit 9](#_Toc133844082)

[Basic Emergency Kit 9](#_Toc133844083)

[Additional Emergency Supplies 10](#_Toc133844084)

[Food Safety 11](#_Toc133844085)

[Food Preparation 11](#_Toc133844086)

[Safe Food Handling 11](#_Toc133844087)

[Water Safety 11](#_Toc133844088)

[Water Purification Methods During a Boil Water Advisory 12](#_Toc133844089)

[Car Emergency Kit 12](#_Toc133844090)

[For Babies and Children 13](#_Toc133844091)

[For Elderly Adults 13](#_Toc133844092)

[For Persons With Disabilities 13](#_Toc133844093)

[For Persons With Medical Illness 14](#_Toc133844094)

[Preparing Pets 14](#_Toc133844095)

[What You Should Do DURING an Emergency 15](#_Toc133844096)

[When to Call 911 15](#_Toc133844097)

[In Case of a Major Emergency 15](#_Toc133844098)

[Shelter In Place 15](#_Toc133844099)

[Evacuation 15](#_Toc133844100)

[Protect Your Home 16](#_Toc133844101)

[Evacuating Your Home 16](#_Toc133844102)

[Driving in Emergency Conditions 16](#_Toc133844103)

[Emergency Shelters 17](#_Toc133844104)

[What to Expect: 17](#_Toc133844105)

[Food Safety 17](#_Toc133844106)

[Steps You Can Take to Keep Your Food Safe in an Emergency 17](#_Toc133844107)

[Plan Ahead for Emergencies 17](#_Toc133844108)

[Handling Refrigerated and Frozen Foods During a Power Failure 18](#_Toc133844109)

[Safe Handling of Food and Water 18](#_Toc133844110)

[What You Should Do AFTER an Emergency 20](#_Toc133844111)

[Returning Home 20](#_Toc133844112)

[Re-entering Your Home 20](#_Toc133844113)

[Food Safety After an Emergency 21](#_Toc133844114)

[Cleaning and Drying Stored Food and Food Surfaces After a Flood 21](#_Toc133844115)

[Handling Refrigerated and Frozen Food After a Power Failure 21](#_Toc133844116)

[Recovery 21](#_Toc133844117)

[Individual and Family Recovery 21](#_Toc133844118)

[What You Should Know About SPECIFIC TYPES of Emergencies 23](#_Toc133844119)

[Floods 23](#_Toc133844120)

[General Tips 23](#_Toc133844121)

[Prepare Now 23](#_Toc133844122)

[Pandemic 24](#_Toc133844123)

[General Tips 24](#_Toc133844124)

[Prepare Now 24](#_Toc133844125)

[During a Power Outage 24](#_Toc133844126)

[General Tips 25](#_Toc133844127)

[Use of Home Generators 25](#_Toc133844128)

[If You Have to Evacuate 25](#_Toc133844129)

[Summer Storms/Lightning 26](#_Toc133844130)

[General Tips 26](#_Toc133844131)

[Prepare Now 26](#_Toc133844132)

[Tornado 26](#_Toc133844133)

[General Tips 27](#_Toc133844134)

[Prepare Now 27](#_Toc133844135)

[Winter Storm 27](#_Toc133844136)

[Before the Storm 28](#_Toc133844137)

[During the Storm 28](#_Toc133844138)

[Other Helpful Information You Should Have 29](#_Toc133844139)

[Floor Plan and Escape Route 30](#_Toc133844140)

[Safety Tips: 30](#_Toc133844141)

[**If The Alarm Sounds….** 30](#_Toc133844142)

# Message from Mayor Bentley

Many things in life are out of our control; emergencies often fall under that category. What we can do though, is be as prepared for them as possible. Emergencies can happen anywhere, at any time, and to anyone. By protecting yourself and your family, you are also protecting your neighbours and community members.

When emergencies happen, Haldimand County’s team of emergency personnel respond using the County’s Emergency Response Plan. This plan is reviewed annually and amended as needed by a group of highly trained emergency personnel. It is important to remember that when an emergency arises, emergency response personnel and resources will be stretched thin, and help cannot be everywhere at the same time. Our goal is to help all residents to be safe and secure during an emergency, so I ask that you take the time to read this guide as a measure to be prepared to help yourself, should an emergency arise.

We ask that you take the time to discuss emergency plans with your family, teach your children how to be safe and protect themselves, and create a plan that works best for your family’s specific needs.

Create a 72-hour family emergency kit that contains supplies and resources to aid you in an emergency situation. This guide is an excellent resource and source of information for you and your family to be as prepared as possible.

When emergencies happen, please tune into 92.9 The Grand for updates, as well as the Haldimand County website, social media accounts, and @HaldEmerg social media accounts.

Plan ahead and be safe!

Sincerely,

Mayor Shelley Anne Bentley



# Message from Fire Chief Jason Gallagher, Manager of Emergency Services

Emergency preparedness is the process of taking proactive steps to plan and prepare for potential emergencies, disasters, or unexpected events, with the goal of minimizing their impact and ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals, families, and communities. This involves developing contingency plans, assembling emergency kits, identifying safe evacuation routes, and staying informed about potential threats and hazards.

By being prepared, individuals and communities can better manage and respond to emergencies and potentially prevent or reduce the loss of life and property. An emergency can happen without much warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home or workplace. It can also leave you without basic services such as water, gas, electricity, or a working telephone.

Although Ontario has effective emergency management legislation and programs, individuals and families play a vital role in preparing for times of crisis when emergency services and other government resources may be strained. It is important that individuals and families prepare to take care of themselves for at least three days, or 72 hours.

Individuals and families are best able to cope with emergent situations when they have taken the time to prepare before an emergency happens. This guide will help in the process. Should an emergency arise in Haldimand County, through our partnership with 92.9 The Grand FM, the most current and up-to-date information will be provided to listeners. As well, we will put regular updates on our county website, as well as our emergency services website and social media pages – check it often to keep up-to-date on the situation.

