

# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS GUIDE BOOK



**\*\* Keep an up-to-date printed copy in your 72-hour kit \*\***

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## Introduction

Emergencies can happen at any time and without warning. An emergency can force evacuation or confinement in one place without basic services such as water, gas, electricity or a working telephone. Be ready. With a little preparation, you can respond quickly to help yourself and others.

This guide contains important information on what to do in the event of an emergency situation. Please keep a printed copy in your 72-hour emergency kit, as you will not be able to access the information during a widespread internet or power outage. To access the latest version of this guidebook, please visit [www.essex.ca/emergency](http://www.essex.ca/emergency).

## Sign-Up for Notifications and Alerts

In times of emergency, it is essential that you stay up-to-date with current information. To receive emergency notifications to your home phone, email and/or cell phone, sign up for the Town of Essex Emergency Alerts at:

[www.essex.ca/Alerts](http://www.essex.ca/Alerts)

For live updates on an evolving emergency situation, please visit:

[www.essex.ca/Emergency](http://www.essex.ca/Emergency)

## Report a Problem

Spot a problem in the Town of Essex? There are two ways to report it:

Online

[www.essex.ca/reportaproblem](http://www.essex.ca/reportaproblem)

Phone

519-776-7336 ext. 1100 or 1101

*To report an urgent problem that poses an immediate threat to public health or safety outside of regular business hours, please call 519-776-7336.*

## WHAT TO DO

**\*In case of an emergency, call 911.**



### Flooding

High water levels brings the risk of property flooding and shoreline damage. This page provides resources on how Town of Essex residents can best reduce the impacts of local flooding.

#### Protect Yourself

Shoreline flooding is a real threat. It is essential that you plan ahead and have a place to go. Plan now where you can go so that you and your loved ones can be as safe as possible.

- What you will bring with you?
- Where you will park your car?
- What you will do with your pets?

It is up to you to protect you and your loved ones. In an emergency, calls are prioritized and assistance may be delayed or unavailable.

If you are ordered to evacuate, an evacuation route will be provided by emergency services. If you choose to ignore the evacuation recommendation, Emergency Services may not be able to get to you in a timely fashion.

If you or a loved one are mobility challenged or have special medical needs, your plan should take into account extra time and requirements you may need to self-evacuate.

One of the best ways to be prepared is to create a 72 Hour Emergency Kit, which will provide all the necessities in case of an emergency or evacuation.

#### Protect Your Home

Below are some steps homeowners can take to protect their homes and protect their homes and properties.

- Waterproof your basement and ensure your sump pump is working. Install a battery-operated or water-powered backup in case of power failure.
- Apply to the Basement Flooding Protection Subsidy Program at [essex.ca/subsidy](http://essex.ca/subsidy). The Basement Flooding Protection Subsidy Program is a Town of Essex program which assists homeowners by way of providing a financial subsidy to disconnect downspouts, complete investigative camera work, install a sump pump and/or back-water valve (flood protection devices), and purchase a rain barrel.

- Consider placing sandbags on your property.
- Clear gutters and drains. Move furniture, valuables, and important documents to a safe place.

### Types of Flood Alerts

The Essex Region Conservation Authority monitors water levels, current conditions, and weather forecasts to predict flooding. The Authority may issue the following alerts:

- **Watershed Conditions Statement:** factors related to flooding may be occurring, but flooding is not expected.
- **Flood Outlook:** early notice of the potential for flooding based on weather forecasts and current conditions.
- **Flood Watch:** potential for flooding within specific watercourses or municipalities. Landowners in flood-prone areas should be prepared to respond with the necessary actions.
- **Flood Warning:** flooding is imminent or is already occurring in specific watercourses or municipalities.

To check the current alert, visit the [Essex Region Conservation Flood Status page](#).

### Safety Information

#### Electrical Safety

There is an increased risk of serious injury or death when water makes contact with electrical systems. The following electrical safety tips could save your life, or the lives of those working in your home.

