

Make sure you're prepared for a disaster

Home (/)

Earthquakes, fires and floods are obvious potential disasters, but so is losing back-up disks or tripping over a cable and knocking out a computer system. These can result in the loss of important data. Even a frozen pipe that bursts can result in a potential disaster.

Everyone needs a disaster plan. It should provide information and protect you, your family and friends from personal injury while in your home.



Audit potential hazards (<http://www.rebgv.org/make-sure-youre-prepared-disaster#audit>)

Training and drills (<http://www.rebgv.org/make-sure-youre-prepared-disaster#training>)

Emergency procedures (<http://www.rebgv.org/make-sure-youre-prepared-disaster#emergency>)

Safeguarding your assets (<http://www.rebgv.org/make-sure-youre-prepared-disaster#safeguarding>)

Emergency equipment and supplies (<http://www.rebgv.org/make-sure-youre-prepared-disaster#supplies>)

- **Sample emergency kit** (<http://www.rebgv.org/make-sure-youre-prepared-disaster#kit>)

What to do in a(n):

- **Earthquake** (<http://www.rebgv.org/make-sure-youre-prepared-disaster#earthquake>)
- **Fire/explosion** (<http://www.rebgv.org/make-sure-youre-prepared-disaster#fire>)
- **Flood** (<http://www.rebgv.org/make-sure-youre-prepared-disaster#flood>)
- **Severe weather** (<http://www.rebgv.org/make-sure-youre-prepared-disaster#weather>)

Resources (<http://www.rebgv.org/make-sure-youre-prepared-disaster#resources>)

Preparing a disaster plan begins with:

- Having medical data about you and your family, for example, information about allergies and medical conditions such as diabetes.

- Having up-to-date next-of-kin or emergency contact information. Disaster relief workers will need to know who do you contact if there is an emergency and permission is needed for a medical procedure.

Audit potential hazards

How safe is your home? Have a look around and identify and then correct potential dangers, including:

- book shelves, cabinets, photos or paintings in glass frames not properly secured to the walls;
- glass in windows and mirrors;
- cords and wires across floors where you, your family or visitors might trip; and
- areas under desks and tables which need to be kept clear to provide shelter.

Training and drills

Make sure you and at least one family member (or if you live alone, one of your neighbours) are trained in first aid, including the Heimlich maneuver, injecting an Epi pen in the case of a bee sting or food allergy, and cleaning and bandaging minor wounds.

- Hold an annual fire drill in your home and review emergency procedures.
- Test fire alarms and know how to use fire extinguishers.
- Know the location of shut-off valves for water, gas and power – and how to shut them off.

Emergency procedures

Plan emergency route in your home – whether it's detached or an apartment condominium.

Write down a checklist to follow during an evacuation which includes:

- shutting down computers and other equipment;
- accounting for family members and/or friends and pets during an evacuation;
- closing doors and locking your home.

Safeguarding your assets

Back-up copies of your computer data and vital records including important passwords and store off-site.

Make copies of important documents such as your passport, driver's license, credit cards and insurance policies and store off site, in an easily accessible location.

Install surge protectors for all computers and phones, and battery back-up systems.

Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how your home would be secured after a disaster. • Establish a meet-up location in case your home is damaged or unusable. • Establish agreements with clean-up and restoration companies who can remediate your home to a usable condition.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish communication through cell phones or radio transmission. • Arrange for an off-site contact to become a message centre notifying family and friends.
Data and Finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duplicate and store vital records including financial and legal documents, and back-up disks in an off-site facility. • Develop procedures for post-disaster financial transactions so you have ready cash on hand.

Emergency equipment and supplies

Make sure you have fire extinguishers, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and alarms. Create a schedule to test and monitor them.

Buy or create and maintain an emergency kit which contains a three-day supply of water and non-perishable food and other necessities such as a flashlight with spare batteries, face masks and tools such as a hammer and mini-saw. Review the contents annually as part of your emergency drill.