Sincerely,

Jason Gallagher

Manager of Emergency Services & Fire Chief

Haldimand County



# Haldimand County’s Emergency Plan

## What You Should Know

Haldimand County’s Emergency Plan shows clear and concise responsibilities of staff members should an emergency arise. The document provides an overall plan, with step-by-step instructions so that no important steps are missed. Haldimand County has consulted with neighbouring municipalities to review their emergency strategies and see how we can help each other should a large scale emergency arise. The County has agreements with these municipalities to assist each other as needed during crisis situations.

The County’s Emergency Plan is reviewed on an annual basis. This ongoing review ensures that the County is ready and that the process put in place in case of an emergency will run smoothly. These annual reviews also allow us to make any necessary revisions to our plan arising from technological or legislative changes.

The Emergency Services Division wants the residents of Haldimand County to be assured that the staff of the division and the County as a whole, have a strong plan in place should an emergency arise and which can be implemented within minutes of an emergency.

This guide has been developed to help residents understand and be prepared for any emergency situation. Take the time to review the guide and begin the family activity of “Getting Ready Made Easy” to be self-sufficient for 72 hours.

An emergency is a highly stressful situation but being prepared can eliminate some of that stress and help you and your family manage some of the uncertainty until the crisis resolves.

Read through this guide and start your family’s readiness preparations!

# What You Should Do BEFORE an Emergency

## Be Prepared

Disaster can strike quickly and without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighbourhood or confine you to your home. When an emergency occurs in our community, local government and non-government emergency services organizations will be there to assist you. It’s important to remember that in the event of a large-scale incident, local emergency responders can quickly become overwhelmed and may not be able to reach you immediately. To ensure the safety and well-being of your family, you should prepare now to take care of your basic needs for at least the first 72 hours following a major disaster. It is important that you are prepared and understand your responsibilities during an emergency.

## Safe Home Instructions

* Post emergency contact numbers near all telephones. Teach children how and when to dial 911.
* Have working carbon monoxide and smoke detectors. If you live in an apartment know where the fire alarms and fire exits are located.
* Everyone in your home should know where to find the fire extinguisher. All capable adults and older children should know how to use it.
* Identify the possible emergency situations in your community. Discuss how you will respond to each emergency.
* Create a “Home Escape Plan”. Identify two escape routes from each room and two meeting places: one near your home, and one outside your neighbourhood.
* Prepare an emergency kit. Keep the kit in an accessible location and make sure it is easy to carry.
* Have a battery or hand-crank powered radio available and listen to 92.9 The Grand FM for local information and emergency instructions.
* Locate and label shut-off switches. Know how to turn off your home’s water, electricity, and gas. Make large, easy-to-see signs for water and gas shut offs as well as for the breaker panel or fuse box. Clearly label the on/off positions and show family members how to shut off these services.
* NOTE: Natural gas services should be left on unless officials tell you to turn it off. If advised to turn off your gas metre, or the supply of gas is interrupted, the gas company or an authorized technician must turn it back on. Please DO NOT attempt to reactivate your gas metre.
* Identify local and out of area contacts for family members to call if separated.
* Make arrangements for members of your family with special needs: children, elderly, disabled, medical illness, pets, etc..
* Take a basic first aid or CPR class.
* Know your insurance policy. Make sure you have adequate coverage to meet your needs (type of coverage, amount of coverage, hazards covered, etc.).
* Keep family records in a water and fireproof safe (passports, birth certificates, etc.).

## Develop a Plan

Your best defense in protecting yourself and your family during an emergency is knowing what to do and planning ahead. Emergency preparedness is the planning process a family takes to ensure they can survive a disaster. Your *Emergency Preparedness Guide* will help your family prepare for and respond to disasters when they occur.

## When Creating Your Home Emergency Plan, You Will Need to Think About

* Safe exits from home and neighbourhood
* Meeting places to reunite with family or roommates
* Designated person to pick up children should you be unavailable
* Local and out of area contacts
* Health information
* Place for your pet(s) to stay
* Risks in your community (refer to the specific emergencies starting on [page 22](#_What_You_Should))
* How you and your family will respond to each possible emergency situation
* Location of your fire extinguisher, water valve, electrical box, gas valve, and floor drain

After developing your household emergency plan, you should review it with your family every six months to make sure it is up to date.

## Creating a Home Escape Plan

During a fire or other emergency, you may need to evacuate your home on a moment’s notice. You and your family should be ready to get out fast.

* Draw a floor plan of your home with escape routes using the instructions on [page 29](#_Floor_Plan_and). Include the location of doors, windows, stairs, and large furniture.
* Indicate the location of emergency supplies, fire extinguishers, smoke alarms, first aid kits, and utility shut offs.
* Use a coloured pen to draw a broken line charting at least two escape routes from each room if possible.
* Mark a place outside of your home where family members should meet after the evacuation.
* Make sure you include important points outside, such as garages, patios, stairs, and porches.

If you live in an apartment, make sure that everyone in your family knows where the emergency exit is. Locate the fire alarm and explain when and how to use it. In a fire or other emergency, never use the elevators. They may not work if the power goes out.

**Safety Tip #1: Practice emergency evacuation drills with all household members every six months.**

## Prepare an Emergency Kit

Emergencies and disasters can happen at any time. Utilities can be out, roads closed, and crucial supplies unavailable. While local, provincial, and federal officials prepare for emergencies, individuals can plan to be prepared at home and at work.

Everyone should be prepared to take care of themselves and their families for up to three days in the event of an emergency or disaster.

## Basic Emergency Kit

You may have some of these basic emergency kit items already, such as a flashlight, battery operated radio, non-perishable food, water, and blankets. The key is to make sure they are organized, easy to find and easy to carry (in a suitcase with wheels or a backpack) in case you need to evacuate your home.

