

Wildfire Evacuation Planning Guide

Preparing Your Family and Property for a Safe Exit

Wildfires can move quickly and conditions can change with little warning. In some situations, evacuation orders may be issued with only minutes to respond.

Having a clear evacuation plan allows families to **leave quickly, safely, and with less stress during an emergency**. Planning ahead ensures that everyone in the household understands where to go, what to bring, and how to respond if a wildfire threatens the area.

An evacuation plan is one of the most important steps homeowners can take to protect themselves, their families, and their property during wildfire season.

Understand Local Emergency Alerts

The first step in evacuation planning is knowing **how your community communicates wildfire warnings and evacuation orders**.

Emergency alerts may be issued through:

- Local government emergency notifications
- Provincial or state wildfire services
- Emergency broadcast systems
- Mobile alert systems
- Community emergency websites or social media

In Canada, alerts may come through **provincial emergency alert systems or local emergency operations centres**.

Homeowners should familiarize themselves with these systems so they can **receive evacuation information as quickly as possible**.

Know the Difference Between Alerts

Communities often use different levels of evacuation notifications.

Evacuation Alert

This means a wildfire is nearby and you should **prepare to leave on short notice**.

Residents should begin gathering important items and preparing vehicles.

Evacuation Order

This means residents must **leave the area immediately for safety**.

Emergency services may not be able to assist people who remain in evacuation zones.

Understanding these alerts helps families respond quickly when conditions change.

Create a Family Evacuation Plan

Every household should have a simple plan that outlines **how family members will leave and where they will meet.**

Your plan should include:

- Two or more evacuation routes from your home
- A safe meeting location outside the risk area
- Contact information for family members
- Plans for pets or livestock
- A designated out-of-area contact person

Practice the plan with family members so everyone knows what to do.

Children should understand where to go and how to contact family if separated.

Prepare an Emergency Kit

An emergency kit helps ensure that essential items are available if you must leave quickly.

Recommended supplies include:

- Drinking water and non-perishable food
- Prescription medications
- First aid supplies
- Flashlights and batteries
- Portable phone chargers
- Important documents and identification
- Extra clothing and blankets
- Personal hygiene supplies

Emergency kits should be stored in an accessible location so they can be **grabbed quickly during evacuation.**

Prepare Your Property Before Leaving

If time allows, taking a few quick steps before evacuation may help reduce wildfire risk to your home.

Possible actions include:

- Closing all windows and doors
- Removing combustible items from decks and patios

- Moving outdoor furniture away from the structure
- Turning off propane tanks or fuel sources if safe to do so
- Leaving exterior lights on to improve visibility in smoke

If your home has protective systems such as **sprinklers or water pumps**, ensure they are ready to operate.

Never delay evacuation to complete property preparation if conditions are unsafe.

Plan for Pets and Animals

Pets and animals should always be included in evacuation plans.

Prepare by:

- Keeping pet carriers accessible
- Storing food and water for animals
- Maintaining identification tags or microchips
- Identifying pet-friendly evacuation shelters or accommodations

If you have livestock or larger animals, work with neighbours or local emergency services to understand evacuation procedures for agricultural properties.

Know Your Evacuation Routes

Wildfires can block roads or reduce visibility with smoke. Having multiple evacuation routes helps ensure that you can leave safely even if one route becomes inaccessible.

Consider:

- Primary and alternate routes out of your neighbourhood
- Avoiding dead-end roads where possible
- Monitoring road closures during wildfire events

Local emergency services may direct traffic away from active fire areas, so always follow official instructions.

Stay Informed During Wildfire Events

Situational awareness is critical during wildfire season.

Homeowners should monitor:

- Local wildfire updates
- Fire danger ratings
- Emergency alerts and evacuation notices
- Weather conditions such as wind and heat

Staying informed allows families to **act early rather than waiting until conditions become dangerous.**

Practice Your Plan

An evacuation plan is most effective when it is **practiced ahead of time.**

Families should occasionally review:

- Evacuation routes
- Emergency kit locations
- Communication plans
- Responsibilities for pets or children

Regular practice helps ensure everyone remains calm and prepared during a real emergency.

Supporting Community Safety

Wildfire evacuation planning is not only about individual households. When communities prepare together, evacuations become **safer and more organized for everyone.**

Neighbourhood cooperation can include:

- Sharing information about evacuation routes
- Helping vulnerable residents prepare
- Coordinating with local emergency services

Community preparedness plays an important role in reducing confusion and improving safety during wildfire events.

Final Thoughts

Wildfires can be unpredictable, but preparation makes a significant difference. A well-developed evacuation plan allows families to respond quickly and confidently if a wildfire threatens their community.

By planning ahead, preparing emergency supplies, and staying informed about local conditions, homeowners can ensure they are ready to **protect themselves and their families when it matters most.**