Store the kits in an area least vulnerable to destruction in a portable, water-proof container. Use the following list as a guideline.

Sample safety kit

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency contact list • at least one first aid kit with gauze and tape, antiseptic wipes, anti-bacterial ointment, a cold pack, non-latex gloves, a CPR breathing barrier, medications such as pain relievers and stomach remedies • a three-day supply of non-perishable food • enough water to supply 12 litres per person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a signal mirror • pots and pans, dishes, utensils, aluminum foil • blankets or sleeping bags • a sewing kit and scissors • toilet paper • anti-bacterial soap, liquid detergent, bleach • garbage bags • mylar blanket
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- a battery powered or wind-up radio with extra batteries
- at least one fire extinguisher
- work gloves and tools – hammer, pliers, wrenches, knife
- masking and duct tape
- easy-to-operate camp stove with two canisters of fuel
- candles and water proof matches
- a whistle

- written instructions on how to turn off gas and water if authorities advise
- notebooks, pens, pencils
- reading material
- cash to buy meals and supplies
- camera and film

What to do in a(n):

Earthquake – sample guide

Before

- Have enough supplies to last for three days or more.
- Know where safe spots are in each room—under tables, desks or supported doorways.
- Know where danger spots are in each room—near windows, hanging objects or unsecured furniture such as large paintings, light fixtures and book shelves.

During

- Duck, cover and hold on. Take cover under a desk or table or sit/kneel beside a strong interior wall.
- Stay away from windows, bookshelves and filing cabinets.
- Never use an elevator.
- Outside avoid power lines and buildings.
- If a representative is in a vehicle, they should pull over away from buildings, power lines, bridges and overpasses and stay in their vehicle.
- Anyone in a crowd should seek cover and try not to get trampled.

After

- Expect aftershocks and duck, cover and hold on.
- Never use candles or matches where there may be broken gas or propane lines.
- Send someone trained or go yourself to turn off the outside gas valve, and the furnace if required.
- Use the telephone only for emergency, life-saving calls.
- If indoors, stay there if possible. If outdoors, avoid damaged buildings, power lines and poles.

- Apply first aid to anyone injured and avoid moving seriously injured victims unless necessary.
- Turn on a computer, TV or radio for information.
- If you decide to evacuate, take emergency supplies.
- Place HELP signs in windows.

Fire/explosion – sample guide

Before

- Know escape routes; and
- Know where fire extinguishers are located and how to use them.

During

- Douse small fires with fire extinguishers. For a spreading blaze, use the fire alarm and evacuate, closing doors.
- Stay close to the ground where smoke and fumes.
- If clothing catches fire—Stop...Drop...Roll.
- Never use elevators.
- Go to pre-determined gathering spot and call 911 to notify the fire department.
- If anyone is trapped in a room, place a cloth (a coat or jacket) around/under the door to prevent smoke from entering. Signal for help from a window.

After

- Never return to the office until the fire department tells you it is safe.

Flood – sample guide

- Turn off your furnace and gas (from outside).
- Avoid wet wires, outlets and electrical equipment.
- Turn on your battery-powered radio for emergency bulletins.
- Do not drive or walk through a flooded area.
- Do not begin clean-up until electrical outlets and systems have been inspected.

Severe weather - sample guide

- During a wind storm, avoid windows since they can break, scattering glass.
- Anyone outside should avoid power lines and poles, trees and unsafe structures.
- Avoid driving.
- If anyone is caught in a vehicle during a snowstorm, stay with the vehicle. Use the emergency kit kept in the trunk which should contain a mylar blanket, a candle and matches, food, water, a flare to signal your location, a set of warm clothing and medical supplies.

Resources

Emergency Management BC (<http://www.embc.gov.bc.ca/index.htm>)

Disaster Response Routes (http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/popular-topics/driver_info/route-info/disroute/disaster_response_routes.htm)