



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako

A Guide to Re-Entry after an Interface Fire

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Introduction

This guide is intended to provide advice on how to safely re-enter your community and home following an interface wildfire. Your home and community will not look like it did when you left. Please re-enter with caution. Unseen dangers such as danger trees, livestock and wildlife roaming, and downed power lines may be present on your property, roads and surrounding areas. Using caution can help reduce potential injuries. When in doubt, ask for help or seek advice from an expert.

If your property is placed under an Evacuation Alert following the removal of an Evacuation Order please be aware that a risk from wildfire remains and you should be prepared for possible evacuation.

Banking and Insurance Information

If your home has a mortgage, call the bank or company that holds this mortgage to let them know about the wildfires as soon as possible to discuss mortgage or loan payment deferrals if needed.

If you are insured:

- Contact your insurance company/broker as soon as possible. The sooner the insurance company is notified, the quicker your insurance claim can be processed.
- Try to create an inventory of household items, both inside and outside of the buildings, which have been damaged by fire. Photograph or videotape the damage as much as possible.
- Work with your insurance company to find out what is covered, what is not covered and what may be subject to further discussion.
- Work with your insurance company and their accredited fire restoration companies to try to restore or rebuild your home.
- Do not throw away any damaged goods until the insurance assessor says to do so.
- **If you are not insured the Canadian Red Cross may be able to provide assistance. They may be contacted at 1-800-863-6582 or www.redcross.ca**

Safety precautions when returning to your community

Once you are able to enter your community, take basic precautions and be aware of hazards to your health and safety.

- Please watch for emergency, firefighting, and utility company vehicles.
- Be aware that burned trees are dangerous, highly unstable and can be easily blown over.



- Be aware of bears and other wildlife that may be present on your property, on roads or in your neighborhood.
- Be on the lookout for livestock on roads.

Safety precautions when entering your home

- Walk carefully around your home and check for loose power lines, gas leaks and structural damage. If you have any doubts about safety, do not enter. Do not enter if you smell gas and call PNG's Emergency 24 hr Service Line 1-800-663-1173
- Be careful around burnt structures that may be unstable.
 - Fire damaged buildings may be a hazard.
 - Standing chimneys are a hazard
- Be aware that burnt posts may leave hidden holes in the ground.
- Take proper respiratory precautions when working around ash, soot and demolition dust.
- Hazardous materials containers may have been partially damaged or destroyed. Use caution with items such as the following:
 - kitchen and bathroom cleaning products;
 - paint;
 - batteries;
 - fuel;
 - pesticides or herbicide containers; and
 - propane cylinders.
- Small animals that have been burned out of their homes may seek shelter in yours. Use caution when opening drawers and cupboards, and look for signs of infestation.
- If you see downed power lines on your property, see any damage to hydro infrastructure, or are experiencing fluctuations in electrical service quality contact BC Hydro at 1-888-769 3766 (1-888-POWERON) or *49376 on your cell phone.
- Wash your hands if they come into contact with ash.

Water & Sewer Considerations

- Before using your water for consumption, take all precautions to flush the system and ensure you water is safe and potable.
- Do not use your sewage disposal system until you know it is capable of handling waste, and has not been damaged by equipment and vehicles.
- Please contact Northern Health regarding information and advice on the operation of your water supply and sewage disposal system.



Recommendations for Clean up

Your insurance policy may cover house cleaning by a fire restoration specialist. The RDBN will provide you with cleanup kits and fire kits. If you are going to clean your residence yourself:

- Wear gloves and goggles when working near ash, keep children and pets away, and ensure proper ventilation in the area you're cleaning.
- Smoke odours can last a long time, and you may need to clean everything several times.
- Vacuum all surfaces, change heating and air conditioning filters, and have ducts cleaned.
- Soot/smoke can be removed from painted walls with trisodium phosphate (tsp), but wallpaper may not be salvageable.
- To remove odours from fridges and freezers, wash with baking soda/water, vinegar or ammonia.
- Dispose of hazardous materials like solvents and garden chemicals if they show signs of damage. Separate hazardous materials from landfill waste and dispose appropriately.

Disposing of Food from your Home

- All perishable items should be disposed of immediately upon your return. When you are trying to decide what food to keep or throw away, be safe and always remember: "When in doubt, throw it out."
- It is recommended that you dispose of:
 - Any unrefrigerated raw vegetables or fruits, and meats, and any porous containers (e.g. cardboard, foam containers, etc.) used to store spoiled foods.
 - Any canned food that is bulging or rusted.
 - Any food displaying an off odour or signs of spoilage.
- Food Waste can be disposed of at an RDBN Transfer Station
- If your refrigerator or freezer contains spoiled foods it is recommended that the appliances be sealed with the contents inside. The RDBN will be organizing roadside pick-up of refrigerators and freezers. Please contact the RDBN to discuss collection procedures.
- Contact your insurance provider regarding refrigerator and freezer replacement process.



Transfer Station Locations

Southside Transfer Station
36007 Eakin Settlement Rd

Burns Lake Transfer Station
4410 Babine Lake Rd

Area "D" (Fraser Lake) Transfer Station
3366 Fraser Lake Airport Road

BCWS Property Damage

If there is damage to your property due to wildfire suppression activity, please contact bcwsclaims2018@gov.bc.ca for more information, including how to submit a claim.

Air Quality

It is important to note that air quality could remain poor as a result of smoke from nearby fire activity. With wildfires of this size and magnitude, smoky conditions are expected to persist into the winter months.

Mental Health

If you need help, or know of someone in need of help, because of depression or other mental health concerns, call the **Mental Health Support Line**: Call 310-6789 (do not add an area code to the number). This number will connect you to your local BC crisis line without a wait or busy signal, 24 hours a day. Crisis line workers are trained to help provide emotional support as well as mental health information and resources.

HealthLink BC

Call 811 or visit www.healthlinkbc.ca to access free, non-emergency health information for anyone in your family, including mental health information. Through 811, you can also speak to a registered nurse about symptoms you're worried about, or talk with a pharmacist about medication questions.



Recovery Issues

The Regional District of Bulkley Nechako is currently working with the Province of BC and other organizations to identify funding, and other opportunities in support of residents impacted by the 2018 wildfires. These activities include:

- Refrigerator and fridge pickup and replacement
- Hydro pole replacement on private property
- Danger tree removal on private property
- Damaged or lost fencing on private land
- Feed or crop loss in fields
- Livestock loss

The Regional District of Bulkley Nechako is planning the establishment of a Recovery Centre on the Southside from September 23rd to 27th to provide residents with easy access support to agencies such as Red Cross, BC Hydro, social service agencies, and community volunteer groups.

