

Home **Emergency** Preparedness



Plan • Prepare • Know

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Home Emergency Preparedness

Emergencies can come in a variety of forms, but they all constitute a major danger to both people and property.

In the case of an emergency the City and various emergency organizations will leap into action, each enacting their own procedures and plans to minimize the risks when disaster strikes.

Like those emergency professionals, you, and your family, should also have a plan, the knowledge and the preparation necessary to react to any disaster. If you are prepared it doesn't only help you. Being prepared means emergency responders can prioritize those who need help most.



Have a Plan

Having a plan can make all the difference in an emergency, a plan means your family will know what to do and when. If disaster strikes you won't waste any time making decisions, or second-guessing yourself, in the moment.

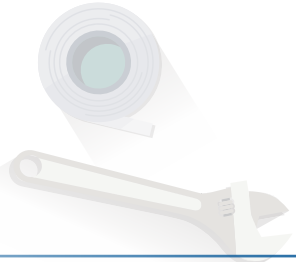
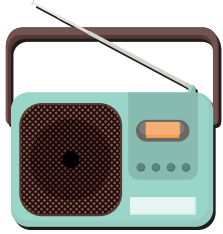
Your plan should include:

- A friend or family contact outside of the area in case anyone is separated during an emergency
- A home escape plan, including emergency exits for each room of your home
- Meeting places, including one inside your neighbourhood, and one well outside it in case of a large-scale emergency
- Have a designated place to meet and stay out of town in case it is needed
- Have a communications plan, make sure everyone in the house knows who to call in case of an emergency, especially if you become separated
- Special arrangements for those with special needs such as limited mobility or health issues



Emergency FYI: *Don't forget to practice your emergency plan with all members of your household, including children and those with special needs.*

See Page 23 for an emergency contact checklist.



Have a Kit

In the event of an emergency, the services we all rely on every day may not be available. Individuals may not be able to leave their homes, or access food, water and other resources. In the event of a large-scale disaster or emergency it could take days for emergency crews to get to you as they prioritize the most urgent injuries and incidents.

Make sure your home is stocked with an emergency supply kit to get everyone through 72 hours, keep one in your car as well. Keep your kit in a bag or suitcase so it is easy to grab and carry, in case you are ordered to evacuate. Locate the kit in an easily accessible area and ensure everyone in the home knows its location.






Your kit should include:

- Water, four litres per person per day
- Copies of identification and important documents
- Non-perishable foods, high-energy foods like peanut butter are great, make sure you have food for those with special diets in your home
- Medications, especially a one-week supply of important prescriptions
- First aid kit and manual
- Personal hygiene items
- Battery or crank-operated radio
- Flashlights
- Extra batteries
- Basic tools
- Extra clothing, especially for inclement weather
- A copy of your home emergency plan
- Cooking and eating utensils
- Supplies for any pets in the home, including food and water See page 22 for a pet emergency kit checklist

See page 20 for a handy emergency kit checklist.



Emergency FYI: *Make sure you restock your home emergency supply kit every six months when the clocks change and you check your smoke alarm batteries. Check expiry dates on food and medication and restock new water. Check to make sure copies of identification are up to date.*



Have the Knowledge

From severe weather caused by the impact of climate change to chemical spills to major infrastructure disruptions an emergency can come in many forms. Knowing the hazards and what to do can help your family react in the best possible way to an emergency.



Emergency FYI: *The world is changing, and so are the frequency, type and scope of emergencies. With climate change once-in-a-lifetime weather events, such as droughts and floods, are happening every few years.*

Flooding

St. Catharines has plenty of shoreline, all of which can surge above normal levels, most commonly in the spring and summer. Flooding can happen anytime though, even in areas well away from shorelines if heavy rain overwhelms drainage infrastructure.

Before a flood:

- Have your emergency kit ready
- Ensure water has a path to drain away from your home
- Ensure catch basins and storm drains are clear of debris
- Store important documents in upper levels of the home
- Safeguard electrical and/or gas home heating equipment
- Consult with your electrical and gas providers for the best practice if a flood is forecast

During a flood:

- Evacuate if advised
- Avoid walking or driving in flooded areas or through flood waters
- Exercise extra caution around waterways
- Do not drink or wash with flood water



Emergency FYI: *Electricity and water are a deadly combination. Don't try to shut off electricity if water is present, and never enter a room where water might be in contact with live electrical outlets.*

Winter Weather

From snow to freezing rain extreme winter weather can pose a variety of risks. Roadways can become dangerous to use or impassible, accumulating ice can bring down power lines and plummeting temperatures can cause frostbite or hypothermia.