- Do not enter your basement if you suspect water has risen above the level of electrical outlets and electrical appliances. Electricity can move through water or wet flooring and cause electrical shock. If you suspect water has risen above these levels, contact a licensed electrician and your local electric utility immediately to arrange the safe disconnection of power.
  - Hydro One: 1-800-434-1235
  - ELK Energy: 1-877-355-7798
- Watch out for downed power lines in flooded areas. If you see one, stay out of the water and back at least 10 meters and call 911.

#### Natural Gas Safety

If you smell natural gas or detect other signs of a gas leak, please take the following steps:

1. Prevent sources of ignition. Do not touch electrical switches, light candles, or use a landline phone.
2. Exit the building immediately.

3. From a safe area, call 911 and Enbridge Gas 1-877-969-0999
4. Do not re-enter the building until it has been inspected.

## Stay Informed

Monitor your property and adjacent waterways.

Listen and watch local media outlets for updates about flooding conditions.

Follow the Town's news page and social media accounts for regular updates at [essex.ca/emergency](https://essex.ca/emergency)

Sign up for the Essex Alerts Emergency Notification System at [essex.ca/alerts](https://essex.ca/alerts). During a flooding event, impacted residents will receive important updates and instructions through Essex Alerts.



## Severe Rainstorm

Severe rainstorms can include thunderstorms, lightning and heavy rainfall that can lead to flooding. These are real risks that can impact citizens and properties. To stay informed of changing weather conditions, monitor local weather forecasts.

## Thunderstorm safety

Thunderstorms can bring lightning, heavy rain, hail, strong winds and tornadoes. Be aware of weather conditions and warnings. Seek shelter immediately if a warning has been issued.

### When indoors

- Stay away from windows, skylights, and glass doors – strong winds and large hailstones can shatter them.
- Avoid taking showers or baths.
- Remain indoors and stay inside for at least 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder.
- Be prepared to seek shelter in a basement or interior room on the lowest level if conditions worsen.

### When outdoors

- If thunder is heard, that means lightning is close enough to be dangerous – take shelter in an enclosed building or metal-topped vehicle.
- If there's no shelter, go to a low-lying area away from tall, isolated objects – crouch down, do not lie down.

## Lightning safety

On average, Canada experiences more than two-million lightning strikes annually. If thunder is heard, there is a risk of being struck by lightning.

### When indoors

- Avoid running water in the house – lightning can enter through pipes and plumbing.
- Remain indoors for 30 minutes after the last roar of thunder as lightning can happen at the end of a storm.
- Do not handle electrical equipment, telephones or plumbing as they can conduct a lightning bolt.

### When outdoors

- Go to the nearest solid brick building – sheds, picnic shelters, tents and covered porches do not protect from lightning.
- If there is not a sturdy building nearby, get into a metal-roofed vehicle and close all the windows.
- Stay away from tall objects such as trees, poles, wires, and fences.
- If out on the water, get to shore immediately.
- If there are no nearby shelters, go to a low-lying area.
- If a person has been struck by lightning, call 911 immediately – victims of lightning strikes do not carry an electrical charge.



## Power Outages

Power outages are often caused by freezing rain, sleet storms and high winds which damage power lines and equipment. Cold snaps or heat waves can also overload the electric power system.

If the power goes out, check with your local service provider for more information:

### E.L.K. Energy

- Customers can submit a damage claim by contacting E.L.K. Energy at 519-776-5291 or complete the online form at [www.elkenenergy.com](http://www.elkenenergy.com)
- In the event of a power outage, Customers are encouraged to contact E.L.K. Energy directly to report it at 519-776-5291, toll free at 1-877-355-7798, or by completing the online form at [www.elkenenergy.com](http://www.elkenenergy.com)

### During a power outage

- First check to see if neighbors have power. If no other home or building is experiencing a power outage, check the main fuse in the electric service panel or fuse box to ensure a fuse has not been blown or the main circuit breaker has not been tripped.
- If the power is out at homes in the surrounding area, notify E.L.K. Energy Inc.
- Turn off all tools, appliances, and electronic equipment.
- Turn the thermostat(s) for the home heating system down to a low setting to prevent damage from a power surge when power is restored.
- Do not open the freezer or fridge unless it is necessary – a full freezer will keep food frozen for 24 to 36 hours if the door remains closed.
- Listen to a battery-powered or crank radio for information on the outage and advice from authorities.