Please phone the RDBN or visit our website for more information.

Contacts

Regional District of Bulkley Nechako Emergency Operations Centre

- <https://www.facebook.com/BulkleyNechakoEmergencyInfo/>
- RDBN Public Information Line
 - 1-250-692-3195
 - 1-800-320-3339
- RDBN Website
 - www.rdbn.bc.ca

RCMP

- Emergency
 - 9-1-1
- Non-Emergency
 - Burns Lake 250-692-7171

BC Hydro

- 1-800-224-9376

BC Wildfire

- www.bcwildfire.ca



Emergency Info BC

- 1-800-663-7867
- www.emergencyinfobc.gov.bc.ca

Emergency Support Services (ESS)

- 1-800-585-9559
- (RDBN) 250-692-3195

Pacific Northern Gas

- Emergency 24 hr Service 1-800-663-1173
- Customer Care Centre 1-800-667-2297

Health Link BC

- Available 24 hours call 8-1-1 Insurance Bureau of Canada
- 1-844-227-5422
- www.ibc.ca

Ministry of Health:

- 1-800-663-7867
- www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health

Northern Health Regional Office

- Suite 600, 299 Victoria St.
Prince George, BC V2L 5B8
 - Phone: [250-565-2649](tel:250-565-2649)
 - Toll Free: [1-866-565-2999](tel:1-866-565-2999)

Ministry of Agriculture:

- 1-888-221-7141

Shaw

- 1-888-472-2222

Telus

- 1-844-443-8622

First Nations Resources

- First Nations Emergency Services Society
 - 1-888-822-3388
 - <http://fness.bc.ca/>

First Nations Health Authority

- 1-866-913-0033
- <http://www.fnha.ca/>



Canadian Red Cross

- 1-800-863-6582 or www.redcross.ca

Lakes District Food Bank

- www.lafes.com
- Candice Little
 - clittle.ldfes@gmail.com
 - 250-692-9601
 - 250-251-1566

Burns Lake Postmen

- Angelika Posselt 250-692-6683
- Charlie Rensby 250-692-6447



INFORMATION BULLETIN

For Immediate Release

September 12, 2017

Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource
Operations and Rural Development
BC Wildfire Service

Wildfire Information for Residents returning to Southside

BURNS LAKE – Due to favourable weather conditions and firefighting efforts, fires in the Babine Fire Complex have not grown substantially in the last few days.

On September 10, 2018, the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako modified a number of evacuation orders. For more information on Evacuation Order and Alert areas, please visit the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako's website: <https://www.rdbn.bc.ca/>

Public access to active fire areas will remain restricted to ensure:

- **Wildfire suppression activities can continue safely and effectively**
- **Public safety from existing and ongoing fire hazards**

Note: crews and equipment will continue to be present and working within areas around private residences and road systems. Please drive slowly in areas where fire crews are working.

Evacuated residents returning to their homes on the Southside will be returning to an area that has been profoundly affected by wildfire. Things will not look the same. In some cases, damages will have occurred to residences and property during rapid and intense fire growth phases and also as a result of fire suppression efforts. If there is damage to your property due to a wildfire or wildfire suppression activities, please contact BCWSClaims2018@gov.bc.ca for more information, including how to submit a claim.

With wildfires of this size and magnitude, smoky conditions are expected to persist well into the fall and winter months. Residents will be able to see smoke in the surrounding forest(s) and grasslands that have burned. The BC Wildfire Service would like the public to be clear on what type of hot spots and smoke are of concern by outlining which hot spots should and should not be reported:

- Do not report smokes or hot spots that are far away from structures and well within the fire perimeter
- Please report fire activity near a structure or on the edge of the fire's perimeter near unburnt forests or grassland



Figure 1



Figure 2

The hot spots shown in figure 1 and 2 are within the fire's perimeter and are not threatening structures. These smokes are to be expected upon re-entry and should not be reported.



Figure 3



Figure 4

The hot spots shown in figure 3 and 4 are of concern. The smoke in Figure 3 is burning in unburnt forest that is outside the fire's perimeter. The hot spot in Figure 4 has potential to threaten the structure. Both of these smokes should be reported.

Trees that have been damaged by wildfire can be unstable and may fall at any time. **It is the responsibility of the property owner to ensure danger trees on private property are assessed by a qualified professional and removed if necessary.**

The public is also reminded that airspace over fires is restricted so aircraft engaged in fire suppression can operate safely. **Drones may not be operated in the airspace around a wildfire and may not be used to observe fire activity.**

Media Contact:

Erin Catherall
Fire Information Officer
Babine Fire Complex
BC Wildfire Service
250-876-8557



PreparedBC: **Re-entering your home after a wildfire**

When your local or First Nations government has declared it safe for you to return home, there are steps you can take to make this transition easier and safer, both physically and psychologically.

GETTING THERE

Local authorities may specify a safe route or routes for your return. Follow their directions, including road closures and other signage, and avoid shortcuts.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY

Fear, stress and anxiety are natural reactions to a traumatic event. Eventually, these feelings will diminish and, for most people, completely subside. To help yourself and your loved ones:

- Accept and offer help and comfort; seek counselling if necessary.
- Focus on positive memories and the skills you've used to get through other hard times.
- Be aware of your child's reactions: reassure them and encourage them to express themselves.
- Give yourself and your family permission to grieve and time to heal.
- Get physical activity, but rest as needed, eat well, hydrate and keep a manageable schedule.

RE-ENTERING YOUR HOME

Your home and its surroundings may not look like they did before you left. As you arrive, it's important to obey all signage and understand Damage Assessment Placards.

- Damage Assessment Placards are notices that the local government places on buildings within the damaged area. They tell you whether a structure is suitable for re-entry, access is restricted or unsafe to enter entirely.

Visit BC Housing's website for more information on placards: www.bchousing.org

If you can only enter your home once, remove valuables and take steps to secure your property.

If you're safely able to return for longer:

- Bring supplies like a flashlight, tools, drinking water, gloves, garbage bags and a first aid kit.
- Walk around the perimeter of any structure before entering, noting electrical wiring, any gas smell or debris that could fall.
- Enter with caution and check that the main power breaker is off.
- Only use generators outdoors; do not connect to a household circuit.
- Note sewage and water damage; your septic system or sump pump may not work without power and water may not be potable (that is, may not be safe to consume).
- Do not use your sewage disposal system unless you know it's capable of handling waste.

- If using propane, gas or heating oil, contact suppliers for inspection and service.
- Take pictures, keep track of your expenses and time spent cleaning up, and keep your receipts.

