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Preparedness...it's everybody's business

EMERGENCIES are not planned, but we can plan what to do when they happen. The City's Emergency Services work closely with City emergency planners to prepare for emergencies. While the City is prepared to assist residents in an emergency, residents also need to help themselves by being well prepared.

An emergency may result from an existing danger or it may be a threat of an impending situation affecting property or the health, safety and welfare of the community. Sometimes we have some warning that bad weather is on the way and have time to prepare, but most often an emergency happens with no notice.

The potential threats that we face in Toronto range from natural hazards such as severe weather, flooding and winter storms to major fires or a major incident that interrupts our normal lives. Last summer, the city had two major fires that forced residents from their homes for extended periods of time.

Some basic planning can help you be prepared when an emergency happens.

Please take some time to review this information and take the time to be prepared.

PROTECT YOURSELF

Homeowners AND renters should have insurance.

Home insurance can protect you and your family by helping to replace or repair property damaged during a major incident, such as a fire or an explosion. If you have bought the coverage, home insurance may also pay for water damage caused by a sewer backing up into your house or basement apartment. And if the damage forces you to leave your house or apartment while it is being repaired, insurance may also pay for your additional living expenses while you stay somewhere else.

The City responds to emergencies by dealing with the immediate dangers that threaten life and property, such as fire or flood, by providing emergency medical care, instructing and assisting residents with evacuation procedures, and finding temporary emergency shelter. The City does not pay for the cost of replacing or repairing personal property, nor does the City provide long-term accommodation while a home is being repaired or rebuilt.

Understanding just how much insurance you need is the first step to finding coverage that is right for you. To help keep track of your personal belongings, the Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) provides free home-inventory software called *Know Your Stuff*. Visit www.abc.ca to download your free copy.

There are many different kinds of insurance coverage for renters and homeowners. Be sure to discuss your needs with an insurance professional.

It's all about planning:

Everyone needs to develop a plan to be prepared in the event of an emergency or disaster. At a minimum, you should have an emergency kit that includes enough food, water and supplies to last at least 72 hours. Remember, you may need to look after your own needs as well as those of your family during an emergency.

You need to take into consideration that a highway spill of hazardous chemicals or a gas leak could mean instant evacuation or being stranded for hours. A winter storm could confine your family to your home or make it impossible to get home. A flood, fire or power failure could cut off basic services – gas, water, electricity and telephones. Sometimes interruptions can be brief but being prepared for a longer outage is important.

Assemble an emergency kit and make sure everyone in your family knows where it is.

Keep enough water and non-perishable food to meet your needs for at least 3 days. Check the food regularly and replace the water every year.

Other considerations

- Have basic supplies and tools, first aid and clothing.
- Think about special needs for infants, adults and seniors.
- Make copies of all your important documents – insurance, ownership papers and prescriptions.
- Keep a minimum one-week supply of medications in your emergency kit.

To get real time updates from the City during an emergency - subscribe to the Emergency Alert and Information e-update service at toronto.ca/e-updates. Your e-mail address remains confidential. Follow 'TorontoComms' on Twitter. During an emergency, notices will be sent to all subscribers.



Important documents

- Bank account numbers, wills, insurance policies
- Credit card account numbers and companies
- Health Card and Social Insurance Numbers
- Passports, immunization records
- Family records, such as birth, marriage and death certificates
- Important telephone numbers
- Inventory of valuable household goods
- Photos of family members in case you get separated
- Copies of your important documents in a waterproof container
- Extra keys, a small amount of cash and cheque books



Your Emergency Kit

Food and water

- At least three litres of bottled water per person, per day
- Canned food: soups, stews, beans, pastas, meat, poultry, fish, fruits and vegetables
- Energy bars and dried foods
- Honey, peanut butter, nuts, syrup, jams, salt and pepper, sugar, instant coffee and tea
- Comfort/stress foods such as cookies and hard candy
- Food for infants, seniors or people on special diets



Medications:

- Make copies of all your prescriptions and keep a minimum one-week supply of medications in your kit.

Dos and Don'ts during an emergency

DO stay tuned to the radio and television.

DO follow the instructions of emergency officials. For example, if an evacuation is called, remember your personal safety is the most important thing.