Before a winter storm:

- Remove vehicles from streets and roads
- Reschedule appointments if possible
- Clear drainage outlets and downspouts
- Locate shovels and sand
- Charge cell phones and computers
- Consider work from home options

During and after a winter storm:

- Avoid unnecessary travel
- Work from home if possible
- Clear windrows
- In extreme cold turning household taps to slightly open can prevent pipes from freezing
- If exposed to cold, regularly check for frostbite
- If you get frostbite, warm the area slowly with warm water, roughly 40 to 43 C
- Prepare an emergency vehicle kit for all vehicles, see **page 21** for a vehicle kit checklist



Emergency FYI: *Weather warnings*

Environment Canada issues special alerts for severe weather of all types.

Alerts are divided into three levels:

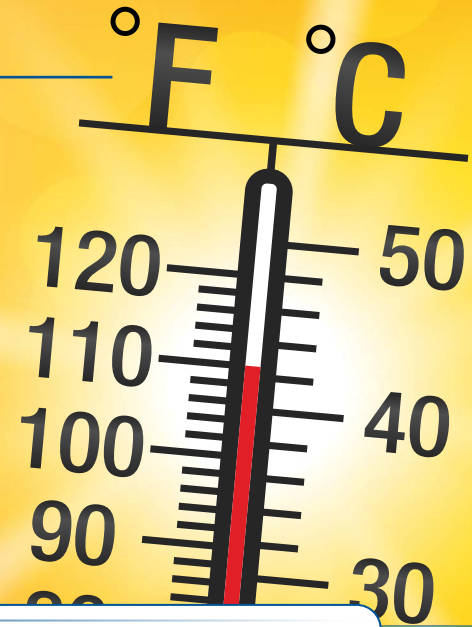
- *Special weather statement: the least urgent of the alerts, severe weather could be on the way*
- *Watch: severe weather of a given type is very likely*
- *Warning: the highest alert level, severe weather is occurring or will occur soon.*

Extreme Heat

Exposure to hot weather for extended periods can pose serious health risks, especially to children and seniors.

During a heatwave:

- Drink lots of fluids, preferably water
- Stay indoors if possible, avoid direct exposure to the sun
- Wear lightweight, light-coloured clothing
- Avoid strenuous activity
- Avoid alcohol and caffeinated drinks
- Don't eat high-protein foods
- Check on your elderly neighbours



Emergency FYI: *During instances of extreme heat or cold the City of St. Catharines opens warming or cooling centres respectively in select City facilities. Visit the City website or social media for more information, or call Citizens First at 905.688.5600.*

Wind Storms and Tornadoes

Tornadoes are a rotating column of air, forming a funnel cloud that can touch down and cause destruction on the ground.

Tornadoes usually occur between May and September, in the afternoon or early evening. They can move at speeds of more than 70 km per hour, leaving long paths of destruction, uprooting trees, tossing cars and demolishing houses.

Individuals should remain aware of weather conditions and warnings, seeking shelter immediately if a warning has been issued or it is believed a tornado could occur.



Before a wind storm or tornado:

- Trim tree limbs
- Tie down or move objects inside
- Prepare for possible hydro outage

During a wind storm or tornado:

- Ride out the storm in an underground shelter such as a basement
- If sheltering underground is not possible choose a room in the centre of the lowest-level of the building; stay clear of corners, windows, doors and outside walls
- Get under a sturdy piece of furniture, protect the head and neck
- If outdoors, seek shelter immediately in an area of low ground such as a ditch, avoid sheltering under a bridge or overpass



Emergency FYI: *After tornados and other storm events:*

- Check on family and neighbours
- Call 9-1-1 if individuals are trapped or injured
- Avoid damaged areas
- Call in downed or damaged power lines, or gas leaks to 9-1-1
- Call 905.688.5600 for damaged water mains and sewer lines
- Avoid driving, debris and damaged infrastructure can make driving dangerous

Earthquakes

Caused by shifts in the earth's crust, earthquakes can be sudden and violent, causing extensive damage to buildings and infrastructure.