FOOD AND DRINKING WATER SAFETY

Food can be damaged by unsafe temperatures, smoke, ash, soot, fire retardant chemicals, water and loss of power during a fire.

- Discard food that is spoiled, as well as food that has been stored in a refrigerator that has lost power, even if the power has since been restored. ***When in doubt, throw it out.***
- If your freezer has been exposed to fire or has been without power for more than three days, discard the contents.
 - Discard any food that has thawed.
 - It is considered safe to re-freeze partially frozen foods as long it still contains visible ice crystals.
- If you do not need to replace your fridge or freezer, clean, disinfect and deodorize your fridge and freezer once you have discarded the spoiled food.
- Discard foods/items exposed to heat, ash, chemicals, soot, water and smoke including:
 - foods stored in fridges, freezers, cupboards, drawers and containers
 - open foods
 - packaged foods, including paper, cardboard boxes, plastic, cellophane
 - bottles and jars of food with screw top lids or crown/crimp caps
 - single service items/utensils which also includes individually plastic-wrapped items
- Discard damaged, dented or bulging cans.
- Clean and sanitize canned foods/drinks exposed to smoke only.
- Photograph foods that are discarded as the information may be required for insurance purposes. Contact your insurance provider for specific details and requirements.
- Follow current local guidelines on where food waste may be discarded.
- Do not drink tap water unless local officials have assured you that it's safe for drinking. Obtain bottled water, or boil or disinfect tap water with tablets (or chlorine bleach for non-drinking needs).
- If you are on a well or cistern and it has been damaged, assume the water is not safe to drink. Contact your local authority for instructions.

CLEANING UP AFTER A WILDFIRE

Your insurance policy may cover house cleaning by a fire restoration specialist. If you are going to clean your residence yourself:

- Wear gloves and goggles, keep children and pets away, and ventilate the area you're cleaning well.
- Smoke odours can last a long time, and you may need to clean everything several times.
- Vacuum all surfaces, change heating and air conditioning filters, and have ducts cleaned.
- Soot/smoke can be removed from painted walls with trisodium phosphate, but wallpaper may not be salvageable.
- Clean dirt off furniture, removing drawers and scrubbing wooden surfaces; let dry thoroughly.
- Linoleum flooring may require replacement, but wood and carpet can be vacuumed and washed.

RE-ENTERING YOUR HOME AFTER A WILDFIRE

- To remove odours from fridges and freezers, wash with baking soda/water, vinegar or ammonia.
- Locks and hinges should be taken apart, thoroughly cleaned and oiled.
- Dispose of hazardous materials like solvents and garden chemicals if they show signs of damage. Separate hazardous materials from landfill waste and dispose appropriately.

REPLACING DOCUMENTS AND MONEY

- If your documents are in a safe, do not attempt to open it until it is cool to the touch.
- Keep track of lost documents, including birth certificates, passports and tax records.

INSURANCE MATTERS

- Review your policy to understand what items to list, then take an inventory – you'll need to provide a list of lost or damaged items as part of your claim.
- Take photos or videos, noting serial numbers if possible and the approximate cost of each item.
- Keep your inventory with receipts related to living expenses, repairs and inspections.
- Notify your mortgage company and keep them informed about restoration of your property.
- If you have questions about your home insurance, call your insurance representative directly or call the Insurance Bureau of Canada toll-free at: 1 844-2-ASK-IBC.

REPAIRING YOUR HOME

- If you can repair and live in your home, look for a reputable contractor to help with restoration; you may get recommendations from friends and neighbours or your insurance adjuster.
- Verify the track record of any roofer or builder, dealing with only licensed contractors. Beware of potential scams.
- Contact your local authority about submitting plans and getting a building permit, as needed.
- Ask for a written estimate and get a copy of the final, signed contract before the job begins.
- Pay only by cheque or credit card – not cash; consider a hold back payable post-completion.
- Damage to utilities must be repaired under permit and inspected by the appropriate agency.
- If you live in a First Nations community, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is able to cover the costs of repairing homes and buildings, as identified in recovery plans submitted by the local First Nations government.
- In general, where private insurance is in place, that coverage comes first. Where there is no insurance, the INAC recovery plan takes effect.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR HOMEOWNERS WITH LIVESTOCK

IF your animals have been relocated:

- If you haven't already, contact your local government Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) regarding number and location of relocated livestock.
- Inspect your farm for hazards and damage, secure the site and contact your insurance provider.
- Assess the situation to determine if you have the ability to feed, water, shelter and safely contain your livestock. Take care to avoid hazards.

- Assess the condition and safety of buildings, equipment and other infrastructure; you may require the help of a professional.
- Check on the status of stored fuels and other hazardous materials.
- Evaluate and document damage to equipment, structures and fence lines.
- Animals should not be returned to your farm until the Evacuation Alert is lifted.

IF your animals have been sheltered in place or have been freed:

- Consider all the recommendations above.
- Locate and determine the health and condition of remaining animals, and provide for their food, water and safety needs.
- Determine your capacity to continue to feed, water, shelter and safely contain your remaining livestock.
- Determine any additional feed and water needs and make arrangement to secure resources if necessary (this may require outside help provided by your local government).
- Determine the number of missing animals. Document any loss of livestock, farm buildings, fences or equipment (in writing and with photographs).
- Notify your Local Government EOC of any large numbers of injured or dead animals.

IF only temporary re-entry is permitted and animals have been sheltered in place or freed:

- For your safety, maintain awareness of the hazard(s) in your area and follow any instructions from your local officials.
- Inspect your farm for hazards and damage, taking care to avoid hazards.
- Locate and determine the health and condition of your remaining animals; provide for their food, water and safety needs.
- Determine your ability to continue to feed, water, shelter and safely contain remaining livestock.
- Determine whether you need to relocate or free animals.
- Note the number of dead or missing animals; if there are large numbers of injured or dead animals, notify your local government EOC.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Emergency Management BC: www.gov.bc.ca/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery

PreparedBC: www.gov.bc.ca/PreparedBC

BC Wildfire Service: www.BCwildfire.ca

Ministry of Health: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health

Ministry of Agriculture: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/farm-management/emergency-preparedness

BC Housing: www.bchousing.org/about/rapid-damage-assessment

Insurance Bureau of Canada: www.ibc.ca

For information regarding INAC's role in Emergency Management for First Nations please call 1-800-567-9604 or visit: www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1309369889599/1309369935837

Wildfire Information

Wildfires And Your Health

Using Face Masks During Wildfire Smoke Events

There are negative health effects associated with breathing smoky air. Wildfire smoke contains particulate matter and, when we breathe it into our lungs, it can cause health problems. Smoke is especially problematic for those with breathing, heart, and circulation illnesses (e.g. asthma, COPD, heart failure).