* Emergency Plan: include a copy of it and ensure it contains local and out of area contact information
* Water: two litres of water per person per day (include small bottles that can be carried easily in case of an evacuation order)
* Food that will not spoil: such as canned food, energy bars, and dried food
* First aid kit
* Manual can opener
* Battery powered or hand crank flashlight
* Candles and matches/lighter
* Battery powered or hand crank radio
* Extra batteries for above items
* Special needs items: medication, infant formula, or special equipment for people with disabilities, infants, or seniors
* Extra keys for your car and home
* Cash: include small bills and change (travelers cheques are also useful)
* Pets

Safety Tip #2: Replace water, canned food, dry goods, and batteries once per year.

## Additional Emergency Supplies

The basic emergency kit will help you get through the first 72 hours of an emergency. In addition to this kit, we recommend you also have the following additional emergency supplies. Then you will be well equipped for even the worst emergency situations.

* Change of clothing/footwear for each household member
* Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each household member
* A whistle in case you need to attract attention
* Garbage bags for personal sanitation
* Toilet paper
* Safety gloves
* Disposable plates and cups, knives, forks, and spoons
* Soaps, liquid detergent, unscented household chlorine bleach
* Basic tools: hammer, pliers, wrench, screwdrivers, fastener, work gloves
* Small fuel-driven stove and fuel: follow manufacturer’s directions and store properly
* Two additional litres of water per person per day for cooking and cleaning
* Other personal care supplies: shampoo, hairbrush, toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, towels, face cloths, feminine supplies
* Copies of personal documents: passports, birth certificates, citizenship paperwork, etc.

Safety Tip #3: Store copies of important family documents in a watertight, fireproof, portable container. Keep copies of your important documents in a safe place outside your home as well, such as a safety deposit box.

## Food Safety

## Food Preparation

* If the power goes out, use a barbeque, charcoal grill or camp stove *outdoors only*. Your cooking area should be well ventilated to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
* Food can be heated indoors using candle warmers, chafing dishes, and fondue pots.
* During a power outage, use perishable food and foods from the refrigerator first. Next, use the food from the freezer. Finally, begin to use non-perishable foods and staples.

Safety Tip #4: Minimize the number of times you open the freezer and fridge by posting a list of contents on it. Food in a freezer will remain safe to eat for 24-36 hours without power. A refrigerator will keep food cool for 4-6 hours without power.

## Safe Food Handling

* Wash hands properly before handling food
  + Wet hands with warm water, add soap, and rub palms together to create lather
  + Thoroughly cover all surfaces of your hands and fingers with lather and work fingertips into palms to clean under nails
  + Rinse well under warm running water
  + Dry with single-use towel and then use towel to turn off the tap
  + Hands should be washed for a minimum of 15 seconds
* If running water is not available, follow the steps above using a bucket or pail of water
* If a water source is not available, a liquid hand sanitizer is recommended
  + Rub enough product to keep hands moist for 15 seconds
  + Rub product into palms and thoroughly cover all surfaces of the hands and fingers
  + Rub fingertips of each hand into the opposite thumb
  + Keep rubbing until hands are dry
  + Do not rinse with water or use paper towel to dry hands

## Water Safety

Contaminated water can contain micro-organisms that cause disease. It may be necessary to purify water I you are unaware of its quality before using it for drinking, food preparation, or hygiene.

If your drinking water is made unsafe as a result of an emergency situation, the Medical Officer of Health may issue a *Boil Water Advisory* (BWA) or *Drinking Water Advisory* (DWA).

A BWA is issued when there is a known or suspected bacterial contamination of the water system.

## Water Purification Methods During a Boil Water Advisory

*Boiling* is the safest method of purifying water

* Let the water cool before drinking
* Pour the water back and forth between two containers to add oxygen and improve taste

*Disinfection* uses liquid chlorine bleach to kill micro-organisms. Use only regular household liquid bleach that contains 5.25% sodium hypochlorite as the active ingredient. Do not use scented bleaches colour safe bleach or bleaches with added cleaners.

* Add one to two drops of bleach per litre of clean water
* If the water is cloudy, treat with three to four drops of bleach per litre
* Stir and let stand for 30 minutes
* If the water does not have slight bleach odour, repeat the dosage and let stand another 15 minutes

A DWA is issued when there is known or suspect chemical contamination of the water system. When a DWA is issued, boiling your water will NOT make it safe to drink. The water must not be consumed under any circumstances and there may be restrictions on other common household uses. During a DWA, the County will attempt to provide alternate sources of drinking water.

## Car Emergency Kit

Every driver should carry an emergency kit in his or her vehicle. Here are some important items to consider:

* Food that will not spoil, such as energy bars
* Water in plastic bottles so it won’t break if frozen (change every six months)
* Blanket
* Extra clothing and shoes
* First aid kit
* Small shovel, scraper, and snow brus
* Candle in deep can and matches
* Battery powered or hand cranked flashlight
* Whistle in case you need to attract attention
* Road maps
* Copy of your emergency plan and personal documents

Also keep in your trunk:

* Sand, salt or non-clumping cat litter
* Vehicle fluids: windshield washer fluid, gas line antifreeze, motor oil, etc.
* Tool kit, including various screwdrivers, pliers, utility knife, ratchet socket set, a four-way wrench, vice grips, rolls of electrical tapes, duct tape, seat belt cutter
* Assortment of spare fuses
* Tow rope
* Jumper cables
* Fire extinguisher
* Warning light or road flares

Safety Tip #5: Keep your vehicle’s gas tank at least half full at all times, especially in winter. Remember to have your vehicle serviced regularly. Drive carefully.

The information in this guide applies to everyone, however, people with special needs may want to consider some of the following steps as well.

## For Babies and Children

Disasters have a big impact on children. Parents typically work or act more effectively when they know their children are secure. To make sure that children feel secure and useful, involve them in the family emergency planning process.

*Essentially, children need the comfort of knowing that they will be cared for.*

Teach your children, according to their age:

* How to identify hazard
* How to evacuate and where to go
* Basic survival skills in case of fires, tornadoes, or other disasters when adults may not be with them
* Where your emergency kit is located
* How to reach an out of area contact and when to call 911

Add necessary items to your emergency kit such as:

* Bottles and formula (include extra water if powdered or concentrate)
* Special foods
* Disposable diapers
* Petroleum jelly
* Extra clothing
* Medication
* Toys and books
* Special comfort items (blanket, stuffed animal, soother, etc.)

