

BE PREPARED




Emergency Planning Guide for Churches



The Presbyterian Church in Canada

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Emergency situations are potential realities for all communities. Taking the time to plan how to respond to different types of emergencies, as well as the day-to-day needs of faith communities during such events, is essential.

In times of crisis, communities of faith are often places people turn to for support. Yet, depending on the nature of the emergency, the way a congregation normally functions may be severely affected. Emergency planning is key to not only ensuring the physical health and safety of church staff, volunteers and congregants; it is also key to ensuring that spiritual care, pastoral support, community outreach and worship can continue in ways that are appropriate for the presenting needs and circumstances.

This resource contains information and templates to help ministries design an emergency preparedness plan. It is not exhaustive and should be expanded upon by congregations, taking into consideration the many variables found in church facilities, regions, congregations and potential emergencies. As your ministry's Emergency Preparedness Committee works through this resource, they should be adapting it to suit your context.

It may take you anywhere from a few weeks to several months to complete the 10 steps of this plan. Create a timeline that seems realistic based on the resources available (i.e., time, parts of the plan already complete, etc.) and variables unique to your context. Be sure to complete each step. While completing all 10 steps may feel onerous or daunting at the outset, it will be worth the effort as you will be more prepared for future emergencies.

This Emergency Preparedness Guide is meant to help congregations of all sizes and configurations. Therefore, some of the steps and recommendations in this resource will need to be adapted. Review the whole guide but adapt its steps to suit your specific circumstances.

STEP 1

Establish an Emergency Preparedness Committee

- The Session or the Boards of Managers may wish to establish an Emergency Preparedness Committee. The committee will consist of 3–5 members and be responsible for creating and updating the Emergency Preparedness Plan. It will also be responsible for ensuring employees, volunteers and congregants are educated about the plan. In some ministries, the Session and/or Board may serve as the Emergency Preparedness Committee.
- Depending on what is established as the emergency communication strategy, you may want to consider making the convener of this committee the link between the region (public health, government officials, etc.) and the community of faith during an emergency.

The following positions/bodies/people will participate in emergency planning for our congregation:

STEP 2

Engage in Risk Assessment

- The first task of the Emergency Preparedness Committee is conducting a risk assessment for the congregation.
 - Emergencies come in many forms:
 - ◆ Natural (e.g., storms, floods, wildfires, earthquakes, extended power outages)
 - ◆ Health (e.g., pandemics, food poisoning)
 - ◆ Human-Caused (e.g., arson, bomb threat, human-caused violence)
 - Consult the municipal and provincial emergency preparedness websites, your church insurance provider, the Red Cross and public health in your area to see what emergencies are most likely where your church is located.
- List as many potential emergencies you can think of in different categories in the chart below.

Natural	Health
Human-Caused	Other

STEP 3

Establish a Leadership Plan

- In the event of an emergency, you will want to have a leadership plan in place that addresses how decisions will be made and key functions carried out in the event of an emergency.
- There are two types of key leaders in this section: **first-response leader** and **primary crisis manager**.
 - The **first-response leader** is the person in a designated position who will lead the response *while it is happening*. They are the person on the scene who will step in right away to address the emergency at hand.
 - The **primary crisis manager** (or their backup) will be the person in a designated position who is called in to manage emergencies as they unfold after the initial crisis.

Example: If a person has a medical emergency during a worship service, the **first-response leader** will immediately step in to ensure that the person receives proper first aid and that an ambulance is called, if needed. The **crisis manager**, who may not even be there during that particular worship service, will be called and alerted to the emergency and will follow up with any reporting or coordinating that needs to be done.

First-Response Leader at the Outset of an Emergency

It is best to designate a primary position and a backup position to act as the leader at the outset of an emergency. The person in this role will vary depending on the circumstances under which the emergency occurs. For example, if an emergency happens during a worship service, the best person to coordinate the response may be a person who is leading worship or a member of the greeting team; however, if an emergency happens during another church event in the building, such as a Bible study or luncheon, the best person might be the coordinator of the event.

When making your plan, identify positions rather than specific individuals. For example, the lead greeter will act as the first-response lead and the clerk of Session will be the primary crisis manager. The reason for naming a position rather than an individual is to

ensure that even if certain individuals are not present at the time of the event there will still be a designated person available to step in. It will be important to train people to perform the tasks required of them under the policy.

Please note: It is advisable that the minister is not designated the first-response leader or primary crisis manager. In the event of an emergency, they will have other pastoral duties, such as providing spiritual support to congregation members, and should not be expected to coordinate the response.

Identify who will take the lead in coordinating the first stage of an emergency response during ...

A worship service

First-Response Leader

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Backup

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Another church event in the building

First-Response Leader

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Backup

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

(chart continued on next page)

Event hosted by renters or community group

First-Response Leader

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Backup

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Before or after hours when building not in use

First-Response Leader

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Backup

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

A church event outside the building

First-Response Leader

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Backup

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Primary Crisis Manager

The following person is the primary crisis manager and will serve as the key liaison between the congregation and government and health authorities. You may want to consider assigning this role to the chair of the Emergency Preparedness Committee. This person will be responsible for implementing the various stages of the emergency response plan with input from the Emergency Preparedness Committee.

