

Communicating During an Emergency

Being able to communicate with family, friends and emergency responders during an emergency is critical. It is important to keep in mind that everyday communication devices may not work properly during an emergency. Here are some tips to keep you connected:

- **Ensure your family [emergency plan](#) includes a communications plan.** Designate someone out of the area as a central contact, and make certain all family members know who to contact if they become separated.
- **Limit non-emergency phone calls.** This will minimize network congestion and free up the network for emergency communications. It will also save battery power if you are using a wireless phone.
- If possible, **use non-voice channels like text messaging**, email or social media, as these use less bandwidth than voice communications and may work even when phone service has been disrupted.
- If you must use a phone, **keep your conversation brief** and convey only vital information. Keeping calls short also saves the battery life of your mobile phone.
- If you are unable to complete a call, **wait ten seconds before redialing** to help reduce network congestion.
- **Keep extra batteries or a charger** for your mobile device in your emergency kit. Consider getting a solar-powered, crank or vehicle phone charger to ensure that your phone is available for use when you need it the most.
- If you have been evacuated and have call-forwarding on your home phone, use it to **forward calls to your cell phone**.
- If you do not have a hands-free device in your car, stop driving or pull over to the side of the road before texting, making a call or using the device.
- **Keep your contacts up to date** on your phone, email and other channels.
- Note that cordless phones rely on electricity and will not work during a power outage. **If you have a landline, keep at least one corded phone in your home.**
- Remember, **in an emergency or to save a life, call 9-1-1 for help.** You cannot currently text 9-1-1. If you are not experiencing an emergency, do not call 9-1-1. If your area offers 3-1-1 service or another information system, call that number for non-emergencies. Additionally, for information about provincial services and programs, call 310-0000.

Additional tips for smartphones

- **Save your safe meeting location(s)** on your phone's mapping application.
- **Conserve your battery** by going into power saving mode, reducing the screen's brightness and closing apps you are not using.
- To **reduce network congestion** immediately after an emergency, avoid using your mobile device to stream videos, download entertainment or play video games.
- Sign up for Direct Deposit and electronic banking through your financial institution so you can access your funds and make electronic payments from wherever you are. For more information on how to stay safe online, visit GetCyberSafe.ca.
- If social media like Facebook has activated their “marked safe” feature, use this as another way to let your family and friends know that you are safe.

Information Sources

- In Alberta, you can opt into an emergency alert notification system. Alberta Emergency Alert is the leader in public alerting and warns the public over the **Internet, radio, television**, social media, through public/private partnerships and a mobile application. It is used to instruct Albertans to take action to protect themselves and their families in the event of an emergency or disaster. If you are outside of Alberta, check with your emergency management organization for notifications systems in your area:
 - **All Hazards** - download the [Alberta Emergency Alert](#) app to receive current information about disasters or emergencies impacting your community.
 - **Wildfire** - download the [Alberta Wildfire](#) app to see where wildfires are burning in Alberta and how they impact you.
 - **Flooding** - download the [Alberta Rivers: Data and Advisories](#) app for high streamflows, flooding and ice jams in rivers and streams.
 - **Avalanche** - avalanche warnings can be found on the [Avalanche Canada](#) website.

Include these sites in your emergency plan and bookmark them for quick access:

- Public Safety Canada's website on emergency preparedness, GetPrepared.ca
- Canadian Red Cross: www.redcross.ca
- Environment Canada: www.ec.gc.ca
- St. John Ambulance: www.sja.ca
- The Salvation Army: www.salvationarmy.ca
- Alberta Emergency Management Agency: www.aema.alberta.ca

For more information on hazards in Alberta, contact your municipality or community's Director of Emergency Management of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency at 780-422-9000 (Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton) or visit www.aema.alberta.ca.