## For Elderly Adults

* Involve senior family members in your plan. Their experience of living in a less complicated and technologically dependent world can be extremely valuable.
* If older adults are likely to be separated from you in times of disasters, have prearranged meeting places and share out of area contacts.
* If members of your family live in senior housing or nursing homes make sure you know the facility’s emergency policies and how to contact key individuals.
* Consider hearing and sight impairments in your emergency planning (e.g., will smoke detectors be loud enough).
* Practice evacuation plans to test how they work and make necessary changes.
* Review and adjust your plans if health or living conditions change.
* Register any health needs and appropriate agencies (e.g., continual power for oxygen supply).

Add necessary items to your kit such as medications an daily living aids (hearing aids, spare batteries, glasses, etc.).

## For Persons With Disabilities

Persons with disabilities represent a wide range of physical, intellectual, and mental health issues.

* Involve persons with disabilities in your plan. Ask for feedback and listen to suggestions.
* Consider special evacuation needs and equipment such as ramps, ambulatory devices, etc.
* Practice evacuation plans to test how they work and make necessary changes.
* Wear medical alert tags or bracelets to identify your illness or disability in an emergency.

## For Persons With Medical Illness

* Create a network of relatives or friends to assist you in an emergency. Involve them in your planning. Show them how to operate any medical equipment you use and practice your emergency procedures.
* Persons who receive home health care services should discuss emergency plans with their caregiver or home care agency. Individuals should check with their physicians to establish whether prior arrangements would be necessary to evacuate to a hospital.
* Wear medical alert tags or bracelets to identify your illness or disability in an emergency.

Include necessary aids or special supplies to your emergency kits:

* Batteries for medial equipment, hearing aids, assistive devices, etc.
* Current prescription names, strengths and dosages
* Detailed information about the medication regime
* Names and contact information for physicians and pharmacists

## Preparing Pets

Pets are an important part of many families. Preparation and planning for the care of pets should be considered when planning for an emergency and help you to evacuate your pets quickly and safely. Keep in mind that animals react differently under stress and should not be left unleashed or unattended.

* Contact your veterinarian, local animal shelter, or animal hospital for advice on pet boarding or emergency shelter for pets in a disaster.
* Arrange for out of area friends or relatives to shelter your pet in an emergency.
* Keep a list of hotels and motels outside your immediate area that allow pets. If you have notice of an impending disaster, call ahead to make reservations.

Include pet supplies in your emergency kits:

* Three day supply of pet food and water
* Bowls, kitty litter, litter pan, can opener
* Medications, medial records, first aid supplies
* Information on feeding schedules, medical conditions, behavioural problems, and the name and number of your veterinarian
* Sturdy leashes, harnesses, and carriers to safely transport your pets
* Pet treats and toys

# What You Should Do DURING an Emergency

During an emergency, you may not have time to make alternative plans. You may also not be aware of whom to listen to for instructions. That is why it is important to know who to call and what to do under different circumstances.

## When to Call 911

* Report a fire
* Report an in-progress crime
* To save a life/medical emergency

For non-emergency calls, contact the non-emergency number for the local police, fire, or paramedic services. Refer to contacts on [page 28](#_Other_Helpful_Information).

## In Case of a Major Emergency

* Follow your emergency plan
* Get your emergency kit
* Make sure you are safe before assisting others
* Listen to 92.9 The Grand FM on your radio, watch CHCH TV, check the Haldimand County website, monitor Haldimand County and Haldimand Emerg social media accounts for information from local officials and follow their instructions

## Shelter In Place

In an emergency situation you may be required to stay indoors. In-place-sheltering may be short-term such as going to a safe room for a short period of time while a tornado warning is in effect. It may also be longer-term, such as when you stay in your home for several days, sometimes without electricity or water service after a severe storm or after a hazardous chemical release.

These steps to prepare in-place-sheltering will vary depending on the particular emergency situation. However, if at any time you feel there is a threat to your safety by remaining in place, you should evacuate yourself and your family to a safer location. Please listen to the radio or TV, or follow reputable social media accounts for up-to-date information and instructions. Be sure to let your out-of-area contact(s) know that you have left your home.

## Evacuation

In the event of a community disaster, local authorities may advise you to evacuate your home. An evacuation order could come with little warning so it is important to include evacuation plans as part of your emergency preparedness plan.

If an evacuation is necessary, local authorities will notify you directly through the local media. Stay tuned to local radio (92.9 The Grand FM) and TV (CHCH), or check Haldimand County’s website for information on evacuation routes, emergency shelters, and procedures.

Safety Tip #6: It is important to stay calm, listen carefully, and follow all instructions.

If you are ordered to evacuate, take:

* Your emergency plan
* Your emergency kit
* Essential medication and copies of prescriptions
* A cellular phone (if you have one)
* Your pets

Remember: Pets are not allowed in emergency shelters, so plan in advance for pet-friendly locations.

## Protect Your Home

* Shut off water and electricity if officials tell you to
* Leave natural gas services on, unless officials tell you to turn it off. If the gas company advises you to turn off your gas metre, or the supply of gas is interrupted, the gas company or an authorized technician must turn it back on. Please do not attempt to re-activate your gas metre.
* Lock your home

If you have time:

* Call or email your out-of-area contact. Tell then where you are going and when you expect to arrive. Once you are safe, let them know. Tell them if any family members have become separated.
* Leave a note telling others when you left and where you are going

Safety Tip #7: Only use your phone in life-threatening emergencies. Telephone lines are frequently overwhelmed in disaster situations. Keep the lines free for emergency calls to get through.