Primary Crisis Manager

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Secondary Crisis Manager (Backup)

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Areas of Responsibility During Emergency

There are certain areas of leadership that do not relate directly to the presenting emergency but still need to be attended to, especially if the emergency is long lasting. It is important to assign people to be responsible for each of the following areas (some areas of responsibility may be covered by the same person, depending on the size and structure of your congregation).

Areas of Responsibility

Pastoral Support

Primary Person

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Secondary Person

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Liturgical & Worship Support

Primary Person

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Secondary Person

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Outreach Initiatives

Primary Person

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

Secondary Person

Name:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

Email:

(chart continued on next page)

Finance	
Primary Person Name: Home Phone: Cell Phone: Email:	Secondary Person Name: Home Phone: Cell Phone: Email:
Human Resources	
Primary Person Name: Home Phone: Cell Phone: Email:	Secondary Person Name: Home Phone: Cell Phone: Email:
Communication	
Primary Person Name: Home Phone: Cell Phone: Email:	Secondary Person Name: Home Phone: Cell Phone: Email:
Building	
Primary Person Name: Home Phone: Cell Phone: Email:	Secondary Person Name: Home Phone: Cell Phone: Email:

STEP 4

Create an Emergency Response Mission Statement

To develop an emergency response plan that suits your congregation's needs, it can be helpful create an emergency response mission statement that reminds you of *who* you serve and *how* you will continue to serve them during an emergency.

A clear, meaningful statement of your congregation's role during an emergency

Things to consider when creating this statement:

- Who will you be serving during an emergency?
- Which essential services must continue? Why?
- What additional services (if any) will you be asked (and be able) to provide?
- Who might you able to partner with to continue providing services?
- What are your limitations?
- What areas might you have to rely on others?

For example:

In the event of an emergency, [insert name of church] will strive to ensure the health and safety of staff, volunteers, church members by and visitors by _____.

We will also seek to continue serving our community by providing the following services: _____, _____, _____.

The order of our priorities if the emergency is long-lasting will be:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

We commit to partnering with _____, _____, _____ to provide the following services: _____.