### What to do after a power outage

- Replace the furnace fuel (if removed) and turn off the fuel to the standby heating unit.
- Turn on the main electric switch, but check beforehand to ensure all household appliances and electronics are unplugged to prevent damage from a power surge.
- Give the electrical system a chance to stabilize before reconnecting tools and appliances.
- Turn the heating system thermostats up first, then after a few minutes reconnect the fridge and freezer – wait 10 to 15 minutes before reconnecting all other tools and appliances.
- Close the drain valve in the basement.
- Turn on the water supply – close valves/taps on lower levels and open taps starting from the highest level downwards to allow air to escape.
- Make sure the hot water heater is filled before turning its power on.
- Check food supplies in refrigerators, freezers and cupboards for signs of spoilage. If a freezer door has been kept closed, food should stay frozen for 24 to 36 hours, depending on the temperature. When food begins to defrost (usually after two days), it should be cooked – otherwise it should be thrown out.
- As a general precaution, keep a bag of ice cubes in the freezer. If the ice has melted and refrozen, there is a good chance the food is spoiled.
- Reset clocks, automatic timers and alarms.



## Winter Storms

Winter storms often bring heavy snowfall, extremely cold temperatures and high winds. This can result in whiteouts and large amounts of drifting and blowing snow.

### Weather Related Resources

- Weather: [www.weather.gc.ca/](http://www.weather.gc.ca/)
- Roads: [www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-transportation](http://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-transportation)
- For information on Schools and Busses
  - [www.publicboard.ca](http://www.publicboard.ca)  
Phone: (519) 255-3200
  - [www.wecdsb.on.ca](http://www.wecdsb.on.ca)  
Phone: (519) 253-2481
  - [www.cscprovidence.ca](http://www.cscprovidence.ca)  
Phone: (519) 948-9227
- Snow removal: [www.essex.ca/snowremoval](http://www.essex.ca/snowremoval)

### Keep safe

- Avoid unnecessary travel.
- Wear layers of lightweight clothing, mittens and a hat (preferably one that covers ears).
- Wear waterproof, insulated boots to keep feet warm and dry and to prevent slipping on ice and snow.
- Regularly check for frostbite — this can result in numbness or white areas on the face and body (ears, nose, cheeks, hands and feet).
- Take frequent breaks to avoid overexertion when shoveling snow.
- Bring pets inside and move livestock to sheltered areas with non-frozen drinking water.

### Ice Storms

Ice storms occur when raindrops freeze on contact with a cold surface. The buildup of ice on surfaces creates unsafe conditions, such as downed trees and powerlines, slippery sidewalks and roads.

### Before and during ice storms

- Monitor media, the Town's website and social media for information.
- Stay off the road and avoid unnecessary travel – wait until salting operations have been completed and roads have been cleared of debris.

- Monitor weather forecasts.
- Have an emergency kit.
- Stay clear of downed trees and powerlines.
- Use a fireplace to keep warm.
- Evacuate the home if there is no longer any means to stay warm.
- Watch for signs of broken water pipes.



### Tornadoes

A tornado is a powerful rotating column of wind that can hurt people and damage property. Very large thunderstorms can create many tornadoes. Tornadoes can appear after heavy rain or hail in a sky that looks green, yellow or black.

Essex County has experienced tornadoes and they can strike anywhere between May and September. Environment Canada issues warnings when tornadoes are imminent or already detected and the Ontario government assists in distributing these alerts to the public.

### Tornado safety

Always be aware of weather conditions and warnings. Seek shelter immediately if a warning has been issued.