Healthy people can also be affected, particularly pregnant women, children, the elderly and outdoor workers. The fire does not have to be close for you to be affected. If the skies are smoky, you could be at risk.

Staying indoors where the air is cleaner, is the best protection

The best way to protect the health of yourself and your family during smoky sky events is to seek cleaner air. You can buy a HEPA air cleaner for a room in your home, you can go to a building with a good air filtration system, or you can leave the area. If this is not practical, it may help to simply stay indoors with the windows and doors closed, and to reduce your physical activity.

Limitations of face masks and particulate respirators (N95 Masks)

Particulate respirators (N95 masks) can stop some of the tiny particles found in wildfire smoke from getting into your lungs. However, these masks have important limitations because they may make it difficult to breathe normally, which can be risky for those with existing breathing or heart conditions, do not fit children's faces properly, cannot be worn properly by people with facial hair, and stop working if they get saturated with water or sweat.

Simple dust masks, surgical masks, and other masks made of paper or cloth do not provide protection against smoke.

For those who choose to wear a mask

If you need to be outside during a smoke event and want to wear a mask:

- choose one labeled 'N95' and 'particulate respirator'
- follow the fit instructions: a tight seal around the mouth and nose is needed to protect your lungs against smoke
- take regular breaks from wearing the mask so your body can recover from the increased breathing effort required. This increase breathing effort can outweigh the benefits for people with chronic heart or lung disease. If you feel more short of breath with the respirator on, do not use it
- replace used and dirty masks regularly

Air Quality - reducing your exposure in smoky conditions

Wildfire smoke is a mixture of very small inhalable particles and gases. The amount and the makeup of smoke can change from fire to fire and as the smoke gets older.

The variability in the smoke can lead to a variety of health effects that range from nose, throat and eye irritation to more serious symptoms like difficulty breathing and worsening of heart and lung conditions like COPD or asthma.

Those particularly at risk are unborn children, children, the elderly, and those with chronic illness. Effects can be made worse when combined with high temperatures.

What you and your family can do to reduce your risk:

- Limit your exposure to wildfire smoke.
- Stay indoors and keep the air clean.
- Keep windows and doors closed.
- Avoid smoking tobacco, using wood-burning stoves/fireplaces, burning candles, incenses or vacuuming.
- Use a HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) or EP (electrostatic precipitator) indoor air cleaner if available (not all air conditioners filter the air).
- Reduce the amount of time spent outdoors when air quality is poor.
- Avoid rigorous outdoor activities if your breathing becomes difficult or uncomfortable.
- When driving in a vehicle, keep windows closed with air conditioning set to recirculate.
- N95 respirators are only effective for those who are familiar with their use and proper fit; simple dust masks are unlikely to provide any reduction in exposure to fine particles or gaseous pollutants.
- Visit a clean air shelter or a location that has a large volume of air that is air conditioned and filters the air (such as shopping malls, swimming pools, public libraries, etc.).
- People with asthma or other chronic illness should activate their asthma or personal care plans.
- Some people may consider leaving the smoke filled area all together, however, conditions can vary dramatically by area and elevation.
- Listen to your body - Visit HealthLinkBC, call 8-1-1 (non-emergency), see your doctor, or call 9-1-1 (emergency) if you're experiencing symptoms such as difficulty in breathing, chest pain or discomfort, and sudden onset of cough or irritation of airways.
- Be aware – visit bcairquality.ca for current air quality information (air quality may be poor even though smoke may not be visible).

Maintaining good overall health is a good way to prevent health effects resulting from short-term exposure to air pollution.

Northern Health supports the Ministry of Environment (MoE) with air quality advisories and bulletins when certain air pollutants become a concern. MoE issues **Smoky Skies Bulletins** when smoke can be expected in a local airshed.

Unlike air quality advisories which are based on air concentrations measured at monitors, these Smoky Skies Bulletins are issued by a meteorologist who uses a number of different tools to determine that smoke is likely to enter a specified region. These bulletins can provide sooner warning to people that their health may be affected during the smoke event and may also be in affect longer than a typical advisory due to the unpredictable nature of wildfire smoke.

Northern Health, in conjunction with other agencies, will be monitoring smoke levels in communities close to fire activity. If situations arise where evacuation or relocation of high-risk individuals is required, NH will work to provide information to communities and partner agencies, and will assist with risk assessment and coordination of medical services.

Water Quality – ensuring your drinking water is safe for use

Water quality can be compromised by a variety of emergencies, including natural disasters like forest fire or flooding. Environmental Health Officers routinely inspect, sample and assess Community Water Systems in Northern BC. Water systems with high hazard ratings are generally put on a boil advisory until the source of contamination is found, or adequate treatment facilities are installed.

Food Safety – safe food handling and preparation in emergency situations

Food safety is an important consideration in emergency situations such as a power outage, or following a period of evacuation from your home.

Food safety when evacuation orders are lifted:

Upon returning to your home following a period of evacuation, it is important to ensure any food left behind has not spoiled or been compromised by a power outage.

Check expiry dates on food left behind during a period of evacuation, to determine if they are still safe to eat. If frozen foods have thawed, they may not be safe to eat and must be discarded. (Thawed and refrozen ice cream may be a good indicator that helps to determine whether the freezer has been off. Fish product that is malodorous on thawing is also a good sign.)

If in doubt throw it out. Do not take any chances with the safety of your food.

Food safety when the power returns:

- Ideally, fridge temperatures should remain at 4 degrees Celsius or below and foods in the freezer should remain frozen solid.
- A refrigerator can keep food cool for up to 12 hours and a freezer can keep food safe for days if it is kept closed.
- If you don't have a thermometer or if you don't know how long your fridge was without power:
- Check the products in the fridge for spoilage and souring. Milk and other dairy products that have gone off/sour are good indicators that the fridge has been off and all food should be discarded.
- If frozen foods have thawed, they may not be safe to eat and must be discarded.
- Food in the freezer that has or may have reached 4C or higher should be discarded and must not re-frozen.
 - Thawed and refrozen ice cream may be a good indicator that helps to determine whether the freezer has been off. Fish product that is malodorous on thawing is also a good sign.
- If there has been an extended power outage it may be necessary to contact your insurance provider. Make a list of items discarded and photograph these items if possible for insurance purposes.
- Extra precautions should apply to ready to eat foods.
- If in doubt throw it out. Do not take any chances with the safety of your food.

Information for customers affected by the wildfires.