## Evacuating Your Home

* If possible, try to seek shelter with friends or relatives outside of the affected area. If it is not possible, emergency shelters can be set up in locations in the community. When you are advised to evacuate, you will also be informed of assembly locations for transportation and the location of the nearest emergency shelter.
* Follow the routes specified by emergency officials. Do not take shortcuts on the way to the shelter; they may be blocked or expose you to dangerous hazards.
* Keep in mind that evacuation procedures may take longer when children, elderly adults, or persons with disabilities or medical illnesses are involved. Evacuation may be required sooner in order to meet these needs.

## Driving in Emergency Conditions

* Keep the radio tuned to 92.9 The Grand FM to receive important information
* Follow the routes specified by officials. Do not use shortcuts because certain areas may be impassable or dangerous
* Stay away from downed power lines
* Always pull to the right and stop for emergency vehicles when you hear their siren and see their flashing lights (including green flashing lights as they indicate a volunteer fire fighter responding to an emergency)
* When the traffic signals are not working, the intersection becomes a four-way stop
  + The first vehicle to arrive and stop has the right-of-way
  + If two or more vehicles stop at the same time, the vehicle on the right has the right-of-way

## Emergency Shelters

Emergency shelters may be set up in locations such as schools, municipal buildings, and community centres. When you arrive at the emergency shelter, sign in at the registration desk so you have be accounted for and reunited with your family.

### What to Expect:

* Food (cafeteria style) and water
* Bedding (cots, blankets, or mats)
* Washroom facilities
* Basic medical needs/first aid
* Privacy is limited as families live, eat, and sleep together (typically in one area)
* Pets are not allowed. Arrangements for their care may be made.
* Families are generally expected to look after themselves (e.g. organized baby-sitting is not usually provided)
* Community briefings and information updates will be provided by emergency officials
* Community members with similar experiences, concerns, and situations have a chance to talk to each other
* Counselling services may be available

# Food Safety

## Steps You Can Take to Keep Your Food Safe in an Emergency

Practicing safe food-handling is an important part of everyday life, but is especially important in emergency situations. Be sure to carefully inspect all food items and do not eat any food you think may not be safe. Spoiled food may not look contaminated. Remember, when in doubt, throw it out.

### Plan Ahead for Emergencies

Check the temperature of your fridge and freezer. Are they cold enough?

* Set refrigerators at or below 4°C (40°F). Use a refrigerator thermometer to check the temperature.
* Keep freezers at or below -18°C (0°F). Use a freezer thermometer to check the temperature.
* If there is a power outage, refrigerator and freezer thermometers will indicate the internal temperature of the appliances to help you determine if the stored food is safe.

Have a cooler with ice ready ahead of time to keep refrigerated food cold if you know that the power will be out for more than four hours.

Have items on hand that do not require refrigeration, such as shelf-stable foods, including canned goods and water. Remember to replace these emergency storage food items periodically. Be sure to have ready-to-se baby formula and pet food, if needed, and also ensure that you have a hand-held can opener to use during an emergency.

## Handling Refrigerated and Frozen Foods During a Power Failure

Freezing stops the growth of bacteria. Do not open the refrigerator or freezer door unless absolutely necessary in order to maintain the cold temperature.

* A full freezer will keep food frozen for about 48 hours. A freezer that is half full will keep food frozen for about 24 hours.
* An unopened refrigerator will keep cold for about four hours.
* If available, add ice to the refrigerator to keep the food at a safe temperature if the power will be out for long periods of time.

Do not place frozen food outside, even in the winter. The sun’s rays could thaw frozen food even when the outdoor temperature is very cold, and animals could contaminate your food.

If you know that a power failure will last for a long period of time, see if you can take the food to a friend nearby who has power.

## Safe Handling of Food and Water

Listen to local authorities to determine if tap water is safe to use. If the water is not safe to use, follow instructions to use bottled water, or to boil or disinfect water for cooking, cleaning, and bathing.

Do not use contaminated water to:

* Brush your teeth
* Make baby formula
* Make ice
* Wash and prepare food
* Wash dishes
* Wash your hands

Do not eat any food that may have come in contact with:

* Animal waste
* Chemicals
* Extraneous materials
* Floodwater
* Snow and ice
* Soil and dirt

If buying food at the grocery store, or eating out, ask retailers and restauranteurs to explain how food has been kept safe during a power failure.

Check the condition of stored food and throw away any containers that have been damaged or are past their “best before” date. Can or container damage is shown by:

* Crushing/denting that prevents normal stacking or opening
* Deep rusting
* Holes
* Leakage
* Punctures
* Swelling

Food containers that are not waterproof and could have come into contact with floodwater should be thrown away. These include containers with pull tops, screw-caps, and snap lids.

If the following items have come into contact with floodwater or hazardous material, they should be thrown away because they cannot be sanitized properly:

* Baby formula containers
* Cardboard juice containers
* Home-canned foods
* Milk containers

# What You Should Do AFTER an Emergency

These are general instructions that apply to many emergencies, but not every situation is the same. Refer to the section, “How to Prepare For Specific Emergencies” for additional tips for specific emergency situations.

* Try to stay calm
* Check yourself and others for injuries. Give first aid to people who are injured or trapped; take care of life-threatening situations first. Get help if necessary.
* Check on neighbours, especially the elderly or people with disabilities
* Confine or secure pets
* Use the battery-powered or hand-crank radio from your emergency kit to listen for information and instructions
* Do not use the telephone except to report a life-threatening incident, leaving the phone lines free for official use
* If possible, put on sturdy shoes and protective clothing to help prevent injury from debris, especially broken glass
* Stay away from damaged areas unless you are asked to help or are qualified to give assistance
* Do not go near loose or dangling power lines. Downed power lines can cause fires and carry sufficient power to cause harm. Report them and any broken gas, sewer, and water mains to the authorities.

## Returning Home

Take care when re-entering your home. You should only re-enter your home when local authorities have said it is safe to do so.