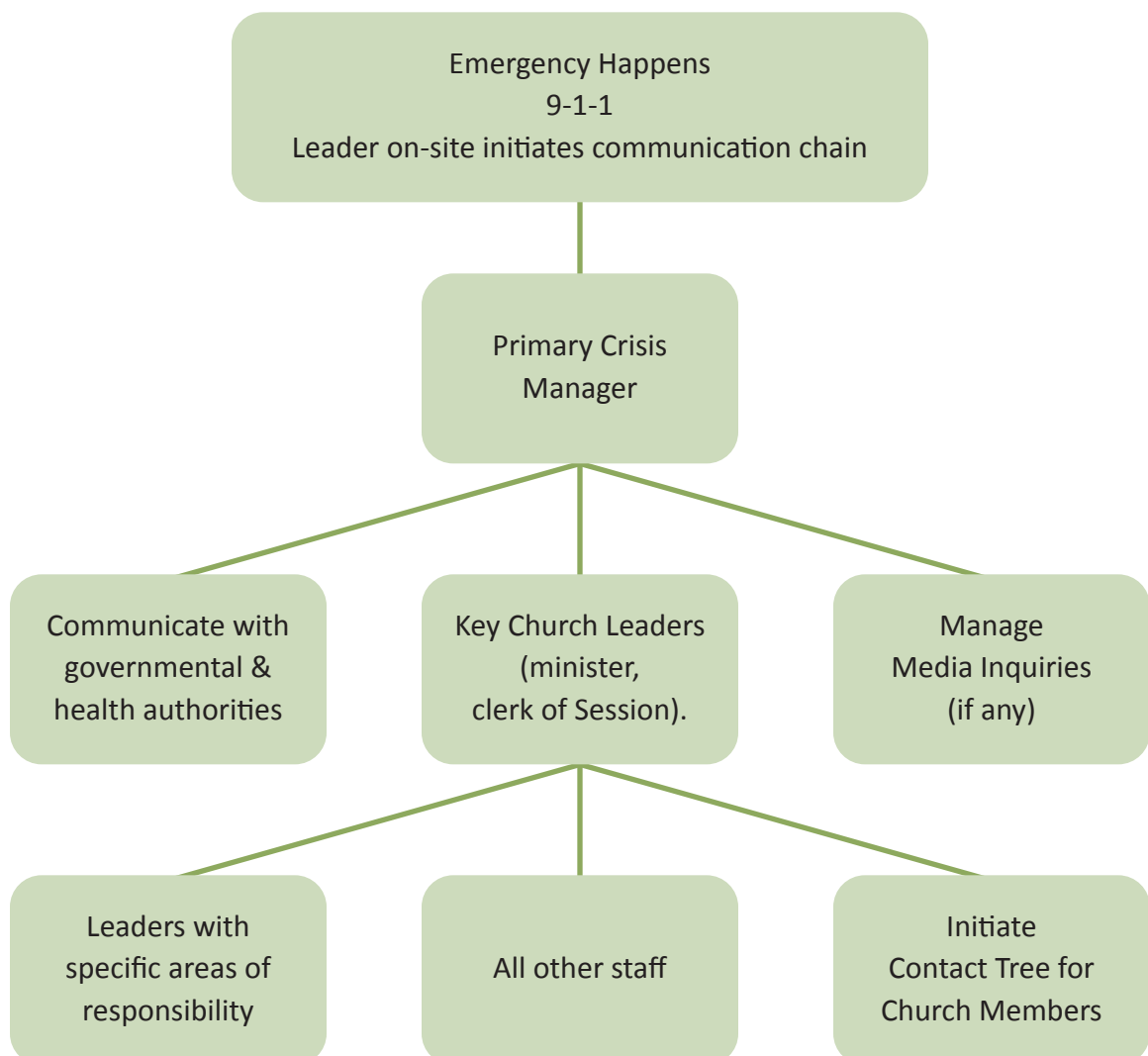
Emergency Response Mission Statement

STEP 5

Develop a Communications Plan

Your communications plan should include information about **when** and **how** to connect with government and health authorities as well as with staff, key leaders and congregation members.

An example of what your communications plan might look like:



Emergency Contacts

If you need the fire department, police or ambulance immediately, you will call 9-1-1 or its equivalent in your area.

It is important, however, to have other local emergency contacts on hand that you may need in different types of emergencies. For example, during the outbreak of a pandemic, you may not need to call 9-1-1, but you will need contact information for the local health department.

You may not need to call these providers but checking their website would be important.

- Keep this list as well as your church's address near the telephones in your building so that first-responders have easy access.

Local Emergency Contacts	
Emergency	Local Public Health Authority
9-1-1	Phone: Email: Website:
Police Station	Insurance Provider
Phone: Email: Website:	Phone: Email: Website:
Fire Department	Utilities Provider
Phone: Email: Website:	Phone: Email: Website:
City/Regional Emergency Management	Security System Provider
Phone: Email: Website:	Phone: Email: Website:

Staff & Key Leaders Contact

List contact information for all staff, the clerk of Session, chair of the Board, and any other key leadership positions in your congregation, especially if they are not listed in one of the categories above. You may also want to include contact information for your presbytery.

- All staff and key leaders should be notified as soon as possible when an emergency occurs.
- The person responsible for contacting staff and key leaders will be the primary crisis manager.

Congregational Staff & Leaders Contact

Position: Name: Phone: Email: Home address:	Position: Name: Phone: Email: Home address:
Position: Name: Phone: Email: Home address:	Position: Name: Phone: Email: Home address:

Presbytery Contacts

Clerk of Presbytery Name: Phone: Email:	Other Presbytery Representative Name: Phone: Email:
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Contact Tree for the Congregation

Develop a contact tree for all members of your congregation listing all the various methods of contact. Do not rely solely on one method because phone lines may be down, or the Internet may not be working.

- The minister (or where there is pulpit vacancy, the Interim Moderator), the clerk of Session, and the person responsible for pastoral care during an emergency should have a printed copy in a safe place at home as well as a digital copy.
- The list should be updated every six months or as needed.
- It is a good idea to test your contact tree after it is updated. Consider the testing of the contact tree an opportunity to do a pastoral check-in with each member of your church community.

Contact Tree Coordinator

You may choose to make this person the leader you've assigned the responsibility of pastoral care or another responsible elder in your congregation.

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Home address:

Backup Contact Tree Coordinator

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Home address:

(chart continued on next page)

