

# Severe weather

## Overview

Thunderstorms, heavy rain, hail, high winds, blowing snow, blizzards, and ice storms can develop quickly and threaten life and property. Severe storms occur frequently across Alberta and can be unpredictable.

## Before a storm

Having an [emergency plan](#) in place is valuable when severe weather strikes. Take the opportunity to choose the best location to shelter in the places you frequent most and share that location with people close to you. Talk to your friends, loved ones and co-workers about where you will go, how you will get there, and how to stay in touch if you are separated during a storm.

- Maintain an [emergency kit](#) stocked with supplies such as water, food, battery-powered/crank radio/flashlight or [Weatheradio](#) in case of a power outage.
- 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.
- If you are outdoors, secure everything that might be blown around or torn loose. Trim dead branches and cut down dead trees to reduce injuries and damages.
- If you are indoors, close your windows, blinds, and curtains.
- If you are in a vehicle, park away from trees or power lines that might fall on you.

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.

When individuals are prepared to the best of their ability, this allows first responders, such as police, fire, and ambulance, to focus on the emergency and provide assistance to those who need the help most.

## 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](mailto:askibcwest@ibc.ca) or by telephone 1-844-227-5422. For more information on insurance preparedness visit [ibc.ca](#).

## 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.

**When building a kit, remember to include items for children, individuals with specific needs, and pets.**

## During a storm

- In extreme high winds, go to the basement or to a small interior room in the center of the building on the lowest floor, such as a closet, bathroom, or hallway. If this is not an option, take cover under a stairway or sturdy table and use a soft item, such as a cushion or mattress, to protect your head.
- Stay away from windows, doors, exterior walls and fireplaces. Avoid buildings with large, unsupported roofs like arenas, supermarkets, and barns.
- You may want to go to the sheltered area that you and your loved ones have chosen in your emergency plan.
- Stay up to date on the situation by listening to updates from local authorities.
- If you are on water and see bad weather approaching, head for shore immediately.

## Community

When unexpected situations occur, the people around you, like your neighbours, co-workers, and friends are often the first ones on-scene. If something happens in your neighbourhood, ask yourself these questions:

- Who might need extra assistance?
- Who can you ask to check on your pets?
- Who is first aid-certified?

Getting to know the people in your community can help everyone. If you aren't already familiar with your neighbours, consider reaching out and making those connections.

## After a storm

Severe weather can have a significant impact on people and property. The steps you take after a storm are as important as what you do before and during it.

- If you have been evacuated, do not return until advised that it is safe to do so.
- If you have experienced flooding due to rainfall and the main power switch was not turned off, do not re-enter until a qualified electrician has determined it is safe to do so.
- If you suspect structural damage, get a professional opinion to ensure it is safe before re-entering.

- Damaged buildings, such as homes and workplaces, should be restored as soon as possible to protect human health and prevent further damage.
- Depending on where you are, your local or provincial inspection authority may be responsible for issuing the necessary permits before certain utilities can be reconnected.
- Reflect on the impact of the storm and take steps to be better prepared for the next one.

## For more information

Read our other fact sheets on:

- Blizzards, freezing rain, and ice storms
- Thunderstorms, lightning, and hail
- Hazard specific preparedness information including wildfire, flooding, power and water outage, and more.

You can find more information about preparedness through [Alberta.ca](https://alberta.ca), and [Environment and Climate Change Canada](https://www.ec.gc.ca).