### Re-entering Your Home

* If you are inside, check the building for structural damage. If you suspect it is unsafe, leave and do not re-enter.
* Do not turn on light switches or light matches until you are sure that there isn’t any gas leaks or flammable liquid spilled. Use a flashlight to check utilities.
* Do not shut off utilities unless they are damaged, leaking (a gas leak smells like rotten eggs), or if there is a fire. If you turn the gas off, do not turn it on again as this must be done by a qualified technician.
* If you smell gas, leave your house immediately and call 911
* If tap water is available, fill a bathtub and other containers in case the supply gets cut off
* If there is no running water, remember that you may have water available in a hot water tank, toilet reservoir, or in ice cube trays
* Water supplies may be contaminated so purify your water (refer to, “Water Purification Methods” on [page 11](#_Water_Purification_Methods))
* Do not flush the toilet if you suspect that sewer lines are broken
* If you are in a high-rise building, do not use the elevator in case of power failure. If you are in an elevator, push every flood button and get out as soon as possible.
* If the power has been off for several hours, check the food in the refrigerator and freezer in case it has spoiled
* Assess the damage systematically and thoroughly
* Notify your insurance agency of any damage
* Do not throw out damaged goods until an official inventory can be made by your insurance company or an emergency official
* Keep records of all clean-up and repair costs incurred as a result of the disaster, including hotel, meal, and travel costs
* Get direction from authorities on how to clean an decontaminate after emergency situations such as a flood or hazardous material incident

Safety Tip #8: Do not eat any food you think may be unsafe. When in doubt, throw it out.

## Food Safety After an Emergency

### Cleaning and Drying Stored Food and Food Surfaces After a Flood

Only undamaged, commercially prepared foods in sealed, unopened, airtight, waterproof cans, jars, or pouches are entirely safe to use. However, these cans and/or pouches must be carefully inspected, cleaned, and disinfected before use by following these procedures:

* If possible, remove the labels on cans or pouches since they could have come into contact with dirt or bacteria. Be sure to re-label your cans or pouches, including the ‘best before’ date, with a permanent marker.
* After labels are removed cans may be cleaned by washing them for two minutes with a mild bleach solution (5ml or 1 tsp of bleach per 750ml or 3 cups of water)
* Air-dry all cleaned food cans, jars, and pouches to prevent potential contamination when the containers are opened

Food preparation equipment, surfaces, dishes, and utensils should be properly sanitized with a mild bleach solution. It is important to allow them all to air dry thoroughly before storing. Do not put one wet cutting board on top of another because bacteria can multiply in trapped water.

By taking steps before, during, and after an emergency, you can help protect yourself and your family from food-borne illnesses.

### Handling Refrigerated and Frozen Food After a Power Failure

* Discard any thawed food that has been at room temperature for two or more hours, and any food that has an obvious unusual colour or odour. Keep in mind that food contamination with bacteria does not necessarily smell bad or appear spoiled.
* Food that still contains ice crystals or feels refrigerator-cold can be re-frozen
* If raw food has leaked during thawing, clean and disinfect the areas the food has touched. Do not reuse the cloths you have use for clean-up until they have been disinfected by washing in hot water.

## Recovery

For individuals and families who are adequately prepared for disaster, recovery can begin almost as soon as disaster strikes. Depending on the nature and severity of the disaster, recover will need to occur on individual, family, community, provincial, or national levels.

### Individual and Family Recovery

* Seek medical attention for any lingering complaints, unattended wounds, etc.
* Expect to feel different for a while (e.g. confusion, numbness, shock, anger, relief at being alive, and grief. They are all normal reactions)
* Talk to family members about what they experienced and how they are feeling
* Listen to one another; take advantage of available counselling
* Make sure all family members, including children, have specific tasks to do
* Make every effort to stay together as a family as much as possible
* Make rebuilding a group effort

# What You Should Know About SPECIFIC TYPES of Emergencies

## Floods

Floods are the most frequent natural hazard in Canada and the most dangerous in Ontario in terms of property damage, disruption, and even death. Floods are typically caused by seasonal melting snow, ice jams, heavy spring rains, and summer thunderstorms. Flash flooding is often caused by violent rain storms or breaking dams, and usually occurs with little or no advanced warning. When you are building your family emergency plan, review and discuss these safety tips with your entire household to make sure everyone understands what to do.

### General Tips

#### If You Are Indoors

* Listen to the radio or television for emergency information
* Move essential items to an upper floor
* If you have time, bring in outdoor furniture
* Turn off utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so by local officials
* Disconnect electric appliances. Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.
* Do not eat fresh food that has come in contact with flood waters

#### If You Are Outdoors

* Do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you have to walk in water walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.
* Be aware that flash flooding may occur. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground. **Do not wait for instructions to move**.
* Keep children and pets away from flood water.

### Prepare Now

* Review and discuss the safety tips with your entire household to make sure everyone understands what to do during a flood
* Put weather protection sealant around basement windows and the base of ground-level doors
* Install ‘backflow preventers’ on sewer laterals to prevent floodwater from backing up into the drains of your home (requires building permits)
* Ensure that your foundation drains (weeping tile), sump pumps, and rainwater downspouts are not connected to the sanitary sewer as these are potential areas for backups causing basement flooding. In addition, these connections add to the overload of the sanitary sewer increasing the problem. Install the drainage for downspouts and sump pump discharges a sufficient distance from your residence to ensure that water moves away from the building.
* Move any important documents or keepsakes out of the basement and store them at a higher level to protect them from flood damage
* Do not change approved lot grading as it the potential to cause drainage issues with the neighbouring properties
* For gas and water shut-offs, keep shut off instructions close by and read them carefully
* For information on the flood status of the Grand River, check the Grand River Conservation Authority website at:

<http://www.grandriver.ca/index/document.cfm?Sec=76&Sub1=1>

## Pandemic

Pandemic refers to an infectious disease that spreads throughout the global population. This differs from an epidemic. While just as serious, an epidemic is usually contained within a region or country. Historically, pandemics have centred on a new strain of influenza. You can prepare now against a potential pandemic by practicing good health habits, including eating well, drinking lots of water, exercising on a regular basis, and getting plenty of rest.

