Facts about emergency preparedness

Emergency Preparedness Week 2014 marks the 19th annual event. Here are some interesting facts to mark 19 years of getting better prepared for emergencies.

1. Roughly 5,000 earthquakes are recorded in Canada every year.

2. Canada gets more tornadoes than any other country except the U.S., averaging about 50 tornadoes per year.

3. The worldwide cost of natural disasters has skyrocketed from $2 billion in the 1980s, to $27 billion over the past decade.

4. Canada’s first billion dollar disaster, the Saguenay flood of 1996, triggered a surge of water, rocks, trees and mud that forced 12,000 residents to evacuate their homes.

5. Some hailstones are the size of peas while others can be as big as baseballs.

6. Approximately 85% of Canadians agree that having an emergency kit is important in ensuring their and their family’s safety, yet only four in ten have prepared or bought an emergency kit.

7. In 2011, flooding in Manitoba and Saskatchewan featured the highest water levels and flows in modern history. Over 11,000 residents were displaced from their homes.

8. Ice, branches or power lines can continue to break and fall for several hours after the end of an ice storm.

9. The deadliest heat wave in Canadian history produced temperatures exceeding 44ºC in Manitoba and Ontario in 1936. Rail lines and bridge girders twisted, sidewalks buckled, crops wilted and fruit baked on trees.

10. In 2007, the Prairies experienced 410 severe weather events including tornadoes, heavy rain, wind and hail, nearly double the yearly average of 221 events.

11. The coldest temperature reached in North America was –63ºC, recorded in 1947 in Snag, Yukon.

12. The largest landslide in Canada involved 185 million m³ of material and created a 40m deep scar that covered the size of 80 city blocks in 1894 at Saint-Alban, Quebec.

13. Hurricanes are bigger and cause more widespread damage than tornadoes (a very large system can be up to 1,000 kilometres wide).

14. 85% of Canadians agree that having an emergency plan is important in ensuring their family’s safety, yet only 40% have prepared one. Complete yours online at www.GetPrepared.ca.
15. One of the most destructive and disruptive storms in Canadian history was the 1998 ice storm in Eastern Canada causing hardship for 4 million people and costing $3 billion. Power outages lasted for up to 4 weeks.

16. The June 23, 2010 earthquake in Val-des-Bois, Quebec produced the strongest shaking ever experienced in Ottawa and was felt as far away as Kentucky in the United States.

17. Using non-voice communication technology like text messaging, email, or social media instead of telephones takes up less bandwidth and helps reduce network congestion after an emergency.

18. At the end of October 2012, Hurricane Sandy devastated parts of the Caribbean and the northeast of the North American continent. When the hurricane made landfall in the United States it blended with a continental cold front forming a storm described as the “Monsterstorm” by the media.

19. At that time, the 2011 Northern Alberta Interface Fires was the largest disaster in Alberta history and the second most costly disaster in Canadian history according to the Insurance Bureau of Canada. The fires resulted in over $700 million in estimated damages, required the evacuation of almost 15,000 residents from northern Alberta and damaged or destroyed over 30 per cent of the Town of Slave Lake.

20. In the days leading up to June 20, 2013, Alberta experienced heavy rainfall that triggered catastrophic flooding described by the provincial government as the worst in Alberta’s history. A total of 32 states of local emergency were declared and 28 emergency operations centres were activated. Four people were confirmed dead as a direct result of the flooding and over 100,000 people were displaced throughout the region. Some 2,200 Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) troops were deployed to help in flooded areas. The Province of Alberta estimated in August that the cost of repairing the damage would exceed $5 billion. The Insurance Bureau of Canada stated in September that insurable losses had exceeded $1.7 billion, making it the costliest disaster in Canadian history in terms of insured damages (and without accounting for inflation), surpassing the $1.6 billion cost of the North American Ice Storm of 1998.

21. The 2013 Moore tornado was an EF5 tornado that struck Moore, Oklahoma, and adjacent areas on the afternoon of May 20, 2013; with peak winds estimated at 210 mph (340 km/h), killing 24 people (+1 indirect fatality) and injuring 377 others. The tornado was part of a larger weather system that had produced several other tornadoes across the Great Plains over the previous two days (including five that struck Central Oklahoma on May 19).

22. The storm and flash flooding that hit the Greater Toronto Area on July 8, 2013, has set a record for the province’s most expensive natural disaster, according to the Insurance Bureau of Canada.

23. The city of Toronto, Canada’s largest city, was among the hardest hit by the ice storm. The first wave of freezing rain began on December 20th, it coated the city in a significant, but manageable amount of ice. The second and more powerful wave of rain struck the city in early morning hours of December 22nd. Utility poles and tree branches collapsed under the enormous weight of the thick ice accumulation. At the height of the
storm there were over 300,000 Toronto Hydro customers that were left without power or heat. Five people died from carbon monoxide poisoning.