

Flood preparedness

Overview

Floods are a frequent hazard in Canada, and have devastated many areas of Alberta. High-risk flood zones are in low-lying areas along river banks, called flood plains. These areas naturally flood when water levels rise.

Flood facts

Flooding can occur at any time of year and can result from:

- Heavy rainfall, particularly when the ground is still frozen or already wet
- Ice jams
- Rapid melting of glaciers or snow packs
- Natural or man-made dam failures

Low-lying areas along rivers or in ravines have a high risk of flooding. Heavy rainfall or dam failures can cause flash floods, which happen quickly and with no warning.

Financial preparedness

- Speak to an insurance agent about your specific needs.
- Know your insurance policy. Make sure your home, vehicle, business and belongings are protected.
- If possible, consider an emergency savings account to cover temporary expenses while you are out of your home.
- If you can, keep emergency cash handy in case banking services are unavailable.
- If you are evacuated, keep all receipts for additional expenses.
- Prepare a [detailed list](#) of all your belongings.
- Know the [7 steps](#) for making a home insurance claim.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada is ready to answer your questions. Connect with them by email at askibcwest@ibc.ca or by telephone 1-844-227-5422. For more information on insurance preparedness visit ibc.ca.

Before a flood

The potential for flood damage is high in the flood plains. If possible, avoid building or buying properties located there. Because flooding is not limited to these areas and can happen anywhere, here are a few things you can do to prepare:

How to prepare

Individuals and families should be prepared to take care of themselves for at least 72 hours. The following steps will assist you in building your preparedness plan.

- Download the [Alberta Rivers: Data and advisories](#) app, or visit rivers.alberta.ca website for more information.
- Maintain an [emergency kit](#) stocked with supplies such as water, food, battery-powered/crank radio/flashlight, extra batteries or [Weatheradio](#).
- Collect any important documents such as passports, birth certificates, banking information, and insurance papers and store them in a safe place in an above ground location.
- If you have a vehicle, keep the tank full in case fuel stations lose power or close down. Keep a [vehicle kit](#) and include an extra phone charger, with necessary adapters.

Find out where your community will post information and updates during an emergency, and make sure to download the [Alberta Emergency Alert](#) app for critical, life-saving alerts.

Protect your home and belongings

- Use weather protection sealant around basement windows and the base of ground-level doors.
- Ensure downspout drainage moves water away from the property.
- Install a sump pump and zero reverse flow valves in basement floor drains.

Safeguard pets and livestock

- Have a pet plan in case of evacuation. Include where they will go and how they will get there.

Water is powerful. It only takes 6 inches of moving water to knock over an adult, 12 inches to carry away a car, and 2 feet to move an SUV. Never attempt to cross a flooded area.

During a flood

If there is a threat of flooding in your area, prepare to leave. Consider the following:

Prepare to leave

- Stay informed on the situation by listening to updates from authorities. Be sure to follow all directions and instructions from authorities.
- Have your emergency kit, including your important documents, ready to go.

Protect your home and belongings

- Consult your electricity or fuel supplier for instructions on how to safeguard electrical, natural gas or propane equipment.
- Do not shut off electricity if any water is present.
- Move furniture, electrical appliances and other belongings to floors above ground level.
- Remove toxic substances such as pesticides and insecticides from the flood area to prevent pollution.
- Remove toilet bowls and plug basement sewer drains and toilet connections with a wooden stopper.

- Disconnect eavestroughs if they are connected to the house sewer.
- Properties can be protected with sandbags or other barriers. This approach requires specific instructions from authorities.

Safeguard pets and livestock

- Avoid locking farm animals in enclosures, such as barns. They could drown if they are trapped.

Evacuation alerts and orders

Some emergencies lead authorities to issue an evacuation alert or an evacuation order.

- **Evacuation alerts** warn the public of a potential or current threat. An evacuation alert can lead to an evacuation order. If an alert is issued, you should prepare to evacuate.
- **Evacuation orders** are used when the public must leave the area for their own safety.

Evacuation survival tips

- Avoid low-lying areas, such as ravines or underpasses that could flood quickly.
- If you are caught in fast-rising waters and your vehicle stalls, abandon it to save yourself and your passengers.
- Follow evacuation routes specified by authorities. Do not take shortcuts. They could lead you to blocked or dangerous areas.
- Drive carefully with headlights on. Make way for pedestrians and emergency vehicles.
- Stop at the marshaling point(s), report in at the checkpoints, and wait for directions.

For more information

Read our other fact sheets on:

- What to do after a flood
- Hazard specific information including severe weather, wildfire, power and water outage, and more.

You can find more information about preparedness through [Alberta.ca](https://alberta.ca), or by contacting your community's Director of Emergency Management.