#### When indoors

- The safest place to be is an underground shelter, basement or safe room.
- If there is no basement in the home, go to the centre of an interior room on the lowest level away from corners, windows, doors and outside walls.
- Get under a sturdy piece of furniture — use arms to shield the head and neck.
- Do not open windows.

#### When outdoors

- Do not wait until the tornado is visible to get inside.
- If stuck outdoors with no nearby shelter, lie flat in a ditch ensuring heads are covered.
- Do not go under an overpass or bridge — a low, flat area is safest.
- Note: mobile homes do not offer much protection from tornadoes — go to the nearest sturdy building or shelter immediately.



## Extreme Heat

Extreme heat can be dangerous for everyone, especially outdoor workers, the elderly, some people with disabilities and children, particularly infants.

For current heat warnings, please visit [www.wechu.org](http://www.wechu.org)

### Keep safe

If feeling dizzy, weak or overheated:

- go to a cool place.
- sit or lie down.
- drink water.
- wash face with cool water.
- avoid exercising during the warmest parts of the day.

If these tips do not help, seek medical help immediately. Be sure to check on elderly family members by phone or video call.

Never leave pets or children in hot cars.

### When indoors

- Stay indoors to limit sun exposure.
- Close blinds and curtains during the hottest times of the day. You can cover windows with tinfoil-covered cardboard to reflect sunlight.
- Take frequent cool showers or baths.
- Stay on lower floors if there is no air conditioning.
- Drink water and eat light, regular meals. Avoid consuming salt, caffeinated beverages and alcohol.
- Avoid using large appliances such as stoves, ovens, washers and dryers. Prepare meals that do not require cooking.

### When outdoors

- Spend the hottest part of the day in air-conditioned buildings.
- Drink water every 15 to 20 minutes, even when not thirsty.

- Dress in light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing covering as much skin as possible.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat to protect the face.
- Wear full UVA and UVB protection sunglasses.
- Apply sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher 20 minutes before going outside.
- Apply lip balm with SPF 15 or higher.



## Earthquakes

Earthquakes are most common in eastern Ontario, but can also happen in other parts of the province.

Earthquakes occur when energy is released underground through the shifting and breaking of rocks. This can cause rapid and sudden shaking of the earth which last for seconds or several minutes and can cause damage to buildings, roads and bridges, and trigger landslides. Aftershocks can also happen – they are small earthquakes occurring hours, days or weeks after an earthquake.

### During an earthquake

#### When indoors

- Drop, cover and hold — go under a sturdy piece of furniture, ensure heads are covered and hold on.
- If there is nothing to duck under, crouch in the corner of a room.
- Stay away from windows — glass may shatter.
- Remain inside until the shaking stops.
- Use stairs instead of an elevator in case of aftershocks, power outages or other damage.
- Note: fire alarms and sprinkler systems often go off during an earthquake, even if there is no fire.

#### When outdoors

- Drop to the ground in a clear spot away from buildings, power lines, trees and streetlights.
- Stay away from objects that could fall — remain there until the ground stops shaking.
- Look out for falling rocks and debris.

#### When in a vehicle

- Pull over to a safe place and stay inside.
- Do not leave the vehicle if downed power lines are across it — wait for help.
- Stay away from anything that could collapse (bridges, overpasses, underpasses and buildings).

- If on a bus, stay in the seat — take cover in a protected area or sit in a crouched position and ensure heads are protected.