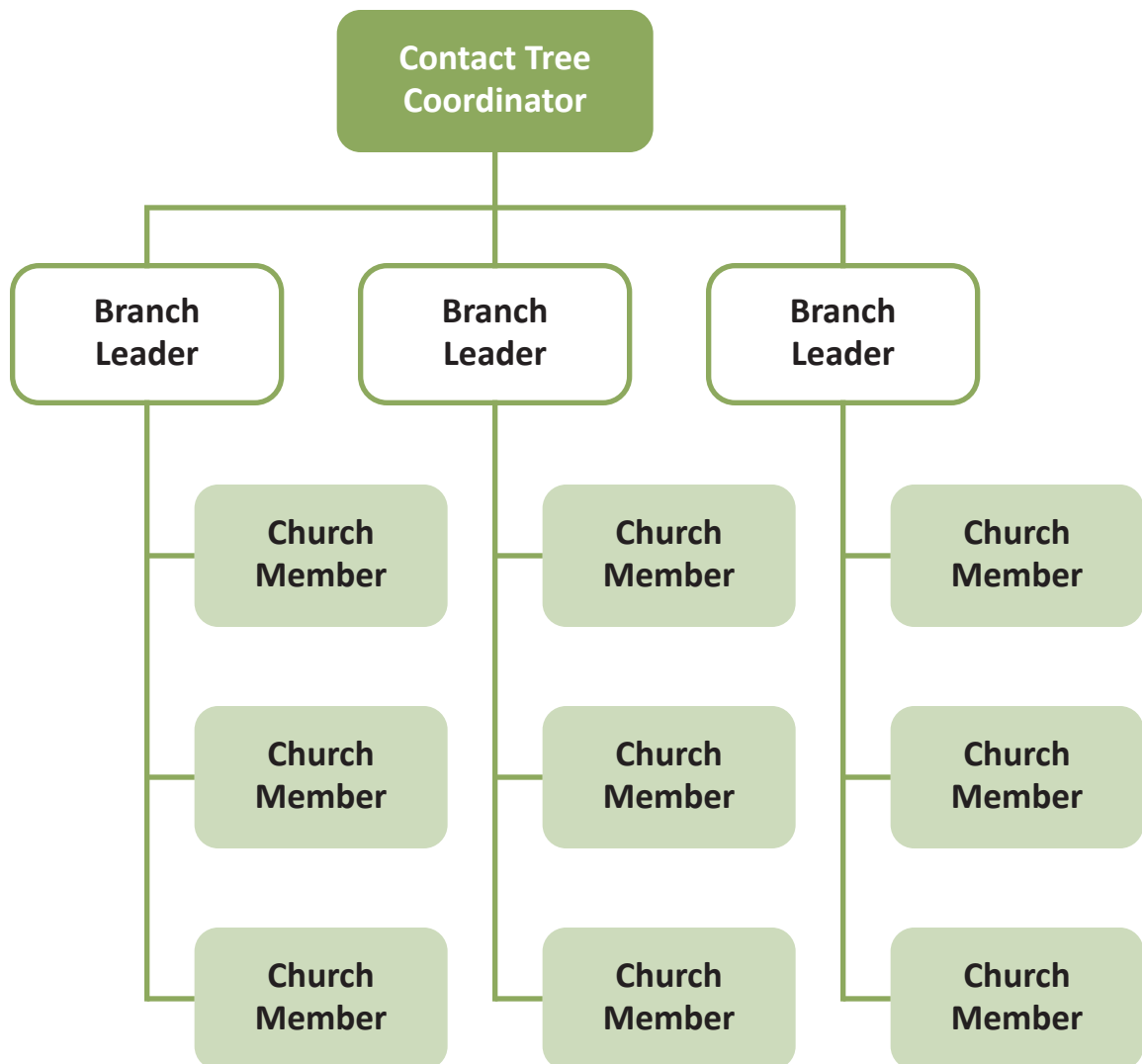
Branch leaders for Contact Tree

You will need a group of key leaders, perhaps drawing on your elders, who will be responsible for calling or alerting members of the congregation. These people should be reliable and receptive to the responsibility of informing people of emergencies. The number of key leaders you need depends on the size of your congregation and how many people you want each leader to contact. Be sure to have an “extra” key leader in case one of the leaders in the phone chain is not available.

*If your Session uses elder’s districts and this system of pastoral care is up-to-date, you may want to consider making the district elders your key leaders for the contact tree.

Name: Phone: Email:	Name: Phone: Email:
Name: Phone: Email:	Name: Phone: Email:
Name: Phone: Email:	Name: Phone: Email:
Name: Phone: Email:	Name: Phone: Email:
Name: Phone: Email:	Name: Phone: Email:

An example of what your contact chain may look like:



For further information on how and what to communicate during a church emergency, please see Appendix A in this resource.

Website Update

Oftentimes, the first place that people go when they hear that something is going on is to an organization's website. Add an alert to the main page of your website giving basic information about the status of the emergency.

Posting Notices

In addition to posting an update on the website, be sure to post printed notices in the building and outside doors (if appropriate).

STEP 6

Protection of Property

When it comes to preparing your property for potential emergencies, the old saying “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is definitely true. How you protect your property from potential emergencies depends on the types of risks that exist in your area.

Review Risks with Prevention in Mind

Review the risks identified in Step 2. Research best ways of protecting church property from the identified risks.

- Consult municipal and provincial emergency preparedness websites, your church insurance provider, and the Red Cross for property protection strategies.
- A full list of Canadian and Provincial Emergency Preparedness websites is available in Appendix C.

List Risks Named in Step 2 For example:	What can be done to protect church property from major damage during these emergencies?
Flood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Clear debris from roof and eaves troughs regularly so that water runs away from building.➤➤
Fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Test the fire alarm systems in your church buildings regularly.➤➤
Major Snowstorm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Trim dead branches and cut down dead trees to reduce the danger of these falling onto the church building during a storm.➤➤

Property Protection Supplies

Using the risks named in the first part of this section, gather supplies you may need to protect the church property. For example, plastic bags, plastic sheeting, tarps, duct tape, rope and waterproof containers are needed to cover equipment and protect items, etc. These supplies should be purchased ahead of time and stored ready for use. Upon notification of a pending disaster event, such as a flood, each area of all buildings should be secured if time allows.

