

Earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and wildfires are just some of the potential hazards in British Columbia.

During a disaster, phone, gas, electrical and water services may be disrupted. Roads could be blocked, stores closed and gas stations out-of-service.

You and your family could be on your own for several days while emergency responders work to save lives and manage the aftermath. It may be weeks before infrastructure, utilities and essential services are restored. Are you prepared to cope?

Completing the steps in this guide will help you to answer “yes”. Once you’re done, download the companion *In it Together: Neighbourhood Preparedness Guide* at gov.bc.ca/PreparedBC. The most immediate help in an emergency will come from you, your family and those directly around you – your neighbours. Connecting and preparing with them today will mean a better response and faster recovery.

Step 1 Know the Risks

Hazards vary depending on where you live. Below is a list of the top 10 risks in BC. Familiarize yourself with the ones that could occur in your area by contacting your local authority for more information. Knowing which ones you face will influence how you prepare.

- Earthquakes
- Severe Weather
- Tsunamis
- Power Outages
- Floods
- Hazardous Materials Spills
- Landslides
- Wildland Fires
- Avalanches
- Disease Outbreaks



More than 1,200 earthquakes are recorded in BC each year. Most are too small to be felt, but an earthquake capable of causing structural damage is expected to occur about once every 10 years. The 6.3 magnitude earthquake that struck Christchurch, New Zealand in 2011 was strong enough to shift this home off its foundation.

MAKE A PLAN

Thinking ahead will help reduce the stress of an emergency.

Step 2 *Make a Phone List*

Make a master list of family and emergency numbers then ensure everyone in your household has a copy. The list should include at least one out-of-area contact in case local phone and mobile networks are overwhelmed. Ideally, choose someone who lives outside BC and wouldn't be affected by a major event, such as an earthquake. For example, someone living in Washington, Oregon or California could be impacted as well.

Call the out-of-area contact if you find yourself separated from family. Let them know where you are, how you're doing and arrange a future check-in time. Advise family members to do the same so everyone stays connected.

TIP: In an emergency, use text messaging, email or social media to communicate. Data-based services are less likely to experience major interruptions.



Are you OK?

YES!

Step 3 *Pick a Meeting Place*

Decide where you'll meet family members during an emergency. Gathering at home is the ideal, but if you can't get there, agree on a secondary location. A neighbour's house, library or community centre are options.

TIP: If you leave your home, put a sign in the window advising you're okay, where you've gone and how you can be reached.



Step 4 *Plan for Your Kids*

If you have young children, you need to consider what happens if you can't make it to their school or daycare. Identify people who could pick them up in the event you can't, ideally someone who's home during the day and within walking distance to where your child will be. Notify the school or daycare of who's authorized to pick-up your children and make sure your kids know as well.

TIP: Talk to your kids about emergencies. Be honest and straight-forward. The more they know in advance, the better they'll be able to react and cope.



Step 5 *Know Where to Get Information*

Contact your local government's emergency management program to find out how it will share alerts and instructions during an emergency, whether it's via social media, sirens, the radio or television. The most important thing is to seek out credible sources so you can make good decisions during a disaster.

Connect with us

TWITTER:



- [@EmergencyInfoBC](#) for alerts
- [@PreparedBC](#) for preparedness information
- [@BCGovFireInfo](#) for wildfire updates
- [@DriveBC](#) for road conditions



FACEBOOK:

- [BC Forest Fire Information](#)

WEB:

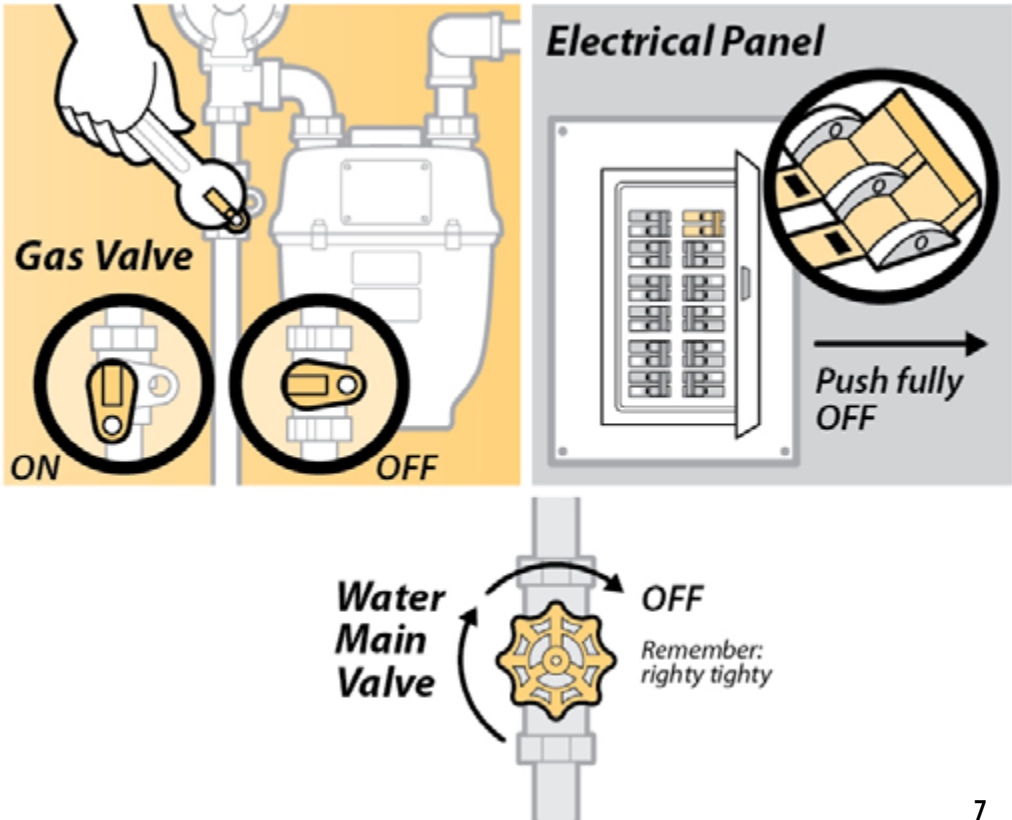
- www.EmergencyInfoBC.gov.bc.ca for alerts
- www.gov.bc.ca/PreparedBC for preparedness tips



