

# Wildfires

## Overview

Wildfire season officially starts March 1 and runs until October 31 annually. Wildfires can affect communities in forested or grassland areas; including urban green spaces like ravines and parks. If a fire is near, protect yourself and loved ones by following directions from authorities, and be prepared to evacuate.

## Before a wildfire

### How to prepare

Individuals and families should be prepared to take care of themselves for at least 72 hours. Prepare for an emergency by:

- Downloading the [Alberta Wildfire app](#), or visiting [alberta.wildfire.ca](http://alberta.wildfire.ca) website for more information.
- Building and maintaining an [emergency kit](#) stocked with supplies such as water, food, battery-powered/crank radio/flashlight, extra batteries or [Weatheradio](#) in case of a power outage.
- Collecting 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 property and belongings

- Learn [FireSmart](#) methods and share them with members of your community.
- Remove items that can burn from within 1.5 metres (5 feet) of your home, such as: dried branches, leaves, lawn furniture, firewood and debris.
- Install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms on every floor and near sleeping areas.
- Keep a sprinkler in an easy to access location.
- Be careful when smoking outside, extinguish fire pits and burn barrels, and obey local fire bans.

## Safeguard pets and livestock

- Have a pet and livestock plan in case of evacuation. Include where they will go and how they will get there.
- In the case of an evacuation, never leave your pet behind. More information on pet preparedness can be found on [Alberta.ca](http://Alberta.ca).
- Use [FireSmart](#) methods to protect livestock enclosures and barns.

## 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](http://ibc.ca).

## Community

Get to know your neighbours!

Being prepared is not only about having the right supplies. When an unexpected situation occurs, the people around you, such as neighbours, co-workers and friends, are often first on-scene. It's easier to offer help, or ask for help, when you know who is there.

**If you see a wildfire, report it immediately by calling 310-FIRE. If the fire is in your community, call 9-1-1.**

## During a wildfire

If there is a threat of fire in your area:

- Listen for updates from authorities.
- Be prepared to evacuate at a moment's notice.
- Have your vehicle stocked with supplies and ready to go.

### Safeguard pets and livestock

- Bring your pets indoors and move grazing animals to a central, safe refuge.
- Avoid locking farm animals in enclosures such as barns as they could get trapped.

### Safety first

Wildfires are extremely dangerous. If a wildfire enters your community, the following steps can help:

- Report it, and get to a safe place.
- Never attempt to fight a fire yourself. Wildfires move rapidly and are unpredictable.
- Smoke from fires can be harmful. Monitor air quality through [Alberta Health Services.ca](https://www.alberta.ca/health-services).
- Children, elderly, and those with heart and lung related health issues are at the greatest risk from smoke inhalation.
- If you experience any difficulty in breathing, seek medical attention immediately.
- Paper masks do not provide protection from smoke.
- Ensure all windows and doors are closed. Cover vents and other openings with duct tape or other adhesive to help keep smoke out.
- Always obey an evacuation order if issued by an authority; failing to do so puts lives at risk!

### 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.

### After a Wildfire

If you are ordered to evacuate, you cannot return until authorities have declared it is safe to do so.

You should not re-enter your property if:

- the authority has not deemed it safe to do so.
- any part of the structure has collapsed.

Use extreme caution, especially if there are holes in the floor, broken glass or dangerous debris.

### Prevent fires from restarting

- Check for hot spots, like smoldering stumps and vegetation. Saturate these spots with water and monitor them closely.
- Check the roof and all exterior areas for sparks and embers.
- Check the attic and the house for hidden burning, sparks and embers.
- Monitor problem areas for several days.

## For more information

Read our other fact sheets on:

- Hazard specific preparedness information including severe weather, flooding and more.

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