### After an earthquake

- Be prepared for aftershocks.
- Listen to the radio or television for information from authorities. Follow their instructions. Place telephone receivers back in their cradles; only make calls if requiring emergency services.
- Put on sturdy shoes and protective clothing to help prevent injury from debris, especially broken glass.
- Check the home for structural damage and other hazards. If the home is suspected to be unsafe, leave and do not re-enter.
- When leaving the home, take an emergency kit and any other essential items. Post an 'EVACUATED' sign in the front window of the home. Do not waste food or water as supplies may be interrupted.
- Do not light matches or turn on light switches until it has been confirmed there are no gas leaks or flammable liquids spilled. Use a flashlight to check utilities and do not shut them off unless damaged. Leaking gas will smell.
- If tap water is still available immediately after the earthquake, fill a bathtub and other containers in case the supply gets cut off. If there is no running water, remember there may be water available in a hot water tank (make sure water is not hot before touching it) and the toilet reservoir (not the bowl).
- Do not flush toilets if sewer lines are suspected to be broken.
- Carefully clean up any spilled hazardous materials – wear proper hand and eye protection.
- Check on neighbours, if possible and safe to do so. Organize rescue measures if people are trapped or call for emergency assistance if they cannot be safely helped.
- If there are pets in the household, try to find and comfort them. When evacuating, take them to a pre-identified pet-friendly shelter.
- Be aware of secondary effects. Although ground shaking is the major source of earthquake damage, secondary effects can also be very destructive. These can include landslides and flooding.



## Wildfires

Forest fires can be very dangerous to people and properties. Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and local fire departments respond to hundreds of forest fires every year.

It is important to prepare in advance and know what actions to take in the event of a forest fire.

### When indoors

- Move away from outside walls.
- Close doors, but leave them unlocked.
- Close windows, vents and blinds.
- Remove lightweight curtains.
- Open the fireplace damper and close fireplace screens.
- Turn a light on in each room to make the home more visible in heavy smoke.
- Turn off air conditioners.
- Have a flashlight, extra batteries and a battery-powered radio close by in case the power goes out.
- Keep all family members and pets together.

### When evacuating the home

- If instructed to evacuate, do so immediately.
- Choose a route away from fire hazards – listen to the radio or TV.
- Watch for changes in speed and direction of fire and smoke.
- Wear clothing and footwear that protect against flying sparks and ashes.
- Do not leave pets behind.
- If there is time before leaving, pack enough supplies for a week (clothes, cash, medications, etc.).
- Remove flammable materials from the home.
- Turn on sprinklers to wet the lawn.
- Turn off the gas line to the home.
- Inform someone of evacuation plans.

### When outdoors during a wildfire

- Do not try to outrun the fire — find a pond or river to crouch in.

- If there is no water nearby, go to a lower level clearing.
- If near a road, lie face down along the road or in the ditch – use soil to shield from the fire's heat.
- Protect lungs by breathing air closest to the ground through a moist cloth to avoid inhaling smoke.



## Hazardous Materials Incident

Hazardous materials are chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or explosive agents that pose risk to life, health and the environment if they are released.

Hazardous material incidents can happen during transportation, production, storage or disposal. A release can be large in scale from tankers and storage tanks to a small spill of chemicals for a backyard pool.

In the event of a hazardous materials incident, there are two courses of action to take:

1. Evacuate
2. Shelter in place

### Evacuate

The Town may determine the best course of action is to evacuate. In the event of a hazardous materials release, residents will receive minimal notice to evacuate.

#### How to evacuate

- Gather all family members, pets and an emergency kit.
- Close and lock all windows and doors.
- Turn off natural gas, electricity and water if directed to do so by authorities.
- Take one vehicle.
- Follow the designated evacuation route or directions provided by authorities.
- Follow instructions by authorities if transportation assistance is required. Authorities will direct residents to the staging area where buses will be available.
- Do not take shortcuts.
- Check on elderly and disabled neighbours and provide assistance if it is safe to do so.
- Do not return home until authorities deem the area is safe for re-entry.

### Shelter in place

In some cases, it is safer to remain in the home or workplace when a release occurs. Many chemical agents form a vapour cloud or plume when released into the air. This vapour cloud may be toxic or explosive in nature.

