

Wildfires

Wildfires (or forest fires) are a natural hazard in any forested or grassland region in Alberta. They are most common between May and September. They can cause extensive damage and put lives in danger.

When fire danger is extreme or wildland fires are actively burning in the forest adjacent to your property, be cautious and prepare for the worst case scenario. Do what you can, but remember that as soon as an evacuation order is given, you must leave. Large moving fires are dangerous and should be left for firefighters to manage.

Before a Wildfire

If your community is surrounded by brush, grassland or forest, follow these instructions to prepare your home and family for potential wildfires.

- Prepare an [emergency kit](#).
- Remove fire hazards in and around your home, such as dried out branches, leaves and debris.
- Keep a good sprinkler in an accessible location.
- Learn [FireSmart techniques](#) and teach them to the members of your family.
- Have fire drills with your family on a regular basis.
- Have an escape plan so that all members of the family know how to get out of the house quickly and safely.
- Have an [emergency plan](#) so family members can contact each other in case they are separated during an evacuation.
- Make sure all family members are familiar with the technique of "STOP, DROP, AND ROLL" in case of clothes catching on fire.
- Maintain first-aid supplies to treat the injured until help arrives.
- Make sure every floor and all sleeping areas have smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors.

If you see a fire approaching your home or community, report it immediately by calling 310-FIRE. If the fire is threatening your home, call 9-1-1.

During a Wildfire

- Be prepared to evacuate at any time. Do not ignore an evacuation order. Ignoring such an order could jeopardize the safety of your family or those who might eventually have to come to your rescue.
- Keep the radio on, tuned to a local station. Have a battery-powered or crank radio ready in case of power failure.
- Ensure your cellphone is fully charged and download the [Alberta Emergency Alert](#) app for immediate alerts in your community.
- Download the [Alberta Wildfire](#) App for the current wildfire status and updates from your area.

Outside the house

- Make sure fire pits and burn barrels are extinguished. Be careful when smoking outside.
- Cover all openings to your house with metal coverings or fire-resistant material such as 12 millimetre plywood. This will help keep sparks and embers out. Move any combustibles well away from the house or inside.
- Place a ladder to the roof at the front of the house. Leave it there so firefighters have access to the roof.
- Attach garden hoses to tap spigots and place them so they can reach any exterior surface of the building. Place a connected sprinkler on the roof and nail it down.
- If the fire is imminent, consider turning sprinklers on to wet the roof and any waterproof valuables. You can also block downspouts and fill rain gutters with water.
- If you have an outdoor pool or hot tub, make it as accessible as possible for firefighters. Fill garbage cans and buckets with water and leave them where firefighters can find them.
- Consider turning off propane or natural gas valves, clear vegetation and debris from around outdoor tanks.
- Make sure your vehicle has a full tank of fuel. Park your car and position it forward out of the driveway. Keep car windows closed and have your valuables already packed in your car.
- Secure your pets and move [grazing animals](#) to a central safe refuge.
- Remove any potential flammable material (firewood and underbrush) that could put your home at risk.

Inside the house

- Close all windows and doors, as closing interior doors will slow fire spread inside the home.
- Keep lights on to aid visibility in case smoke fills the house.
- Move combustibles away from windows and sliding glass doors
- Remove flammable drapes, curtains, awnings or other window coverings.
- Cover vents, windows and other openings of the house with duct tape and/or precut pieces of plywood.
- Fill sinks, bathtubs and buckets for use as extra reservoirs. Attach inside hoses and gather buckets and towels.
- Fill sinks, bathtubs and buckets for use as extra water reservoirs. Attach inside hoses and gather buckets and towels.

When an Evacuation *Alert* Is Given

- Do not assume the evacuation will last only a few hours. Plan to evacuate with enough items to keep your family comfortable for a minimum of 72 hours.
- If a fire approaches:
 - Report it immediately by calling 310-FIRE. If it is an immediate threat call 9-1-1 or your local fire department.
 - Dress properly to reduce the risk of burn injuries. Wear long pants, shirts made of cotton or wool and sturdy footwear.
 - Have firefighting tools and ladders propped against the house in a visible place.
- Keep in mind, an alert is not mandatory but you can evacuate during this period if you choose.

When an Evacuation *Order* Is Given

When you get the evacuation order, use your pre-planned evacuation route or the route singled out by authorities on site. Move away from the wildland fire, never toward it.

- Vacate your home when you are advised to do so by local authorities. Ignoring an evacuation order could jeopardize the safety of your family or those who might have to eventually come to your rescue.
- Take your emergency kit with you.
- [Make the necessary arrangements for pets](#). Remember that pets are not allowed in some emergency shelters, so plan in advance for a pet-friendly location to make sure you bring your pet carrier.

- If time permits, leave a note informing others of when you left and where you went. If you have a mailbox, leave the note in there.
- Follow the routes specified by officials. Don't take short cuts. They could lead you to a blocked or dangerous area.
- Drive carefully with headlights on. May way for pedestrians and emergency vehicles. Stop at the pre-determined marshalling point(s). Report to authorities and wait for further instruction. Do not leave again without informing officials.
- Do not return to your property until permitted to do so by authorities.

After a Wildfire

- Check with local authorities before attempting to return to your home.
- Use caution when re-entering a burned area as flare ups can occur.
- Check the area for hot spots, smouldering stumps and vegetation. Saturate any residual fire spots with water.
- Check the roof and exterior areas for sparks and embers.
- Check the attic and throughout the house for hidden burning, sparks and embers.
- Continue to check for problem areas for several days.

Be Informed

- Download the [Alberta Emergency Alert](#) app to receive current information about disasters or emergencies impacting your community.
- For more information about wildfire in Alberta, visit wildfire.alberta.ca
- Download the [Alberta Wildfire](#) app to see where wildfires are burning in Alberta and how they might impact you.
- Check for current fire bans at albertafirebans.ca
- Natural Resources Canada's [Canadian Wildland Fire Information System](#) provides detailed information about wildfire conditions across Canada.
- The [Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre](#) is a joint initiative of the federal, provincial and territorial governments. During the wildfire season, the centre operates 24-hours per day, seven days per week to provide up-to-date reports on the wildfire situation across Canada. It also coordinates the sharing of firefighting resources, such as aircraft and firefighters.
- [Farm and Acreage Preparedness for Wildfires](#).

For more information on hazards in Alberta, contact your municipality or community's director of Emergency Management or the Alberta Emergency Management Agency at 780-422-9000 (Dial 310-000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton). You can also visit aema.alberta.ca.