During an earthquake:

- Stay indoors
- Take cover under sturdy furniture
- Avoid windows and bookcases
- Don't try to leave a shaking building
- If outside don't go near buildings, structures or hydro wires
- Don't go near buildings after the earthquake, there could be aftershocks



Emergency FYI: *While earthquakes are rare, and usually low in intensity, Niagara is ranked as a level-two earthquake risk zone.*

Explosions and Fires

Fires and explosions bring with them a risk of fatalities and injuries resulting from several factors, including burns and smoke inhalation. Beyond the immediate dangers caused by smoke and heat, toxins contained in smoke, if inhaled, can cause severe respiratory effects, and long-term health impacts.

Risks with fires and explosions can be reduced by having working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, and fire extinguishers in the home.

During a fire:

- Immediately evacuate the building, use your home escape plan and stay low to the floor
- If clothes catch fire stop, drop and roll, covering your face
- Don't open a door if the handle is hot
- Call 9-1-1 only after you have safely exited the building
- Don't use an elevator



Emergency FYI: *Keeping interior doors closed can slow the spread of fire in the home.*

Hazardous Material Incidents

Hazardous material incidents occur with the unintentional release of material that is considered to be hazardous to humans, animals, plants, or the environment due to its explosive, flammable, combustible, corrosive, oxidizing, toxic, infectious or radioactive properties.

In the case of a large-scale incident residents may be asked to shelter in place, or evacuate. (see page 19)

During a hazardous material incident:

- Stay away from the area
- Seek shelter away from odour, gas clouds or spills
- Follow directions of emergency responders
- If outside hold a cloth over your nose or mouth
- Keep track of any possible health impacts, report them to a physician
- Remain inside if sheltering in place, close all doors, windows and vents



Emergency FYI: *Always store household chemicals responsibly. Chemicals should never be stored in large amounts, or in food containers. Keep chemicals out of reach of children. Remember not to mix chemicals of any type.*



Health Emergencies: Pandemics and Epidemics

Infectious disease outbreaks that are widespread can present a danger to the general health and well-being of residents. Such outbreaks can be caused by bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi. Diseases can be passed from person to person, or acquired through the environment.

During a pandemic or epidemic:

- Wash hands often with soap and water
- Cover your mouth and nose when sneezing and coughing
- Stay healthy by drinking plenty of water, eating healthy foods, and getting plenty of rest
- Avoid close contact with sick individuals
- Don't go into work or school if you are sick
- Stay up to date on immunizations



Emergency FYI: *Climate change is changing the way disease is transmitted. Warmer winters mean new pathogens and their carriers are calling our province home, such as Lyme disease carried by the blacklegged tick.*

Transportation Emergencies

Transportation emergencies can come in a variety of forms, via road, rail and air. Such emergencies can be small scale, like a car accident, or large scale, like the derailment of a train carrying hazardous materials.

During a transportation emergency:

- Avoid the area, plan alternate routes
- Yield or pull over for responding emergency vehicles
- Keep an emergency kit in your car
[See page 21 for a vehicle emergency kit checklist.](#)



Emergency FYI: *Your car emergency kit should include booster cables, vehicle fluids, emergency flares, a survival candle, a blanket and first aid kit.*



Infrastructure Disruptions



These emergencies involve disruption of the services and utilities everyone relies on such as government, water or hydro.

In instances of critical infrastructure disruption individuals must be prepared to cope on their own for 72 hours. Having a well-stocked emergency kit, and emergency plan are crucial.

Power outages are the most common such emergency.

During a power outage:

- Unplug electrical appliances to prevent damage
- Only use portable generators outdoors in a well ventilated area
- Keep candles clear of anything that will burn
- Do not leave candles unattended
- Check on neighbours, especially the vulnerable



**POWER
OUTAGE**



Emergency FYI: *During a power outage avoid opening the fridge to keep cold air inside. After prolonged outages check for spoiled foods and discard them properly.*

Who to call? When to call 9-1-1

The 9-1-1 line is for emergencies, only call when people or property are at risk. Be sure to remain calm and speak clearly, identify what emergency service is required, and have your exact location.