DO call family and let them know where you are, and that you are safe.

DO call for assistance if there is a need to move someone immediately and you are unable to do so.

DO stay inside your home, if it is safe to do so, unless otherwise directed.

DO try to ensure, wherever possible without putting yourself at risk, that your immediate neighbours are safe.

DO keep your cell phone battery charger close by and recharge whenever possible.

DON'T tie up the telephone lines.

Emergency officials need those lines to conduct business.

DON'T venture out, unless directed by emergency officials. Stay inside where it is warm and you have supplies.

DON'T attempt to bring your children home from school or daycare in an emergency or evacuation. School officials will be notified of an emergency and they will begin proper procedures to protect the children in their care. You will be notified of when you can be reunited with your children.

For more information

City of Toronto website: toronto.ca

Office of Emergency Management: toronto.ca/oem

Weather Warnings for Canada: weatheroffice.gc.ca/warnings/warnings_e.html

Non-Emergency Phone Numbers:

Fire: 416-338-9050

Police: 416-808-2222

Toronto Hydro Customer Info: 416-542-8000

REMEMBER

During an emergency, things can change. Conditions at the site of the emergency can often change in an instant and the information available to emergency responders can also change depending on the circumstances of the emergency. The City wants to help everyone be safe and sometimes this may mean not being in your home. The patience and understanding of residents until an area is made safe for residents to return is appreciated.

Safety is everyone's responsibility. Follow the directions of City of Toronto emergency staff.

Recovering from an emergency can take time. Some people require special help in dealing with what they went through during an emergency and others may be out of their homes for a long period while things are repaired or rebuilt. The point is that recovery is something that we have to allow to happen over a period of time – it is rarely instant. Recovering from an emergency will often involve the work of many agencies all being coordinated to assist residents. The coordination of recovery efforts is important and can take time to be fully up and running after an emergency. Helping each other as good neighbours and lending a hand wherever we can is a good way to make recovery easier. The City can work with a community and help recovery take place over time.

If you are hearing or visually impaired, have special medical needs, require personal attendant care or use life-sustaining equipment:

Here are some important tips to consider in your preparations:

- Arrange in advance for someone to check on you
- Wear a MedicAlert bracelet or carry an identification card
- Carry a personal alarm that can draw attention to your whereabouts
- Label your equipment and attach instructions
- Keep medicines, supplies and special equipment in your emergency kit and include information about special needs and foods



POWER OUTAGE TIPS

Although Toronto Hydro-Electric System Limited proactively maintains and upgrades its electrical equipment, occasional power outages are an unavoidable aspect of electricity distribution in the City of Toronto. There are, however, steps you can take before and during an outage to ease the stress of the situation.

Before an outage:

- Assemble an emergency kit with a flashlight, portable radio, battery-operated clock, batteries, matches, candles, bottled water and ready-to-eat foods;
- Ensure you have a cell phone or a hard wire, single-line telephone. Cordless phones will not work without electricity;
- Keep Toronto Hydro-Electric System's Lights Out number (416-542-8000) near your phone with a list of emergency numbers.

During an outage:

- Listen to the radio for updates, but if the indoor temperature gets too chilly, go to a heated shelter.
- Don't open the freezer. If undisturbed, food can remain frozen for up to two days. Once thawed, cook before refreezing. Food in the fridge should last up to eight hours, but if in doubt throw it out!
- If using lamps or appliances when the power goes out, turn them off to avoid possible damage when the power comes back on. This includes electronics and motor-driven equipment.

For more information about power outages, visit torontohydro.com/poweroutage

AVOID FROZEN AND BURST WATER PIPES

The spring and summer months are the best time to inspect your home and be sure it is ready for next winter. If there is a lengthy power outage the temperatures inside your home can drop below freezing. If you have water pipes near exterior walls that are not properly insulated, they can freeze or burst. If you know that water pipes run along outside walls, have the problem repaired before next winter. If there is a lengthy power outage, the best way to avoid freezing pipes is turn a tap on at both the highest AND lowest point in your home - let the water run at a very low rate - this will keep your pipes from freezing.

toronto.ca/fire/prevention/frozen_water_pipes.htm