Financial assistance for wildfire evacuees

Wildfires across the province have led to evacuations in several communities.

It's a challenging and emotional time and we want to ensure that we're supporting everyone as much as possible during the evacuation. When the safety of your family is at stake, nothing is more important – and we're working to ensure that your BC Hydro bill doesn't add to your concerns.

We will offer bill credits and flexible payment plans to support residential and commercial customers affected by evacuation orders. In addition to providing this credit, we'll work with those customers who have been evacuated or placed on evacuation alert to defer bill payments, waive late payment charges and set-up a flexible payment plan.

For more information visit bchydro.com or to make arrangements on your account call us at 1 800 BCHYDRO (1 800 224 9376).

Things to know

DISCONNECTIONS DURING EVACUATIONS

- Power will only be disconnected when there is an immediate threat to BC Hydro infrastructure or if there is a safety concern for the public or emergency responders.
- BC Hydro will be restricted from entering evacuated areas to restore power during an outage.

HOW POWER IS RESTORED

- When power outages occur in fire affected areas, BC Hydro crews will work as quickly and safely as possible to get services restored. Assessments will be done when it is safe to gain access to determine the extent of damage.
- BC Hydro is working closely with local authorities to ensure that we are taking all precautions as we enter affected areas.

WHAT TO DO BEFORE AN EVACUATION

- Turn off all unnecessary appliances, such as air conditioners and hot tubs.
- Unplug sensitive electrical equipment, such as televisions and computers.
- Remove food from your refrigerator, unplug and leave the door open – but only if there's enough time to do so.
- Turn off all lights except for one exterior light – this will tell BC Hydro crews that power is on at the residence.

WHEN YOU GET HOME

When the evacuation order has been lifted, if you experience problems with your power, including no electrical service or fluctuating electrical service, call 1 800 BCHYDRO (1 800 224 9376) or *49376 on your mobile phone.

Depending on the extent of damage, power could be out for several days. We'll coordinate with agencies and local authorities to restore services.

Be safe

Never go near a fallen power line. Always assume that a line or anything contacting it is energized. Stay at least ten meters (33 feet) away at all times and do not attempt to remove debris surrounding the line. If you see a fallen power line, call 911.

News release

Aug 17, 2018

BC Hydro offers financial assistance to wildfire evacuees

VANCOUVER — BC Hydro is providing bill credits to customers who have been evacuated due to wildfires across the province.

"Over the past several weeks, wildfires have led to evacuations in several communities across the province, and in some cases our customers have tragically lost their homes", said Chris O'Riley, BC Hydro President and Chief Operating Officer. "We want to help and hope this will provide some financial relief during this especially challenging time."

BC Hydro is working with local authorities to identify residential and commercial customers located in evacuation areas and will automatically apply a credit to the account for the electricity consumed during the period the customer is out of the home or business due to evacuation order.

In addition, for customers that have lost their homes due to the wildfires, BC Hydro will waive all charges from their last bill, including any charges for electricity used prior to the wildfire.

BC Hydro customers on evacuation alert may be able to defer bill payments to a later date or arrange a flexible payment plan. Customers are encouraged to call BC Hydro's customer team at 1 800 BCHYDRO (1 800 224 9376) to discuss options.

BC Hydro is working closely with Emergency Management BC and BC Wildfire Service. Crews are ready to respond should an active wildfire impact the electrical system.

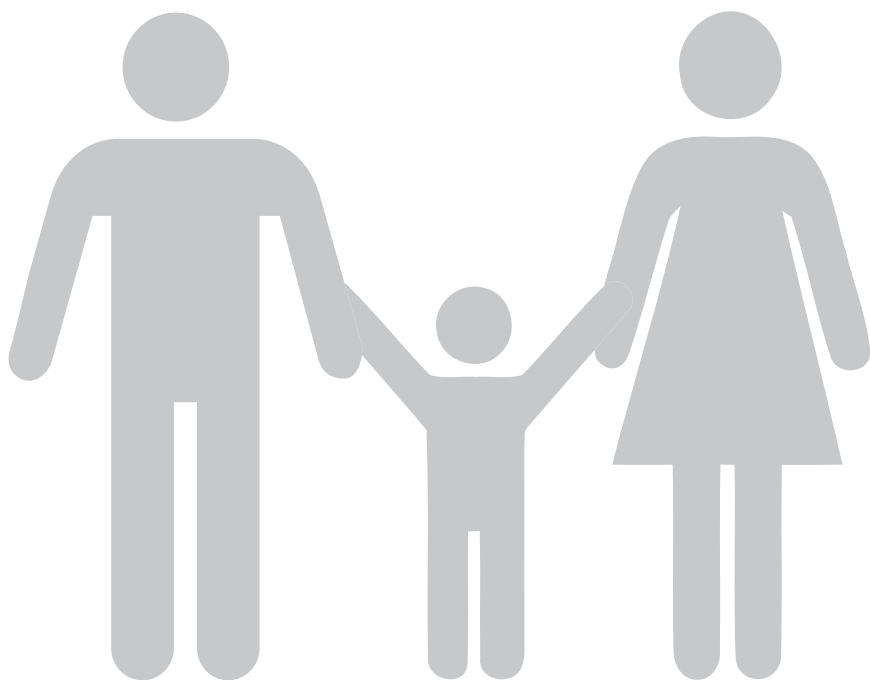
Contact:

BC Hydro Media Relations
p. 604 928 6468

Guide to

WILDFIRE RECOVERY





Quick Checklist

- ☐ Do not enter your home until fire officials say it is safe.
- ☐ Use caution when entering burned areas as hazards may still exist, including hot spots, which can flare up without warning.
- ☐ Avoid damaged or fallen power lines, poles and downed wires.
- ☐ Watch for ash pits and mark them for safety—warn family and neighbours to keep clear of the pits also.
- ☐ Watch animals closely and keep them under your direct control. Hidden embers and hot spots could burn your pets' paws or hooves.
- ☐ Follow public health guidance on safe cleanup of fire ash and safe use of face masks.
- ☐ Wet debris down to minimize breathing dust particles.
- ☐ Wear leather gloves and heavy soled shoes to protect hands and feet.
- ☐ Cleaning products, paint, batteries and damaged fuel containers need to be disposed of properly to avoid risk.

Ensure your food and water are safe.

- ☐ Discard any food that has been exposed to heat, smoke or soot.
- ☐ Do NOT ever use water that you think may be contaminated to wash dishes, brush teeth, prepare food, wash hands, make ice or make baby formula.

Introduction

Following an evacuation, there are a number of practical and emotional things you can consider when you're ready or allowed to return home.