Documentation of Property

Complete a facilities inventory of your property for insurance purposes. Document the inventory with a written description, listing the items, including serial number, cost and date purchased (if possible). Also take digital pictures or a room-by-room video. Make copies and store this inventory in a couple of safe places off site or in a fireproof safe. Update your inventory annually.

Sanctuary			
Date of Photo/Video:			
Item	Serial Number	Cost & Purchase Date	Description / Details

(chart continued on next page)

(chart continued from previous page)

Main Office

Date of Photo/Video:

Item	Serial Number	Cost & Purchase Date	Description / Details

Kitchen

Date of Photo/Video:

Item	Serial Number	Cost & Purchase Date	Description / Details

Records Protection

Determine what records need to be protected and copied. List those records in the chart below, where they are stored, and the method you are using to protect them in case of an emergency. Remember that privacy must be maintained for all records that contain personally identifiable information for staff and church members, so wherever you store your records must be secure and only accessible to those who are authorized by the Session or Board.

- Place hardcopy files that are not replaceable in a waterproof & fireproof container and store off the floor.
- Consider finding a secure place off site to store hardcopy files of important documents.
- Back-up electronic records on a routine basis and store off site or to the cloud.

Person responsible for protecting and backing up records

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Record Type	Where are they stored?	Backup / Protection
Membership Records		
Financial Records		
Session Minutes		
Baptism & Marriage Records		

Building & Property Inspection

Regular property inspection and grounds maintenance are key components in ensuring that your church buildings can “weather the storm” of an emergency. You should have a property maintenance policy for the church that includes procedures for carrying out regular general inspections, identifying problem areas, and resolving problems.

- **How frequently is your building and property being inspected?**

It is recommended that you do so at least once per month.

- **What are the dates that church building(s) and property are being inspected?**

e.g., the first of every month

- **Who is responsible for inspection?**

It is best to have 2–3 people do the inspection together. For examples, a few representatives from the Board of Managers will do the inspection in conjunction with building/custodial staff.

- **Do you have a comprehensive and up-to-date inspection list?**

What is on your inspection list will depend on your buildings and properties. For a general idea of what needs to be included on an inspection list, check with your church insurance company. They usually have resources on their websites for building and property maintenance.

Property Information Needed During Emergency

If an emergency happens in your church building(s), you will want to have information for your building service providers (e.g., water, electric, fuel, alarm, furnace, elevator) at your fingertips. You will also want to know where the shutoffs are in your building to turn off utilities if it is necessary to do so before or during an emergency.

Building & Property Service Providers

Water

Location of shutoff in building:

Company Name:

Phone:

Website:

Email:

Account Number:

(chart continued on next page)

(chart continued from previous page)

Heating

Location of shutoff in building:

Company Name:

Phone:

Website:

Email:

Account Number:

Electric

Location of shutoff in building:

Company Name:

Phone:

Website:

Email:

Account Number:

Security/Alarm

Location of shutoff in building:

Company Name:

Phone:

Website:

Email:

Account Number:

Internet and/or Telephone

Location of shutoff in building:

Company Name:

Phone:

Website:

Email:

Account Number:

Elevator

Location of shutoff in building:

Company Name:

Phone:

Website:

Email:

Account Number:

STEP 7

Plan for Emergencies When People are in the Church Building(s)

Church buildings and how they are used vary, which means that plans for dealing with emergencies that arise within them will also vary. The suggestions below are meant to help your Emergency Preparedness Committee develop emergency plans for your specific context. Each congregation will need to develop their plans in consultation with local agencies and regional guidelines.

Preparing

There is some key information you'll want to consider when preparing for an emergency that may occur when people are using your church building(s).

1. How many people may be in your building(s) in an emergency?

On a weekday _____

On a weeknight _____

During a service _____
2. What church groups use your building (e.g., crafting group, Bible study, youth group)?
 - How will you safely evacuate people from the various programs?
 - How will you notify loved ones of their status?
 - How may you utilize these people to help in an emergency?
3. What groups and services use your facility (e.g., AA, recreation groups, tenants)?
 - How will you safely evacuate people?
 - Who is your primary contact person for the program? Do they have a list of emergency contacts for participants in their program?

- How will you educate staff and volunteers about the emergency procedures for your building?

It is recommended that you review emergency plans with the leaders of community groups annually and have them sign off on them.

4. Can you anticipate special needs of people using your facilities in advance and prepare for them (e.g., mobility issues, cognitive impairment, special equipment needed)?

Facilities Evacuation Plan

You need an evacuation plan for your church building(s). Evacuation Plans are necessary during any event where you need to move people OUTSIDE the facility, including the following: fire, gas leak, hazardous chemical spill, floods, bomb threat, or active shooter.

What types of emergencies will require the *evacuation* of your church building(s)?





Evacuation Plan Checklist

Go through this evacuation plan checklist and ensure that each of these tasks has been completed.

