

# Becoming a prepared neighbourhood



Great neighbourhoods start with you.



# How to reach us

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## NEIGHBOURHOODS WEBSITE

Check out the [neighbourhoods website](#) to find more how-to guides, find your neighbourhood and subscribe to the e-newsletter.

## ACCESSIBLE FORMATS

This material is available in alternative accessible format upon request. Please contact us a minimum of 3-5 business days before it is required.

## GUIDE VERSION

This guide was last updated December 2025.

# About this guide

Being prepared for emergencies promotes the safety of your family, friends, and neighbours. This guide provides information and ideas to help you learn and prepare for emergencies. This guide is divided into three sections:

- Prepared neighbourhoods
- Types of emergencies
- Being ready for emergencies

If you have any questions, please reach out to the [neighbourhoods team](#).



This guide is not a formal training manual for disaster response. This guide provides neighbours with ideas for supporting preparedness.

Neighbours are encouraged to explore learning opportunities to help them prepare and respond to emergencies.

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## Prepared neighbours

There are two levels of preparedness this guide will address: household and neighbourhood.

**Household:** You and members of your household have a plan to stay safe.

**Neighbourhood:** You and your neighbours have a plan to respond to emergencies together.

Prepared neighbourhoods are connected neighbourhoods! When neighbours know each other, they are more likely to:

- Take care of each other
- Work together in emergencies
- Share resources
- Talk to each other

There are many ways to create connections between neighbours. For ideas check out the [neighbourhoods website](#).

In addition to being connected, neighbours in prepared neighbourhoods:

- Know the risks in their area
- Have important safety information

- Plan for dealing with emergencies
- Understand their role in an emergency

As a neighbourhood leader, you can take actions to make your neighbourhood more prepared.

## Types of emergencies

There are different emergencies that could affect you and your neighbours. Some emergencies include:

- Fires and wildfires
- Extreme weather (heat, wind, snow, ice, etc.)
- Poor air quality
- Flooding
- Power outages
- Tornadoes
- Medical emergencies
- Chemical spills
- Safety threats

For more information on hazards and ways to prepare for them, visit the [Alert Waterloo website](#) and the [get prepared website](#).

## Actions during an emergency

In emergencies you may be directed to take one of two actions:

1. **Evacuate:** You will be asked to leave your home or neighbourhood.
2. **Shelter in Place:** You will be told to remain indoors to be safe.

It is important to plan responses for both situations. When planning for evacuation, think about safe places to go if you need to leave your home (this could be a local school, city facility, or a family/friend's home). To support your family during shelter in place orders, think about developing an emergency kit with supplies like food, water, medical items, and more.

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In an emergency, keep communication lines open and listen for instructions from local authorities on whether to evacuate or shelter in place.



# Being ready for emergencies

It is important to prepare for emergencies at a household and neighbourhood level.

## HOUSEHOLD LEVEL

Planning for emergencies starts at home! Learning about local risks, creating emergency plans, preparing 72-hour emergency kits, and preparing pet emergency kits are helpful things to do at home. For more information and templates, explore the [Get Prepared website](#).

Doing your research is also an important step. Be sure to learn about your house and neighbourhood location, and how you can be affected by different kinds of local risks. For example, check and see whether your neighbourhood is in a flood zone, and learn about different types of household floods by reading the [Government of Canada Flood Clean Up Instructions](#). Or check out the [Enova Power website](#) to learn about power outage and power line safety during emergencies, especially if there are overhead powerlines in your neighbourhood.

You can also work together with neighbours to support preparedness at a household level. Some ideas may include:

- Hosting a workshop or training session to learn with neighbours
- Collaborating to purchase items in bulk for emergency kits
- Chatting with neighbours about how they are planning for emergencies - they may have recommendations to share



It's a great idea to encourage other neighbours to get prepared on a household level. The more prepared neighbours are, the better for everyone! To spread the word, consider hosting a neighbourhood meeting, sharing details over social media, or talking with neighbours.

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## NEIGHBOURHOOD LEVEL

In addition to being prepared at a household level, there are ways neighbours can come together to support neighbourhood preparedness.

## Building connections with neighbours

Connected communities are better equipped to handle emergencies. Consider working with fellow neighbours to build relationships in your neighbourhood. For more ideas on bringing neighbours together, explore the [How-To-Guides webpage](#).

## Explore neighbourhood projects that promote resiliency

To reduce risks associated with disasters, think about projects or actions that can make your neighbourhood more resilient. This may involve:

- Reducing the risks of flooding and impacts of heavy rain by planting rain gardens and making sure ground cover can absorb water. For information on being a rain smart neighbourhood, [check out this helpful website](#).
- Investing in temporary shade covers, tree planting, water coolers, and other equipment to help keep neighbours cool at warm outdoor neighbourhood events. Or if a neighbourhood event is taking place during an extreme heat period, it is strongly advised to postpone your event for the safety of neighbours.
- Adding a community message board in your park to support information sharing. Check out the [City of Waterloo's Partners in Parks program](#) for more information on these types of park projects.
- Creating a neighbourhood pantry and keeping it stocked will help to reduce food insecurity, including during an extreme weather event. People may not be able to get to food banks or grocery stores during these periods of emergency or disasters. Check out these [helpful guides](#) to learn more about starting a neighbourhood pantry.
- Start a team of volunteers to check in on elderly or vulnerable neighbours, especially during extreme weather events such as heat waves or snowstorms. Make sure these neighbours are comfortable and safe, for example by keeping them cool during a heat wave or helping to shovel the snow from their driveways in the winter.