Make sure children know how and when to call 9-1-1. They should learn where to find non-emergency numbers.



Call 9-1-1 in instances of:

- Fire
- Serious injuries
- Life-threatening emergencies
- Downed power lines
- Gas leaks
- Criminal activity



Don't call 9-1-1:

- For minor, non-life-threatening injuries
- To locate relatives
- Report water service disruptions
- Find the availability or location of shelters, businesses, and city services



Emergency FYI: *During an emergency you can call 2-1-1 for important non-emergency information such as road closures, evacuation centre locations, and availability of services.*

Evacuation or Shelter in Place orders

Residents may be asked to shelter in place or evacuate depending on the nature of the emergency. Under either scenario it is important to follow the instructions of emergency responders.



If ordered to shelter in place:

- Go indoors immediately and stay there
- Close all windows and doors
- Turn off furnace, air conditioners and other exhaust systems
- Only dial 9-1-1 in an emergency
- Close all vents and dampers
- Monitor TV, radio and social media for more information

If there is need to evacuate you will be notified by emergency authorities at your door. They will provide any special directions and the locations of emergency shelters if available. In instances of large-scale disasters evacuation orders and information could come via television, radio and phone using the Alert Ready system.



If ordered to evacuate:

- Take your 72-hour emergency kit
- Lock your home
- Shut off water, electricity and gas if directed by authorities



Emergency FYI: *Upon returning to your home don't turn on gas yourself, call your utility provider to restore service.*



72-hour emergency kit checklist

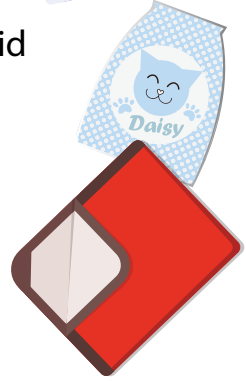
- Food
- Water
- First aid kit and manual
- Flashlight and batteries
- Radio and batteries
- Extra batteries
- Candles and matches or a lighter
- Extra car keys
- Cash
- Important documents and identification
- Can opener
- Clothing
- Blankets, sleeping bags
- Personal hygiene items
- Medication
- Whistle
- Playing cards



Vehicle Emergency Kit Checklist



- Flashlight (preferably a crank type)
- Small first-aid kit
- Reflective safety triangle or flares
- Snow brush and scraper
- Traction aid such as a bag of sand or kitty litter
- Small shovel
- Booster cables
- Extra windshield washer fluid
- Small toolkit
- Extra fuses for the vehicle
- Blanket
- Water
- Non-perishable snacks





Pet Emergency Kit Checklist



- Food for 72 hours, including bowls and can opener if required
- Water for 72 hours
- Blanket and/or towel
- Leash, muzzle, harness
- Litter pan, litter and bags for disposal
- Pet carrier
- Medical records
- Veterinarian contact information
- Medications and a pet first aid kit
- Identification tags and/or tracking chip number



IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND INFORMATION SOURCES

Citizens First

St. Catharines Fire Services

Niagara Regional Police

City of St. Catharines Twitter

St. Catharines Facebook

City of St. Catharines Emergency Preparedness Webpage

City of St. Catharines Climate Change Webpage

905.688.5600 • CitizensFirst@StCatharines.ca

905.688.5601 ext. 4204

905.688.4111

@St_Catharines

facebook.com/CityOfStCatharines

stcatharines.ca/EmergencyPreparedness

stcatharines.ca/ClimateChange

Emergency contact information

Family member 1: _____

Family member 2: _____

Family member 3: _____

Family member 4: _____

Family member 5: _____

Family member 6: _____

Out-of-town contact: _____

Emergency meeting place: _____

Long-distance meeting place: _____

Family doctor: _____

Pharmacy: _____

School: _____

Work: _____

The logo features the word "Home" in a light blue, sans-serif font, positioned above the word "Emergency" in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font. A thin blue line forms a simple house roof shape above "Home". Below "Emergency" is the word "Preparedness" in a light blue, sans-serif font.

Home
Emergency
Preparedness

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905.688.5600