- Consult with your regional fire prevention agents for safety standards and practices.
Your evacuation plan must adhere to your regional fire codes.
- Make a floor plan of each of your buildings. On it, mark the exit doors to the outside, location of fire alarm pulls, fire extinguishers, first aid kits and AED unit.
- Ensure the evacuation plan is in a format that is easy for people to read and understand.
- Post the plan throughout the building in easy to see places, marking “you are here” at the appropriate location. Show how to get to the nearest two exits.
- Ensure that there are clear and visible signs indicating safety tools, exits and emergency instructions throughout the building.
- Ensure you have a fire alarm system that is being tested regularly.
- Keep a “Go-Kit” which includes copies of the emergency plan, contact tree information, copies of vital documents in a place that is easy to grab.
- Designate a meet-up spot at a safe distance from your church building where you can meet to do a head count. Ensure that those attending services and using your church building know where the meet-up spot is.

Other Evacuation Plans items specific to your church building(s):

Shelter-in-Place Plan

Shelter-in-Place plans are necessary for any emergency event that would require people to stay in your building(s) for an extended period of time. For example, this may be necessary in the case of a severe weather event, biological hazard, or act of violence. While this type of emergency response may be less common than evacuation, it is still important to be prepared in the unlikely event that it happens.

What types of emergencies will require people to *shelter-in-place* in your church building(s)?

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-



Shelter-in-Place Plan Checklist

Go through this Shelter-in-Place plan checklist and ensure that each of these tasks has been completed.

- Check with your city/regional Emergency Preparedness authority to see if there are specific shelter-in-place directives for your region. Your shelter-in-place plan should be based on the recommendations for your region.
- Choose a place in your church building that will serve as your shelter-in-place spot.
 - It is best to choose interior rooms, with the fewest windows or vents. The room(s) should have adequate space for everyone to be able to sit in. Avoid overcrowding by selecting several rooms if necessary. Large storage closets, utility rooms, pantries, copy and conference rooms without exterior windows will work well. Avoid selecting a room with mechanical equipment like ventilation blowers or pipes, because it may be difficult to seal this equipment from the outdoors.
- Educate church leaders and group leaders about shelter-in-place procedures. When authorities provide direction to shelter-in-place, they want everyone to take the steps at that moment, where they are, and not drive or walk outdoors. Leaders should be ready to guide congregants, visitors and staff to the shelter-in-place area of your building.
- Ensure staff and leaders are familiar with your building's mechanical systems and how to turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems in case the emergency involves fumes or other noxious substances that you do not want to get into the building.
- Gather essential disaster supplies, such as non-perishable food, bottled water, battery-powered radios, first-aid supplies, flashlights, batteries, duct tape, plastic sheeting and plastic garbage bags. Store them in your designated shelter-in-place area.
- Cell phones may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency. Ensure you have a hard-wired telephone in your shelter-in-place area.
- Ensure that you also have a battery-powered radio. If the disaster is region-wide, you may need to the radio to get the “all safe” from authorities.
- Be sure there is a notebook and pen in your shelter-in-place area so that you can write down the names of everyone in the room so that when you connect with authorities or your church's emergency coordinator you will be able to report who is in the room with you.

Other Shelter-in-Place Plans items specific to your church building(s):

Security Plan

There are security issues in church buildings that pose a risk to staff, congregation members and visitors. These risks range from unknown people wandering around the building to someone entering a worship service with malicious intent (e.g., theft, harassment, violence). These risks will vary depending on your location and context.

What types of security risks do those using your building(s) face?

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-



Security Plan Checklist

Go through this security plan checklist and ensure that each of these tasks has been completed.

- Invite local law enforcement, a security professional or your insurance agent to help you identify potential security risks and offer solutions to help you create a safer church environment.
 - Ask specifically about training on what to do if a violent intruder gains access to the church. These professionals will be able to provide advice on the type of intruder training necessary and available for your area.
- Obtain a list of area crimes from your local police station. This will help your church create a security plan that suits your context.
- Assign security roles based on your church's security need. Possible roles include:
 - Ushers/greeters to monitor door during service;
 - One or two Session members who are "on duty" during the service (i.e., responsible for keeping eyes and ears open to possible issues and stepping in to help address them if necessary).
- Choose one main door that people should use to enter the church building for services.
 - Assign an usher or team member to monitor this door once your service starts. All other entrances should be inaccessible from the outside of your church. Ensure that the exit doors remain unlocked from the inside.
- Ensure that all locks on all building entry points are functional and in a good state of repair. Also ensure that all hallways, parking lots and external walkways are well lit.
- Ensure that those using your building outside of service times know security procedures (e.g., keeping door locked after group has gathered, doing a walkthrough of the building before locking up after an event, setting the alarm, etc.)
- Keep an up-to-date list of church key holders.
- If you have a security alarm system, ensure that:
 - church leaders and staff are formally trained on alarm system arming and disarming procedures;
 - the system is serviced annually by a certified trained technician;
 - the arm/disarm code is changed and reissued annually;
 - the names and call numbers of persons on the central station call lists are reviewed and updated at least annually

- Educate church members about security procedures; consider doing an after-worship seminar or sending out security information by email or newsletter.
- Connect with neighbours and neighbouring businesses to discuss neighbourhood safety.
 - It is always helpful to have neighbours keeping an eye on the church building and property when members and staff are not around.