Step 6 Know How to Turn Off Utilities

Do you know where your electrical panel, water and gas valves are located? Do you know how to turn them off? Learn how in case of leaks or if you're instructed to do so by local officials.

IMPORTANT: If you suspect a gas leak, turn off the gas valve and leave immediately. Once the gas is shut off at the meter, DON'T try to turn it back on. Only a registered gas contractor can do that safely.



PREPARE YOUR HOME

Step 7 Store Emergency Water

Water is the most important item to store. You will need at least four litres (one gallon) of water per person, per day. A family of four will need 48 litres of water for a three-day supply. Also take pets and people with unique needs into account. Check your water supply every six months and replenish or renew as needed.

TIP: Refresh your water supply when the clocks spring forward and fall back. You can also set a reminder on your phone.



Step 8 Stock Emergency Supplies

Have enough non-perishable food to support your family for at least three days. If the power is out, use the food from your fridge and freezer first, followed by your pantry. Ensure you have a suitable food supply for babies, toddlers and pets.



First Aid kit and medications



Whistle to signal for help



Battery-powered or hand crank radio tuned to Environment Canada weather



Cell phone with chargers, inverter or solar charger



Battery-powered or hand crank flashlight with extra batteries



Local maps (identify a family meeting place) and some cash in small bills



At least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. Manual can opener for cans



Water, four litres per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation



Garbage bags, moist towelettes and plastic ties for personal sanitation



Dust mask to help filter contaminated air



Seasonal clothing and footwear

Step 9 *Consider Special Needs*

Medical records may be difficult to access during a disaster. If you rely on a prescription, aim to have a month's supply available at all times. If you can't, keep a copy of your prescription, dosage and name of the prescribing doctor with your emergency supplies.

Other things to consider:

- If you rely on a motorized wheelchair, have a manual back-up one.
- If you have a guide or service dog, ensure they're part of your preparations. That includes a three-day supply of water and pet food, a leash and collar and copies of vaccination records.
- If you use hearing aids, stock extra batteries.
- If you have difficulty communicating verbally, have a writing pad and pencils handy.



Step 10 *Secure Your Space*

Earthquakes can topple bookcases and heavy furniture. If you live in a quake zone, here are a few easy steps to follow:

- Secure tall, free-standing furniture, such as bookcases, china cabinets and shelving units to wall studs using “L” brackets, corner brackets or anodized aluminum moulding.
- Earthquakes have a tendency to knock pictures and mirrors off the walls. Consider moving all framed pictures and mirrors away from beds, couches and chairs.
- To prevent cabinet doors from flying open, secure them with either a push latch or a pull latch.
- Appliances such as refrigerators, freezers, washers and dryers can move significantly during an earthquake. Use strong strapping and ratchets or other connectors to secure them.
- Secure your water heater with straps that anchor the tank snugly to the wall. Contract a licensed gas fitter to install a flexible gas line.

TIP: If it is taller than it is wide, secure it!



ON THE GO

Step 11 *Create a Grab-and-go Bag*

Don't count on being home when there's an emergency. There's also a chance you may have to evacuate your house on short notice. To prepare for these possibilities, create grab-and-go bags for your home, work and vehicles.

What to include:

- Food (ready to eat) and water
- Flashlight and batteries, headlamp
- AM/FM radio
- Medication(s)
- Seasonal clothing
- Blanket
- Pen and notepad
- Cell phone charger
- Personal toiletries
- Small first aid kit
- Extra pair of glasses or contacts
- Cash in small bills
- Local map
- Whistle
- Out-of-area contact card
- Copies of important documents, family photos, etc. Consider storing copies on a USB stick

TIP: Always keep your vehicle's gas tank half full in case you're required to evacuate on short notice.



HOUSEHOLD PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST

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- 1.** Identify the risks for your region.
 - 2.** Make an emergency phone list with at least one out-of-area contact.
 - 3.** Pick a meeting spot if you're separated from family members.
 - 4.** Assign someone to collect your children from school or daycare if you can't.
 - 5.** Identify what official sources you'll get information from.
 - 6.** Learn how to turn off utilities.
 - 7.** Store enough emergency water for your family.
 - 8.** Store enough emergency food to support your family for a minimum of three days.
 - 9.** Identify any special needs, such as medications, and make sure a proper supply is on hand.
 - 10.** Secure your space.
 - 11.** Create grab-and-go bags.