Ask your heath care provider about getting a seasonal flu shot. An annual flu shot is one of the most effective ways to prevent catching or spreading the flu virus. For more information, please visit the Haldimand Norfolk Health Unit website for their booklet on pandemic/flu.

### General Tips

Wash your hands often with soap and water thoroughly for at least 15 seconds, including:

* Before and after eating
* After you have been in a public place
* After using the washroom
* After coughing and sneezing
* After touching surfaces that other people also touch

### Prepare Now

Consider adding additional items to your emergency preparedness kit such as:

* Alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing between 60-90% alcohol
* Medicine for headaches, cough, and fever (consult with your pharmacist for advice if you buy over-the-counter medicine)
* Thermometer
* Anti-diarrhea medication
* Beverages with electrolytes

## During a Power Outage

First, check whether the power outage is limited to your home. If your neighbours’ power is still on, check your own circuit breaker panel or use box. If the problem is not a breaker or a fuse, check the service wires leading to the house. If they are obviously damaged or on the ground, stay at least ten metres back and notify your electric supply authority. Keep the number along with other emergency numbers near your telephone.

If your neighbours’ power is also out, notify your electric supply authority.

Turn off all tools, appliances, and electronic equipment and turn the thermostat(s) for the home heating system down to minimum to prevent damage from a power surge when power is restored. Also, power can be restored more easily when there is not a heavy load on the electrical system.

Turn off all lights, except one inside and one outside, so that both you and hydro crews outside know that power has been restored.

Do not open your fridge or freezer unless it is absolutely necessary. A full freezer will keep food frozen for 24-36 hours if the door remains closed.

Never use charcoal or gas barbeques, camping heating equipment, or home generators indoors. They give off carbon monoxide, and because you can not smell or see it, carbon monoxide can cause health problems and is life-threatening.

Use proper candle holders. Never leave lit candles unattended and keep out of reach of children. Always extinguish candles before going to bed.

Listen to your battery-powered or wind-up radio for information on the outage and advice from authorities.

### General Tips

* Make sure your home has a working carbon monoxide detector. If it is hard-wired to the house’s electrical supply, ensure it has a battery-powered back up.

### Use of Home Generators

Home generators are handy for backup electricity in case of an outage, but must only be used in accordance with the manufacturer’s guidelines. A back-up generator may only be connected to your home’s electrical system through an approved transfer panel and switch that has been installed by a qualified electrician. Never plug a generator into a wall outlet as serious injury can result when the current produced by the home generator is fed back into the electrical lines, and transformed to a higher voltage. This can endanger the lives of utility employees working to restore the power.

#### To Operate a Generator Safely

* Follow the manufacturer’s instructions
* Ensure that the generator operates outdoors in well-ventilated conditions, well away from doors or windows to prevent exhaust gases from entering the house
* Connect lights and appliances directly to the generator. If extension cords must be used, ensure they are properly rated, CSA-approved cords.

### If You Have to Evacuate

Evacuation is more likely during winter months, when plummeting temperatures can make a house uninhabitable. Although a house can be damaged by low temperatures, the major threat is to the plumbing system. If a standby heating system is used, check to see that no part of the plumbing system can freeze.

If the house must be evacuated, protect it by taking the following precautions:

* Turn off the main braker or switch of the circuit-breaker panel or power-supply box.
* Turn off the water main where it enters the house. Protect the valve, inlet pipe, and metre or pump with blankets or insulation material.
* Drain the water from your plumbing system. Starting at the top of the house, open all taps and flush toilets several times. Go to the basement and open the drain valve. Drain your hot water tank by attaching a hose to the tank drain valve and running it to the basement floor drain.
* Note: if you drain a gas-fired water tank, the pilot light should be turned out – call the local gas supplier to re-light it.
* Unhook washing machine hoses and drain.
* Do not worry about small amounts of water trapped in horizontal pipes. Add a small amount of glycol or antifreeze to water left in the toilet bowl, the sink, and bathtub traps.
* If your house is protected from groundwater by a sump pump, clear valuables from the basement floor in case of flooding.

## Summer Storms/Lightning

Thunderstorms are accompanied by lightning and may produce damaging weather such as tornadoes, hail, high winds, and heavy rain. In Canada, lightning kills on average nine to ten people and seriously injures 92 to 164 people a year. When you are building your family emergency plan, review and discuss these safety tips with your entire household to make sure everyone understands what to do.

### General Tips

#### If You Are Indoors:

* Stay indoors when a thunderstorm strikes. Remain indoors for at least 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder to ensure the storm has moved well away from your location.
* Strong winds and large hailstorms can shatter windows. Stay away from all windows, skylights, and doors.
* Stay away from running water inside a house. Lightning can enter a house through pipes and plumbing. This means no showers or baths during a thunderstorm.

#### If You Are Outdoors:

* If you hear thunder, then lightning is close enough to be dangerous. Move immediately to a place of shelter, Go to a well-constructed and enclosed building. Small open structures do not provide protection from lightning.
* Avoid water, high ground, isolated trees, picnic shelters, and power lines.
* There isn’t a place outside that is safe during a thunderstorm. Make every effort to get into a solid shelter or metal-topped vehicle. If neither are available, find a low-lying area away from tall, pointy, isolated objects, crouch down, and put your feet together. Do not lie down. Cover your ears to reduce the threat of hearing damage from thunder.

### Prepare Now

* Review and discuss the safety tips with your entire household to make sure everyone understands what to do in a severe thunderstorm.
* Designate a safe place in your home away from windows, skylights, and glass doors for household members to gather during a severe storm.
* Remove existing rotting trees and branches that could fall and cause injury or damage during a severe thunderstorm.
* Make a list of items to secure or bring inside during a storm, such as garbage cans and lawn furniture.
* Use a surge protector (a special safety plug unit available at discount and hardware stores) to protect electrical items throughout your home. This will automatically shut down the electricity if lightning strikes in order to prevent fires and damage to individual household items.