This guide provides information on what to do after you have been evacuated from your community following a wildfire. It provides tips and suggestions for the next steps in your return journey home.

The government will provide information on when your community will be considered safe. Please do not return to your communities until your local authorities, band leadership or Chief and council have given permission to do so.

**BEFORE
YOU
START**

1

Anticipate what it will be like

The physical environment:

It helps to think ahead about what the environment will look, feel, and smell like when you return. There may be delays in returning home due to the area being unsafe, and your community may have dramatically changed, including:

- Blackened lifeless landscapes
- Burnt out buildings and vehicles
- Smell of smoke, burnt trees, homes, vehicles
- Areas covered in ash
- Road signs, and familiar landmarks missing
- Spoiled food in fridges and freezers
- Signs painted on remaining houses

Preparing to return to your home and community:

When it is safe to return, think about:

- Are the roads open and safe? Do you know what route to use to get to your home?
- Do you have fuel, food, and water? There may be limited amounts available to you in your community
- Are your cell phones charged? There may be interruptions or lack of electricity in your community
- Who will you inform that you're returning home?
- Do you have a radio, a flashlight and an emergency preparedness kit?
- Do you have appropriate clothing, boots with heavy soles, thick rubber gloves, hat, long pants and long-sleeved shirt?
- If you anticipate clean-up do you have personal protective equipment, including masks? Do you know where to get these items?
- Do you and your returning family members have your tetanus booster and other vaccinations up to date?
- Do you have all medications that you will need?
- Will you take your children and pets on the first visit?

2

PREPARING TO RETURN HOME

We know that your home is not just a house and it holds memories and aspirations for the future. Acknowledging your loss and taking time to grieve is an important step.

If you cannot live in your home:

- Do not enter the area where your home is located unless officials say it is safe to do so.
- Use caution if entering the burned area as hazards may still exist.
- Recognize that there may be many tasks associated with relocating and resettling your family. Take small steps.
- Get your family settled – if your home is unlivable, you will need to arrange temporary housing. The government may have this set up. Try to keep the family together.
- Take care of your pets – if possible, take your pets with you and ensure they have plenty of food and water. Ask your vet or SPCA for some options to board your animals, if you cannot take the pets with you.
- Notify people of your temporary address – give your new address to your employer, family/friends, post office, bank, school, credit cards, utility companies, insurance companies, and if applicable, update your information with the Red Cross.

If there is no apparent damage to your home:

- Do not enter your home until officials say it's safe to do so.
- If you are unsure if it is safe, ASK! Reach out to your local authorities as they are there to help you.
- Use caution when entering burned areas as hazards may still exist, including hot spots.
- Work out what you need to do FIRST. Take small steps at a time: check the status of your power, water, gas, phone, and sewer. You may need to call utility services for assistance.
- Once you are feeling settled, reach out to your neighbours. It is important to re-establish relationships and be a helping hand to one another.

Important documents to recover

Be careful: If your documents are located in a safe, do not attempt to open it until the outside is cool to the touch.

ITEM DESTROYED OR MISSING

Animal registration papers

Bank books

Birth certificates – Marriage certificates – Death certificates - Status cards

Bonds (completely destroyed)

Bonds (partially destroyed)

Children's Services and Social Assistance identification cards, medical assistance or social assistance cheques

Immigration documents

Credit cards

Divorce papers

Driver's licences and vehicle registration title cards

Income tax records

Insurance policies

Land titles

Medical records

Military discharge papers

Money (partially or completely destroyed)

Passports

Provincial/Territorial health insurance card

Social Insurance Number (SIN) cards – Canada Pension Plan documents – Employment Insurance documents

Stocks

Titles to deeds

Wills

WHO TO CONTACT FOR REPLACEMENT

Municipal office

Bank branch

Provincial/Territorial Registrar General or Ministry of Vital Statistics

Write to: Canada Savings Bonds

P.O. Box 2770, Station D

Ottawa, ON K1P 1J7

Include names and addresses that appeared on bonds, approximate date when purchased, and denominations. Gather all pieces and ashes and keep them for further reference.

Gather up remaining pieces and ashes, put them in a package and write a letter explaining what happened. Send to Canada Savings Bond address (above).

Your case worker

Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada

Issuing credit card company

Supreme Court where decree was filed or divorce lawyer

Provincial/Territorial transportation ministry

Revenue Canada

Insurance agent

Local provincial/territorial land title office

Family doctor or specialist

Veterans Affairs Canada

Nearest Bank of Canada branch

Your Consulate General

Provincial/Territorial health ministry

Service Canada

Issuing company or lawyer

City hall or local municipal office

Family lawyer or estate lawyer

Before moving back into your home ensure that the water supply has been inspected and officially declared safe for use, that every room that was affected by the fire has been cleaned, disinfected and dried, that all affected dishes, utensils and glasses have been thoroughly washed and disinfected and that adequate toilet facilities are available.

Ensure your home is secured against further damage. Check for damaged trees or external buildings that may have become unstable. If you rent, the landlord or property manager should do this. If you own the home, you should board up broken windows and smashed doors, and cover holes in walls and in the roof. You can also call a contractor to do this. See the Yellow Pages under “Contractors – General” or “Fire & Water Damage Restoration.”

Here is a list of recommended items that will help you in the recovery process:

Camera or video camera

Notebook and pen to record damage

Buckets, mops and sponges

All-purpose cleaner or unscented detergent

Large containers for soaking bedding and clothing, and lines to hang them to dry

Flashlight

First aid kit

Tools such as hammer, pliers, screwdriver

Trash bags

Protective equipment: a two-strap dust particulate mask with nose clip (N-95), coveralls, leather and rubber gloves and sturdy boots

Drinking Water

Do NOT consume food left in the house or drink water from the tap until you know it is safe. Bring 4 litres of water per day per person - and food that does not require cooking. Appliances may be unsafe to use.

3

INSPECTING YOUR HOME & STARTING TO CLEAN UP

If you are insured, contact your insurance company. Your policy may cover house cleaning by a restoration specialist. As you go through your possessions, keep ruined furniture, appliances, books, etc. for insurance purposes. You can put them outside or in a shed temporarily.

Household items often take several cleanings to rid them of smoke odours, soot and stains. In some cases, they will never come clean or lose their smell. If you can, consult a restoration specialist to help you determine what is worth saving and what isn't.

Hazardous materials

Contact your municipality or provincial ministry to find out how to dispose of hazardous materials such as solvents, garden chemicals and home cleaning products that have been soaked or that show signs of water damage.