Other security items specific to your church building(s):

STEP 8

Planning for Health-Related Emergencies

There are many different types of health-related emergencies that could occur in your congregation. In planning, it is helpful to divide them into two categories: individual (e.g., someone is having a heart attack during a worship service) and societal (e.g., a pandemic is occurring in your area). Planning ahead of such emergencies will help you to remain calm and have the best measures in place to ensure the health and safety of those using your building(s).

Individual Medical Emergency

Medical emergencies (illness or injury) can happen anytime: during a worship service, fellowship time, Bible study, church school or off-site church activity. Until help arrives, leadership and volunteers in your congregation will need to be able to respond. There are some key ways to prepare to ensure that your church's response to medical emergencies will be swift, calm, and effective.

First-Aid Training & Supplies

- **Who is trained in first-aid?**

Determine how many staff members, church leaders, and volunteers you think should be trained in basic first-aid skills, CPR, and AED use. Offer to organize training for them.

The people trained in first-aid, and other trained medical professionals in your congregation, should be the point of contact for all injuries and illnesses.

Note that first-aid certification must be kept up to date. Be sure the people who are designated first-aiders have up to date certification.

- **How will you ensure that there is at least one medical professional or person with first-aid training at all worship services and events?**

You may want to consider this question when thinking about who gets trained in first-aid. Being the designated “first-aid person” during worship could be paired with another volunteer assignment, such as “elder on duty” or “greeter/usher.”

- **Where is your church’s first-aid kit?**

Churches are required to have well-stocked first-aid kits. Kits should be checked and restocked every 2–3 months.

For details about what needs to be in your first-aid kit, check with The Canadian Red Cross or St. John Ambulance.

- **Do you have an AED unit?**

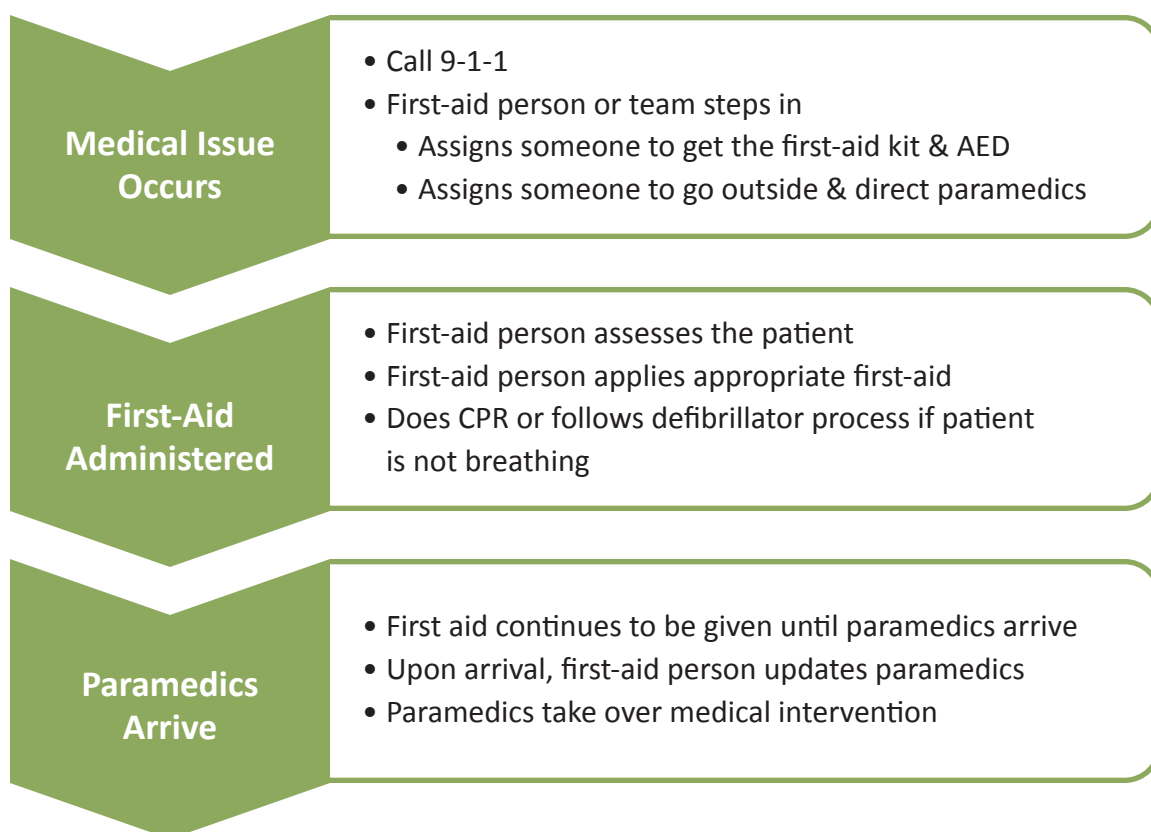
If you have an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED), is it in a place that is easy to access? Is there signage around the church to direct people to the location?