The purpose of sheltering in place is to create as many barriers as possible to the outside environment. Here are some tips on sheltering in place:

- Remain inside.
- Bring pets indoors.
- Tune into media and social media for updates and instructions.
- Close all windows, doors, blinds and curtains.
- Seal around windows and door cracks with duct tape or packing tape.
- Shut down fans and air conditioners, and close fireplace dampers.
- Cover vents with plastic sheeting and duct tape.
- Go to the highest level of the building to an interior space or room with the fewest openings to the outside.
- Take an emergency kit.
- Place wet towels at the base of doors and windows.

### Actions to take if outside

1. If witnessing an incident involving the release of a hazardous substance, get indoors immediately.
2. Call 911 to report the incident.
3. Close vents and windows, and shut down air conditioning in the car.
4. Seek shelter in a solid structure as quickly as possible.
5. If stuck outdoors, proceed in the opposite direction of the wind and go uphill or the opposite direction of the flow of a water course.
6. Follow directions provided by the Town.
7. Travel at least one city block (major road to major road) to get away from the danger.
8. Do not move or drive towards the vapour cloud.
9. Cover mouth and nose with a dry cloth.



## Pandemics

A pandemic occurs when an infectious disease spreads throughout the global population. It is different than an epidemic, which is usually contained within a region or country.

The Ministry of Health and Long-term Care works with local public health units and healthcare providers to prepare for a flu

pandemic. Their tasks include:

- Monitoring flu in Ontario and the rest of the world
- Stockpiling antiviral drugs and equipment
- Deploying drugs and protective equipment where they are needed
- Developing emergency plans for delivering healthcare services
- Administering vaccines as they become available

## Keep safe

- Wash hands often with soap and water for about 15 seconds, including:
  - before and after eating.
  - after being in a public place.
  - after using the washroom.
  - after coughing and sneezing.
  - after touching surfaces that other people also touch.
- Stay healthy by eating well, drinking lots of water, getting regular exercise and plenty of rest.
- Get an annual flu shot.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick and keep distance.
- If possible, stay home from work, school and errands when sick – this will help prevent others from catching the illness.
- Cover mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing – it may prevent those around you from getting sick.

## COVID-19

For more information on COVID-19, visit [www.wechu.org](http://www.wechu.org)

## Appendix A

### In the event of an emergency, please call 9-1-1

#### Town of Essex

General Line	519-776-7336 ext. 1100 or 1101
Environmental Services (Wastewater)	519-776-7336 ext. 1425
Emergency Notifications	<a href="http://www.essex.ca/Alerts">www.essex.ca/Alerts</a>
Emergency Information	<a href="http://www.essex.ca/Emergency">www.essex.ca/Emergency</a>
Report-A-Problem	<a href="http://www.essex.ca/reportaproblem">www.essex.ca/reportaproblem</a>

#### Emergency Services

Essex Fire & Rescue Services	519-776-7336 ext. 1200
OPP Detachment (Non-Emergency)	1-888-310-1122

#### Conservation and Flooding Information

Essex Region Conservation Authority	519-776-5209	<a href="http://www.essexregionconservation.ca">www.essexregionconservation.ca</a>
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#### Health Information

Windsor-Essex County Health Unit	519-258-2146	<a href="http://www.wechu.org">www.wechu.org</a>
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#### School & Bus Information

CS Providence	519-948-9227	<a href="http://www.cscprovidence.ca">www.cscprovidence.ca</a>
Greater Essex County District School Board	519-255-3200	<a href="http://www.publicboard.ca">www.publicboard.ca</a>
Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board	519-253-2481	<a href="http://www.wecdsb.on.ca">www.wecdsb.on.ca</a>

#### Utility Information

E.L.K. Energy	1-877-355-7798	<a href="http://www.elkenenergy.com">www.elkenenergy.com</a>
Enbridge Gas	1-877-362-7434	<a href="http://www.enbridge.com">www.enbridge.com</a>
Hydro One	1-800-434-1235	<a href="http://www.hydroone.com">www.hydroone.com</a>

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For additional information, and to stay up-to-date on the latest news and notification, please visit

[www.essex.ca/Emergency](http://www.essex.ca/Emergency)