If you are interested in exploring a neighbourhood project, connect with the [neighbourhoods team](#) for help exploring your idea and available supports such as neighbourhood funding.

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## Work with neighbours to develop a neighbourhood emergency plan

Neighbourhood Emergency Plans (NEP) help neighbours work together to make sure everyone is safe. To develop a plan, explore the following steps:

1. Learn about NEPs. Creating a NEP is all about working with neighbours to identify your resources and develop a plan for responding to emergencies. Learn from an [example overview and access a planning template online](#).
2. Plan a meeting and invite neighbours to help develop a NEP. Think about how to invite neighbours, your neighbourhood boundaries, where to host the meeting, and any supports you may need. Your neighbourhood may be your building, street, block, or some other geographic location.
3. Host the meeting and develop your plan. When connecting with neighbours and developing the plan, think about:
  - Mapping things in your neighbourhood. Consider neighbours that may need extra help, safe spaces, utilities, helpful resources (like hydrants, ladder, shelter, etc.), and possible hazards in your neighbourhood. Hazards will depend on your neighbourhood. Visit [Alert Waterloo Region](#) for information on local risks.
  - Determining the roles of neighbours. Consider who may be able to check on hazards, provide medical assistance, coordinate communications, and check in on neighbours.
  - Developing a communications plan. Work with neighbours to develop a plan for communicating during emergencies. Ideas for communication include a contact list, social media page, and assigning a main contact.
  - Planning for an evacuation. It is important to develop two to three ways to get out of the neighbourhood, a list of neighbours that may need help evacuating, plans to drive or transport neighbours that do not have access to a vehicle, and coordinators to help with the process.
  - Planning for a shelter in place emergency. It is important that neighbours do not leave their homes, even to check on others. Instead, consider making signs for neighbours to post in their front windows that show their status.
4. Share the guide with all interested neighbours. Consider hosting an online or in-person information session to share the plan and collect feedback.
5. Review your NEP each year to make sure it is up-to-date and that new neighbours are included. If a new neighbour moves in, reach out and share the NEP with them. Ask them if they are interested in playing a role in emergency response and if they have any resources to add to the neighbourhood map. Including new neighbours will help develop connections and support a strong, resilient neighbourhood.

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When creating your plan with neighbours, recognize that not all neighbours will want to be involved in the process of developing the NEP – and that is okay!



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## Plan training opportunities related to emergency preparedness

Learning about safety and emergency response can be a great way to educate neighbours and bring the community together. Consider organizing a neighbourhood course or registering as a group to learn together! Some learning opportunities are listed below.

- St. John's Ambulance offers a variety of courses including standard first aid, CPR, and AED courses; pet first aid; family first aid; courses for youth, like babysitting; specialized training for new parents; mental health courses; and more! To check out the full course catalogue, visit the [St. John Ambulance website](#).
- Certified Emergency Response Training (CERT) offers a variety of different courses on first aid, CPR, and defibrillation. For more information on courses offered by CERT, visit their [website](#).
- The Canadian Red Cross (CRC) offers different online training courses for topics like first aid and CPR, opioid harm reduction, psychological first aid, and more. For more information on courses available, visit the [CRC website](#).
- Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region offers emergency first aid and CPR training through First Aid 4U. The training is interactive . For more information, visit [Extend-A-Family's website](#).
- If you are an educator or parent, check out the Expect the Unexpected curriculum prepared by the Red Cross. This program provides learning resources and activities to help youth get ready in case of unexpected events. Visit the [Red Cross website](#) for more information.

## Resources

There are many community resources to help support emergency preparedness. Check them out below:

- The Canadian Red Cross (CRC) has a guide to help households develop an emergency response plan. To review the guide, visit the [CRC website](#).
- Check and see if your neighbourhood is located in a flood zone by checking the [Grand River Conservation Authority Map](#) and plan accordingly.
- If there is a chemical spill in your neighbourhood, please contact [Waterloo Fire Rescue](#) or call 911. To learn more about chemical spill prevention and reporting, visit the [City of Waterloo](#) and [Waterloo Region webpages](#).
- The Government of Canada posts [guides about outdoor air pollution](#) and the information on how to minimize the effects.
- The Canadian Red Cross (CRC) sell pre-packaged emergency kits [for homes and vehicles](#).

- To help paramedics in emergencies, check out tips on the [Region of Waterloo website](#).
- To prepare for emergencies, paramedic services encourage residents to complete a MEDIC card. MEDIC cards can be given to paramedics to help inform them of health conditions and medications. To be prepared for a health emergency: [print this form](#), fill it in, and store with your medication.
- The Government of Canada posts resources and information to help neighbours prepare for emergencies and hazards. To learn more, visit the [Get Prepared website](#).
- To receive notifications during a local emergency, sign up at [Alert Waterloo Region](#). You can subscribe to receive notifications via email or text.