

Wildfire evacuation

When fire danger is extreme or wildland fires are actively burning in the forest adjacent to your property, be cautious and prepare for a worst-case scenario. Do what you can, but remember that as soon as an evacuation order is given, you must leave. Large moving fires are dangerous and should be left for firefighters to manage.

Safety measures during wildfires

- Ignite no new fires and report any open fires or smoke to authorities.
- Make sure fire pits and burn barrels are extinguished. Be careful when smoking outside.
- Try to remain at home until the fire danger drops. Keep in touch with any absent household members.
- Keep the radio on all day, tuned to a local station. Have a battery-powered radio ready in case of power failure.
- Move grazing animals to a central safe refuge. Keep pets close to the house.
- Ensure your vehicle is fueled and operational.

Be prepared to evacuate your home or workplace

Do not assume an evacuation will last only a few hours. Plan to evacuate with enough items to keep your family comfortable for at least five days.

If a fire approaches:

- Report it immediately by dialling your provincial forestry office, local fire department emergency number, or 911.
- Dress properly to reduce risk of burn injuries. Wear long pants, shirts made of cotton or wool and sturdy footwear.
- Have firefighting tools and ladders propped against the house in a visible place.

When an evacuation alert is given:

Outside the house

- Cover all openings with metal coverings or fire-resistant material such as 12 millimetre plywood. This helps keep sparks and embers out. Move any combustibles well away from the house or inside.
- Attach garden hoses to tap spigots and place them so they can reach any exterior surface of the building (including the roof). Place a connected sprinkler on the roof and nail it down. Do not turn it on unless the fire is an immediate hazard.
- If you have an outdoor pool or hot tub, make it as accessible as possible for firefighters. Fill garbage cans and buckets with water and leave them where firefighters can find them.
- Block downspouts and fill rain gutters with water.
- Turn off propane or natural gas valves. Clear vegetation and debris from around outdoor tanks.

Inside the house

- Close all windows and doors (closing interior doors will slow fire spread inside the home).
- Move combustibles away from windows and sliding glass doors.
- Fill sinks, bathtubs and buckets for use as extra water reservoirs. Attach inside hoses and gather buckets and towels.

Time to evacuate

When you get the evacuation order, use your pre-planned evacuation route or the route singled out by authorities on site. Move away from the wildland fire, never toward it. If in doubt, use the principal evacuation route.

Drive carefully with headlights on making way for pedestrians and emergency vehicles. Stop at the pre-determined marshaling point(s). Report in to authorities and wait for further instructions. Do not leave again without informing officials. Do not return to your property until permitted to do so by authorities.

Protecting your farm resources

Rural residents should know what they are going to do with their animals in the event that a wildfire threatens them. Farmers and acreage owners need to assess if it is possible to evacuate their animals and livestock or do they need to provide protection for the animals on the property.

If evacuation is an option; make and confirm transportation, housing and feeding arrangements in advance. Your municipality may be able to assist you with some viable options.

If you cannot evacuate, animals should be moved to a safe area on the property that has access to feed and water. The risk to farm animals can be reduced by preparing and maintaining fuel-reduced areas onto which stock can be moved and held during a fire. Use a ploughed or heavily grazed field with a minimum of grass or stubble if possible. Field equipment can be used to create an emergency fire break around pens, buildings and pastures if one does not already exist.

Having fire insurance coverage for all farm resources at risk from fire including crops and livestock will help protect your investment and livelihood. Government disaster financial assistance normally does not cover fire damage, as insurance is usually available.

For more information on hazards in Alberta, contact your municipality's Director of Emergency Management or the Alberta Emergency Management Agency at 780-422-9000 (Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton) or visit www.aema.alberta.ca