## Tornado

Did you know Ontario has an average of 12 tornadoes a year? Most tornadoes occur between the months of May and September. Tracking where they will hit is more difficult to calculate. From the extreme southwest of the province to the farthest northern tip, a tornado can strike anywhere. Think about that when you are building your family emergency plan and discuss these safety tips with your entire household to ensure everybody knows what to do in a tornado.

What is a tornado? A tornado is a powerful column of winds spiraling around a centre of low atmospheric pressure. Also known as twisters, tornadoes often appear behind a shroud of heavy rail or hail in a sky that is green, yellow, or black. A tornado can form quickly. It descends as a roaring funnel cloud that can move at speeds of up to 90 km/hr. Very large thunderstorms can spawn multiple tornadoes or a single tornado with a number of smaller but destructive vortices within it. Tornadoes typically snake erratically from southwest to northeast. They can last for a few minutes or a few hours, and usually leave a path of destruction in their wake. The strongest tornadoes, which rank as an F5 on the Fujita scale, boast winds of just over 500 km/hr.

### General Tips

#### If You Are Indoors:

* The safest place to be is an underground shelter, basement, or safe room.
* If there is no basement, go to the centre of an interior room on the lowest level away from corners, windows, doors, and outside walls. Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside.
* Get under a sturdy table or use your arms to protect your head and neck.
* Do not open windows.

#### If You Are Outdoors:

* Do not wait until you see the tornado to get inside.
* If you are caught outdoors, lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head with your hands.
* Do not get under an overpass or bridge. You are safer in a low, flat location.
* Watch out for flying debris.

#### If You Are In a Mobile Home:

* Go to the nearest sturdy building or shelter immediately. Mobile homes, even when tied down, offer little protection from tornadoes.

### Prepare Now

* Designate a safe room in your home where household members and pets may gather during a tornado. This should be a basement, storm cellar, or interior room on the lowest floor with no windows.
* Conduct a tornado drill so that everyone knows what to do if a tornado is approaching (e.g. practice going to your safe room).
* Remove dead or rotting trees and branches that could fall and cause injury or damage.

## Winter Storm

(Ice/Sleet Storm, Blizzard/Snowstorm, Hailstorm)

Winter storms can be treacherous and damaging if you are unprepared. They can disrupt power supply and transportation and create home and personal safety issues. Bitter cold and winter storms kill more Canadians than those killed by tornadoes, thunderstorms, lightning, floods, and hurricanes combined. Being prepared can literally save your life.

When winter storms are expected, Emergency Management Ontario advises the public to follow these tips.

### Before the Storm

* Add additional items to your emergency preparedness kit such as extra warm clothes and blankets.
* Winterize your home to retain heat by insulating walls and attics, caulking or weather-stripping doors and windows, and installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic.
* Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected every year.

### During the Storm

#### If You Are Indoors:

* Listen to the radio and/or television for weather reports and emergency information.
* Stay indoors. If you must go outside, dress for the weather to avoid serious cold-related injuries.
* Running water, even at a trickle, helps prevent pipes from freezing.

#### If You Are Outdoors:

* Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow. If you must shovel snow, ensure you take frequent breaks so as not to over-stress your body.
* Dress in several layers of lightweight clothing, wear mittens and a hat (preferably one that covers your ears).
* Wear waterproof, insulated boots to keep your feet warm and dry and to maintain your footing in ice and snow.
* It is important to regularly check for frostbite; indicators include numbness or white areas on your face and extremities (ears, nose, cheeks, hands, and feet in particular).
* Bring pets/companion animals inside during winter weather. Move other animals or livestock to sheltered areas with non-frozen drinking water.

# Other Helpful Information You Should Have

**\*In case of emergency, call 911\***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Municipal Organizations |  |
| After Hours Road, Sewer, and Water Emergencies | 1-888-849-7345 |
| Dunnville Hospital and Healthcare | 905-774-2529 |
| Emergency Services Administration | 905-318-5932 |
| Haldimand War Memorial Hospital | 905-774-7431 |
| Haldimand County Hydro | 905-765-5211 |
| Toll Free | 1-877-872-2570 |
| Ontario Provincial Police – Cayuga Detachment | 905-772-3322 |
| Union Gas – Emergency | 1-877-969-0999 |
| West Haldimand General Hospital | 905-768-3311 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Non-Emergency Contacts |  |
| Ambulance Dispatch | 905-383-9838 |
| Fire Dispatch | 905-684-4311 |
| Ontario Provincial Police Dispatch | 888-310-1122 |
| Union Gas – Non-Emergency | 1-888-774-7311 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Personal Emergency Contacts** | **Name** | **Contact Number** |
| Local Contact |  |  |
| Out of Town Contact |  |  |
| Family Numbers |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Schools/Day Care |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Family Physician/Pediatrician |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Veterinarian/Kennel |  |  |
| Car Insurance |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| House Insurance |  |  |

You may choose to create an inventory list of items and information pertaining to your home. This information could help you if your family’s home sustains any damage during an emergency. Keeping a list of your home’s contents with any model or serial numbers and photographs may be useful post-emergency. Please refer to your homeowner’s insurance policy for specific information on claim requirements.

# Floor Plan and Escape Route

Fire can spread rapidly through your home, leaving you as little as **two** minutes to escape safely once the alarm sounds. Your ability to get out depends on advance warning from smoke alarms, and advance planning – a home fire escape plan that everyone in your family is familiar with and has practiced.

## Safety Tips

* Make a home escape plan on grid sheets. Draw a map of your home showing all doors and windows. Discuss the plan with everyone in your home.
* Know at least two ways out of every room, if possible. Make sure all doors and windows leading outside open easily.
* Haven an outside meeting place (like a tree or mailbox) a safe distance from the home where everyone should meet.
* Twice a year, practice your home fire drill – at night and during the day – with everyone in your home.
* Practice using different ways out.
* Teach children how to escape on their own in case you are unable to help them.
* Close doors behind you as you leave.

## **If The Alarm Sounds….**

* Get out AND STAY OUT. Never go back inside.
* If you have to escape through smoke, get low and go under the smoke to your way out.
* Call 911 from outside your home.