

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

Prepared by

### ALBERTA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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## Flood and Fire Edition

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Flooding is a fact of life in Alberta, especially in the springtime. Flooding occurs when the volume of water in a river or stream exceeds the capacity of the channel. Flooding also takes place along lake and coastal shorelines, when higher than normal water levels overwhelm low-lying areas.



#### Causes

There are many factors to take into consideration when looking at the potential causes of flooding in Alberta. Environment and Climate Change Canada states that the main causes are:

**Precipitation** - During periods of heavy and prolonged rainfall, the ground becomes saturated and could lose its ability to absorb water which can cause overland flooding.

**Drainage Basins** – Consistent factors (shape, features, size and soil type) and inconsistent factors (vegetation cover, season, and previous rainfall) can have an effect on drainage basins. This could become especially important in areas that have experienced overland fires as the vegetation takes multiple seasons to grow back.

**Climate** – Due to cold winters in Alberta, it sometimes takes time for the ground frost to lessen and allow water absorption. This creates conditions for the snow melts to quickly flow overland and potentially overwhelm rivers and streams. Ice jams could also produce flooding depending on when ice breakup occurs and how much water is released as they melt.

For more information visit:

[Environment and Climate Change Canada](#)

#### Preparing for Floods

Communities should have a flood mitigation strategy. These generally fall into two categories

which are structural, usually dams, and non-structural such as elevating buildings or building berms and floodwalls. To get prepared for a flood, you should know the risks specific to your community and your region to help you better prepare.



The general public should also plan for the potential effects of localized flooding. The simplest way to ensure you are prepared is to stay informed. The Government of Alberta has multiple online resources, such as the Alberta River Basins web page and Alberta Emergency Alert that provide informational updates with regard to hazards in Alberta.

The general public should also know the three basic steps in preparation:

- Know the Risks
- Make a Plan
- Get an Emergency Kit

### 1. Know the Risks

Find out what to do before, during, and after a flood.

### 2. Make a Plan

Make a family emergency plan, so that everyone knows what to do, and where to go in case of an emergency. Your family may not be together when an emergency occurs. Plan how to meet or how to contact one another, and discuss what you would do in different situations.

### 3. Get an Emergency Kit

In an emergency you will need some basic supplies. You may need to get by without power or tap water. Be prepared to be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours. Make sure your kit is easy to carry and everyone in the household knows where it is.

For more information visit:

[Government of Canada Get Prepared](#)

[Alberta River Basins](#)

[Alberta Emergency Alert](#)

## WILDFIRE PREVENTION TIPS



Just over a year ago the wildfire in Fort McMurray, nicknamed “the beast” devastated an area larger than the province of Prince Edward Island, destroyed thousands of homes and led to one of the largest evacuations in Alberta’s history. Many wildfires are caused by human-activity and most are completely preventable.



## Campfires

As the warmer weather approaches we are all eager to enjoy the outdoors; an important part of that can be valuable time with family and friends around a campfire. However, many of the wildfires put out by our firefighters each summer are started by campfires. If you are found to be responsible for starting a wildfire, you can be charged under the Forest and Prairie Protection Act, fined and held liable for all cost associated with fighting the wildfire.

Before starting a campfire:

- 🔥 Check to see if a fire ban is in place
- 🔥 If there is a fire pit use it
- 🔥 Build your fire on level ground
- 🔥 Clear away debris such as leaves and twigs to a 3m diameter area around the fire
- 🔥 Build a circle of rocks
- 🔥 Have a bucket of water, sand and a shovel ready
- 🔥 Use tinder to light the fire not gas
- 🔥 Keep the fire under adult supervision at all times
- 🔥 Always fully extinguish the fire before you



leave

Fireworks are often a part of our celebrations, but every year, incorrectly used fireworks cause wildfires. Before using any type of firework, make sure they are legal to use, as fireworks laws can vary greatly by municipality. Only use fireworks on flat surfaces and in areas without any dry grass or trees. Make sure a bucket of water is available to extinguish all fireworks thoroughly after they are used.

## Cigarettes

To prevent cigarettes from starting wildfires, always dispose of them in places where they cannot be a source of ignition. Placing a cigarette in a cup of water after use is a great way to prevent them from causing fires. Never simply discard a cigarette on the ground or throw it out a car window.



## Vehicles

Regardless of what type of vehicles you use, it is important to be aware of the role vehicles can play in starting wildfires. Never park any type of vehicle on dry vegetation; the heat from the exhaust can cause it to ignite. Also, make sure any off-road vehicle you use has a working spark arrester as improper ones can cause dry vegetation ignitions.

For more information visit:

[Office of the Fire Commissioner - Camping and Outdoor Safety](#)

[Wildfire Alberta - Wildfire Prevention - Campfires](#)

[Fireworks](#)

# PERMITS, FIRE RESTRICTIONS AND FIRE BANS

## Permits

Alberta's wildfire season officially began on 1 March, from this date all burning activities in Alberta's Forest Protection Area, excluding campfires, will require a fire permit. **Fire permits are free** and can be obtained by contacting your local Alberta Agriculture and Forestry office. Phone toll-free 310-0000 to locate your nearest office.

Map to show the Forest Protection Area



Many municipalities also require you to have a fire permit for open fires or camp fires, even on private property. For further information in your local area please contact your Fire Chief.

## Fire Restrictions and Fire Bans

Each municipality within Alberta will have slightly different legislation or bylaws concerning fire restrictions. It is important to contact your local municipality to find out what applies to you.

## Fire restrictions

Fire Restrictions are put in place when there is a perceived increased risk of danger to the public. Restrictions can vary from municipality to municipality, so it is important to check what applies to you. Information can normally be found in newspapers, Municipal websites, community notice boards or by asking at your government office.

## Fire Bans

Fire Bans are put in place when a municipality has taken steps to restrict or prohibit most or all types of fire use within that area. All fire permits are suspended or cancelled and no new fire permits will be issued.

For a list of fire bans in your community visit:

[Alberta Fire Bans](#)

For a list of fire bans in Alberta Parks visit:

[Alberta Parks - Fire Bans and Restrictions](#)