Perishable foods, foods packaged in cardboard or plastic, or any foods or medicines directly exposed to heat, smoke, fumes or water should be discarded. Discard all food in glass jars, as there is a high chance that the seal was broken by exposure to heat. Similarly with food in metal cans, the integrity of the can may have been affected by exposure to heat.

Smoke, odours & soot

Try placing small saucers of vinegar or vanilla around the house to absorb odours.

Heating, appliances and utilities

(Please check the Yellow Pages or phonebook to find the professionals listed below.)

Do not use appliances, electrical outlets, switch boxes or fuse-breaker panels until they have been checked by a qualified electrician.

Have your central heating system checked by a qualified technician before use. Replace any parts that have been damaged or affected by smoke.

You may need to consider replacing all your appliances depending on severity of damage. Take direction from the government authorities.

Consult with a professional electrician or with the manufacturer.

Contact the appropriate utility or service company to have your service restored (i.e. electricity, gas, cable, phone, etc.) when you are ready to return home.

Floors and walls

Vacuum all surfaces with vacuums, including carpets and rugs.

Seal off the room you are working in with plastic sheeting to keep soot from travelling throughout the home.

Consult a professional painter for advice on how to clean your walls. You may need to re-paint with a specially formulated paint.

Furniture

Remove residual mud and soil from furniture and dry it off.

If you suspect any mould on any furniture that has been wet, contact a professional for advice. Check the Yellow Pages or phonebook for listings.

Consult a furniture restoration professional to see if any upholstered furniture can be salvaged. Check the Yellow Pages or phonebook for listings.

You may need to replace furniture entirely if it has been severely damaged by fire.

Scrub wooden surfaces (furniture, kitchen cabinets, railings, etc.) with a stiff brush and a cleaning solution such as Murphy's Oil Soap.

Get professional advice for cleaning antiques and fine reproductions.



You will need to provide a list of lost or damaged items as part of your insurance claim. Review your insurance policy so you understand what items to list. If you had a household inventory before the fire, retrieve it for the insurance adjuster. If you didn't, or if it was destroyed, ask your insurance agent for a blank inventory form; it will jog your memory. Record serial numbers of appliances and household equipment, if possible. Note the approximate cost or value of each item. If possible, take close-up photos or video footage of damaged rooms, furnishings and property.

Once the inventory is complete, contact your insurance company for details on how to submit it to them. Keep all receipts related to living expenses and repairs, permits, inspection forms and any other papers in one place. Your insurance company may request them.

A large, bold, black number 4, which serves as a section marker for the 'TAKE AN INVENTORY' section.

TAKE AN INVENTORY

Notify your bank or mortgage company

You should notify your mortgage company about the fire and to keep them informed about what is being done to restore the property. They may have forms for you to fill out, and they may want to inspect the property.

For more information on cleaning up after a fire, please refer to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's website.

Have your roof inspected.

Take photographs of damage, both of the building and its contents for insurance purposes

Books, photographs and papers

Most photographs can be air-dried, face up. If they were frozen, thaw and then air-dry photos.

To salvage important documents, put them in the freezer immediately. Later, allow them to thaw and lift off each page as it thaws. Consult your lawyer to determine if the actual documents are important to save, or just the information on the documents.

For advice on salvaging books, photographs or paintings damaged by fire, contact the Canadian Conservation Institute toll free at 1-866-998-3721.

Mattresses and pillows

Mattresses and pillows are usually not worth saving. If you must use a mattress temporarily, let it dry in the sun and then cover it with plastic sheeting.



Water

If affected by the fire, use your washer and dryer only once they have been checked by a qualified electrician.

Scrape all heavy dirt from clothes, rinse and wash several times with detergent and dry immediately to prevent mould from forming.

Never use water you think may be contaminated to wash dishes, brush teeth, prepare food, wash hands, make ice, or prepare baby formula.

Medications

Dispose of all medicines, cosmetics and toiletries that have been exposed to smoke or extreme heat. Medications that are required to be refrigerated should be safely disposed off and replaced to ensure they are still effective. Ensure you have enough medication (prescription and over the counter) to sustain for a two week period.

Dispose of the following items if they have been exposed to smoke, soot or heat from the fire.

Contents of the freezer or fridge including all meat and produce (fresh or frozen)

All boxed foods

All bottled drinks and products in jars (the seal may have been damaged by extreme heat)

Cans with large dents or with any external damage

BASIC NEEDS FOOD, WATER AND MEDICINE

You've been through a lot. Don't expect to just take it in stride.

It is normal to experience conflicting emotions as a result of returning home. Allowing yourself to admit your feelings, such as helplessness, confusion, anger and worry, and expressing them to someone you trust will help you to cope. Try to anticipate what conditions you may be confronted with and how you may react. Thinking through this will help you feel more in control of the situation and less distressed.

- Relief returning home – being able to start to get your home, community, and life back in order
- Uncertainty about what it may be like in the coming days, weeks and months
- Distress about the losses you have experienced – your home, personal/ceremonial possessions, garden, maybe even pets; your community
- Relief at what did survive and remain after the fire
- Upset about the changes you have to deal with
- Enthusiasm and motivation to begin to rebuild
- Overwhelmed and worried about how you're going to get through it all – the hard work ahead, and the disruption to your daily life and the impacts on the surrounding community
- Replaying of the frightening moments of the approaching disaster before you left, or the process of evacuating
- Hope for the future

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF AND OTHERS

What you can do:

Identify the feelings and thoughts. Notice them, and label them. Are you feeling anxious feeling of anger or sadness?

Some individuals notice feelings of worry or distress and may experience having a tight chest, gritted teeth, tense jaw, butterflies in their stomach, heart palpitations, sweaty palms, or shortness of breath.

Recognise what these feelings and sensations are by putting them into words and speaking to someone you trust.

The next step is to find ways of managing your feelings. These are some useful techniques that you may find helpful.

If you are feeling anxious or upset, try to:

1. Slow down your breathing.
2. Challenge the negative thoughts and replace them with helpful ones.
3. Only do what you can and take small steps.
4. Try not to take anger out on others.
5. Be patient with yourself and those close to you– it takes time to manage feelings. You and those around you are taking this journey together.

There are practical things that also will help you to manage:

1. Avoid isolation. Individuals who seek out support, involve themselves in their community, and use the services available recover faster and better.
2. Get enough rest. Sleep as much as your body needs for a few days.
3. Stay hydrated, eat nutritiously and regularly.
4. Whenever possible, take time away to do something that you find enjoyable.
5. Get as much realistic physical activity as possible.
6. Accept help from others.
7. Find a support network.
8. Keep a record of your thoughts and feelings.
9. Give someone a hug. Physical touch is important to feel connected.
10. Make plans for the future.



