

Shelter in place – Severe weather

Overview

To shelter in place is to protect yourself by finding the safest area near you and putting as much distance and as many barriers between you and the threat as possible.

A shelter-in-place advisory is a public safety and risk reduction measure. Authorities will advise you to shelter in place if it is determined that an outside hazard is a threat to life safety and an evacuation would pose greater risk.

Reasons to shelter in place

Thunderstorms, tornadoes, and blizzards occur frequently across Alberta. They can be unpredictable, move quickly, and cause widespread devastation.

If advised to shelter in place, bring everyone indoors. Grab your emergency supplies, secure your shelter, and listen for direction from authorities.

Before an emergency

Being prepared before an emergency, disaster, or disruption can help to reduce its impact and support the recovery of you and your loved ones.

- Know your risk to the hazards in your community so you can plan for them. When looking to develop or buy property, assess your risk and avoid high-risk areas.
- Get informed and stay informed by downloading or signing up for local and provincial emergency alert services. Identify trusted sources of information you can rely on such as your community's website.
- Start the conversation with those around you. Talking about how you would shelter in place can help increase awareness and motivate preparedness actions.
- Build an emergency kit and gather supplies to last a minimum of 72 hours so you can be self-reliant until help arrives. Consider any unique needs to your household such as medications.
- Talk to your insurance provider to make sure your policies fully protect you, your property, and belongings. Don't forget to take pictures in the case of a claim.
- Create community connections to build resilience. When people work together it can reduce stress and help everyone navigate disruption more easily.

- Create an emergency plan including how you will communicate and connect with loved ones if separated. Having a plan can help reduce stress during a difficult situation.

Build emotional preparedness by taking care of your mental health. Coping and wellness actions can help you think clearer, make informed decisions, and recognize when it is time to ask for help.

To get started, visit [211 Alberta](#) to find out what community information, resources and supports are available near you.

During an emergency

Shelter in place for different situations

Taking shelter will depend on the kind of hazard you are facing and where you are located when it becomes a threat. This fact sheet can help you plan for different situations. For example, you may be travelling or stuck in traffic, at home with friends and family or at the office away from loved ones. Each situation will require a different approach.

Home | Severe weather

- Bring everyone indoors, including pets (if it is safe).
- If possible, take shelter below ground in a small windowless room in the middle of your home with no exterior doors, like a basement bathroom.
- If a room below ground is not available, take shelter in a small room in the middle of the main floor, such as a bathroom, closet or under a heavy table or stairwell.
- In a multi-level building, take shelter in a hallway, room, or stairwell in the middle of the building; or if available, on the main floor or an underground parking garage.
- In a mobile home or camper, find shelter in a solid building close by; if that is not available, shelter in your vehicle (refer to the "Vehicle" section).
- Gather your emergency supplies in your shelter. Include supplies like water, flashlight, non-perishable snacks, medications and a battery or crank powered radio.

Flooding emergencies require a different response. To learn about floods and what you can do to protect yourself visit <https://www.alberta.ca/floods.aspx>.

Vehicle

- Close all windows, turn on your headlights and look for a safe location to park.
- Avoid parking near trees, power lines, on bridges or under overpasses due to risk of flooding and high winds.
- Fasten your seatbelt, protect your head and neck and get below the window as much as possible
- Turn on the hazard lights and turn off the engine.
- In extreme cold temperatures, you may need to run the vehicle once in a while to stay warm. Make sure to check that your tail pipe is not blocked and open a window for airflow.
- Do not attempt to drive away or exit your vehicle until you know it is safe. Listen to authorities for direction.

At work

If advised to shelter in place while at work, it is important you refer to your workplace emergency response plan as well as your personal emergency plan. If you don't know your employers response plan, ask them about it.

Outdoors (without shelter)

- Cover your head and neck with your arms to protect yourself from flying debris or hail.
- Go to a low-lying area such as a gutter, ravine, or valley; lie down flat and be ready to move in the case of flooding.
- Avoid places that may attract lightning such as standing water, metal, mobile equipment, power lines and trees.
- Do not shelter under bridges or overpasses due to risk of flooding and high winds.

Farm animals and livestock | confined to building

- Never leave any animal tied up or constrained if you are leaving the area without them.
- Keep animals inside if at risk from extreme cold, hail and lightning.
- Leave a minimum of 72 hours of feed and water that does not need power to function (for example, electric waterers).
- If possible, confine animals to multiple shelters. Creating space for them will help to keep them safe. If their space is too small, it can lead to aggressive behaviour or spread disease.
- Cover barn windows with material to protect them from broken glass and other threats.

Farm animals and livestock | out to pasture

- Leave a minimum of 72 hours of feed and water that does not need power to function (for example, electric waterers).

- Ensure animals have a visual identifier. Use a semi-permanent livestock marker to put your cell number or a unique mark on their bodies.
- Open gates or reroute fencing to create a large area for unrestricted movement.
- Ensure access to high ground in case of flooding.
- Keep barn doors closed to prevent animals from going back inside where they can become trapped.
- Remove equipment and debris that could be picked up and thrown around by strong winds.
- Ensure handling equipment and tools are readily available for first responders to free animals if they become trapped.
- Connect with your emergency contacts about care and feeding for the animals.

Pets

- You can help prepare your pets by practicing to shelter in place with them in different locations.
- Bring your pets indoors. Do not chase loose pets as it puts yourself and others at risk.
- Grab your pet's emergency kit if you have one or keep important supplies close to their shelter.
- If possible, bring them into your shelter and avoid letting them roam freely.

Take a few minutes to evaluate your workplace, classroom and other places you visit often to identify spaces that could become a shelter if needed.

After an emergency

- Assess the property for structural damage and new potential risks such as broken glass on the ground, burst pipes, etc.
- Check on your neighbours' and animals' wellbeing.
- Immediately notify your electrical service provider if you notice that power lines are down.
- Keep your pet on a leash when going outside. Familiar scents and landmarks may have changed which can create confusion.
- Contact your insurance provider to ask for a letter showing your insurance coverage and all exclusions.
- Before you throw anything away or make repairs, take pictures of all damaged items inside and outside the property.
- Collect, remove and relocate debris to one location to reduce risk of harm.
- Contact your local government to inquire on what supports may be available in your area.