Words of Encouragement...

No one knows your
children as well as you do.

Family is the most important
support network for children.

Getting help early can be
a good idea.



TAKING CARE OF YOUR CHILDREN

Children have many different types of reactions to disaster and evacuation.

They may be coping well. They may become clingy or fearful, have aches and pains, have nightmares, or revert to thumb-sucking and bed-wetting. They may fight more with their siblings. They may try to act brave when they really need reassurance. All these responses are expected.

Here are some things that may be helpful as you help your children to cope:

- Encourage your children to express their feelings, fears, and experiences. This could include conversations, drawing, play or songs.
 - Continue to love and support your child/children encourage them to talk about their feelings, fears, and experiences. Listen to them. Admit that you also feel sad, afraid, worried, but that you will be there and will work it out together.
 - Provide your children age-appropriate but factual information about what happened. When the time is right, discuss fire prevention with them, including what they can do to keep the family safe.
 - Provide reassurance to your children that the family is safe. Repeat this as often as possible!
 - Keep close to them, and hold them.
- Touch provides extra reassurance that someone is there for them. Spend extra time with them at bedtime.
- Be tolerant of regressive behaviour. It is usually temporary.
 - Allow your children to help by giving them jobs to do, even if it slows you down or even if you will have to do the job over again later. Praise them for what they accomplished
 - Return to a normal schedule, but relax rules for a while.
 - Work with family, teachers, childcare providers, babysitters, and others who will need to understand how the fire and evacuation have affected your children.

Special considerations for caregivers:

For people who depend on caregivers, there may be debris on the streets that could prevent caregivers from being able to reach you. This could leave you isolated.

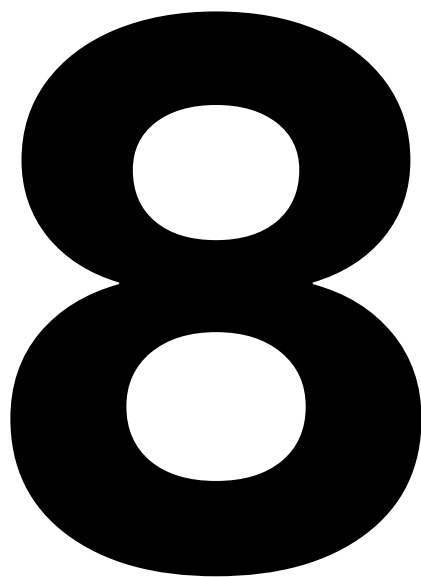
If you have a service animal, the animal also needs time and care to recover. They may be hurt or too frightened to work after a disaster.

Your usual access to health services, such as your family doctor, physiotherapist, home care, and other health supports may be limited.

If you have a condition that requires a reliable electrical supply i.e. home dialysis, home oxygen, CPAP or other assistive devices such as an electric bed or lift, or motorized wheelchair that requires please check to ensure that your devices can operate consistently.

Noisy surroundings, like a shelter, may interfere with how well your hearing aid functions. Also, the vibratory cues you are used to may be disturbed. A noisy environment can be very disorienting for people with visual impairments, as well.

Familiar landmarks you use to help guide you may move or be destroyed, both indoors and out.



SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Your usual ways of getting groceries, medications, and medical supplies may be disrupted. It may take several days before stores reopen, so you may not be able to readily replace even basic items related to your health, including possible disabilities, like hearing aid batteries and prescription medications.
- You may not be able to carry out your daily activities as you did before the disaster.
- You may have a hard time reaching or getting help from police and fire departments, ambulance services, doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, veterinarians, markets, personal assistants, and other home health providers.
- Ensure you have an adequate supply (minimum of two weeks) of any other health supplies you may need, i.e. incontinence products, wound care supplies, barrier creams etc. Access to these products may be limited or certain products not available.
- Public transportation may not be working. Routes and schedules may be changed. Public and private wheelchair transport services or paratransits may not be operating.
- Roads may be damaged or blocked. Road signs may be down. Traffic lights and walking signals used to cross the street may not be working properly, or at all. This can disrupt cues used to cross the street. Travel time may be longer because of detours and added traffic.
- For many people with Alzheimer's or other dementias changes in routine can be extremely upsetting resulting in new or increased challenging behaviors, angry outbursts, increase in wandering frequency, disruption in sleeping, eating and toileting patterns may also occur.
- When you return home it is important to remember that for the person with Alzheimer's and/or other dementias there may be lingering effects.
- Landmarks may be changed or gone entirely, home may look, feel and smell different. Routines may be new or old routines renewed, both resulting in the potential to disorient. Re-establish a routine as soon as possible, reassurance and distraction when agitated will help to make the person feel safe and comforted.
- Caregivers while feeling relieved to a return home and a return to normal will likely still face some challenging behaviors as they provide care in the "new normal".
- Organizations like the Alzheimer's Society have excellent resources to help and may have support groups in your area to help you in the transition.

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MOVING
BEYOND

The period after a disaster can often feel overwhelming, lonely and difficult. Some people find it helpful to:

1. Get back into a routine. It will probably look different from the one you had pre-disaster, but familiar patterns of mealtimes (with familiar food), school or work, and bedtimes are important for adults as well as children.
2. Break tasks into small steps that are manageable and can be accomplished. Work through them one at a time.
3. Think about what you have achieved at the end of each day.

Individuals often find themselves reliving their experience of the disaster and evacuation, thinking about it, trying to put some sense of order into the events, and answering the question of “why?”

It's natural to try to understand what has happened, but it's important to also recognise that many things that occurred were outside of your control.

If you continue to feel overwhelmed, can't shake the feelings of despair or have any of the following signs, seek help through your family doctor, clergy or a community organization. Asking for help is a sign of strength.

- Frequent arguments or short temper
- Increased consumption of alcohol or drugs
- Difficulty sleeping, bad dreams
- Depression
- Panic attacks or general anxiety
- Feelings of intense sadness and hopelessness

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NOTES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

THE CANADIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY

Western Canada

100, 1305-11th Avenue SW
Calgary, AB T3C 3P6
(403) 541-6100

Ontario

5700 Cancross Court
Mississauga, Ontario L5R 3E9
(905) 890-1000

Quebec

6, Place du Commerce
Verdun, Quebec H3E 1P4
(514) 362-2930

Atlantic Canada

133 Troop Avenue
Dartmouth, NS B3B 2A7
(902) 423-3680

National Office

170 Metcalfe Street, Suite 300
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 2P2
(613) 740-1900

Acknowledgements

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