How often are you checking to ensure it is in working order? Who is responsible for checking that it is working?

Location of first-aid kit	Location of AED unit

Response

It can be helpful to create a visual of how you will respond during a medical emergency. Below is a sample of what this might look like.



Documentation & Debriefing

- Immediately after an incident (and treatment) a representative from the Board or Session will work with the first-aid person to document the incident by including the following information:
 1. Date, time, location of injury/illness
 2. Full name and contact information of injured/ill person
 3. Type of injury/illness and description
 4. Course of action (basic first aid, transportation to medical facility, etc.)
 5. Circumstances surrounding the injury or illness
 6. Other people involved and witnesses to the incident
- After a medical emergency occurs, consider debriefing with not only the people who were involved in the immediate response but also with those who witnessed it. For example, if the emergency happened during a service, take the time to let everyone pause, talk with each other, pray or whatever else feels appropriate.

Societal Medical Emergency

From time to time, congregational activities may be affected by health-related concerns that impact society as a whole. These types of emergencies, such as the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, are often triggered by a specific emergency or warnings from public health.

Public Health & Provincial Health Ministry

For these types of emergencies, congregations **MUST** work in cooperation with local health units and provincial health ministries. Your first step in the event of outbreaks of viruses of any kind is to check the directives from public health. These directives can be found on their website, but it also good to have phone numbers and email addresses on hand in case you have specific questions or concerns.

Local Public Health Unit

Name of Local Public Health Unit:

Phone:

Email:

Website:

Provincial Health Ministry

Name of Provincial Health Ministry:

Phone:

Email:

Website:

Education & Prevention

Public health officials tell us that the best way to avoid infection is to avoid being exposed to any viruses. The more knowledge people have, the better they are able to prepare themselves to address the issues that may present. It is good to promote strong hygiene practices in congregations all the time, but especially if there is an outbreak going on.

Suspension of In-Person Worship Services

Churches have an important role to play in the efforts to stop the spread of viruses. Congregations must follow the advice of federal, provincial and municipal health authorities and make decisions about gatherings and interpersonal interaction accordingly. If public health authorities order the suspension of public worship services during a health emergency, churches must comply; however, if an official order to close churches is not made by health officials, Sessions must carefully consider whether or not they should remain open and how to put measures in place to ensure the health and safety of staff, visitors and congregants.

In the Presbyterian Church in Canada, “The Session is responsible for regulating the hours and forms of public worship and for arranging special services” (Book of Forms 111.1). This means Session has the responsibility to determine if public worship in a congregation will be suspended based on the facts before them and their context. Sessions have an obligation to think carefully and will want to work together and act wisely about how to respond in ways that neither under-respond nor over-react causing undue hardship.

Reducing Risk of Transmission if Worship Continues

If worship services are not suspended, there are steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of transmission:

- Make hand sanitizer available in the worship space and throughout the church building for all to use.
- Encourage people who use the church building to wash their hands and post reminder signs throughout the church.
- Avoid greetings that involve touching, such as hugs and handshakes.
- Practice social distancing whenever possible (6ft between people).
- Encourage use of face masks, if appropriate.
- Avoid passing offering plates from person to person.
- Consider suspending communion until outbreak is over.

- If you decide to offer communion:
 - Make precautions to reduce the number of people touching communion elements and trays.
 - Avoid passing communion elements and trays and use individual communion cups rather than a common cup. Space out the individual cups so there is sufficient space on the tray to limit contact.
- Place a box of tissues in every pew. Make sure there are open (lidless) garbage cans for people to use to throw out tissues.
- Regularly wipe down commonly used areas touched by churchgoers, like door handles, pew tops, and railings, regularly.
- Consider rescheduling marriages and baptisms, or reducing the size of some events.

Attending worship during a social health emergency, if places of worship are not closed, is a personal decision. Be generous with those who feel the need to stay home by continuing to offer worship and pastoral care in alternative formats. For example, live streaming or pre-recorded church services provide ways for those who are unable to attend worship (perhaps due to illness or self-isolation) or unwilling to attend (perhaps due to concern about infection). You will be provided with more guidance on how to plan for liturgical support, pastoral care outreach and other services offered by the church in the case of an emergency in the next section of this guide (Step 9).

Additional Questions to Help Your Church Prepare for a Societal Health Emergency

- Have you prepared policies on hygienic church-life and worship practices?
- Are plans in place for hand washing, hand hygiene, tissue disposal and other facilities?
- Are plans in place for frequent and effective cleaning of the church building(s)?
- Have measures been identified to reduce potential for staff, leaders, volunteers and congregants who are using church buildings to infect each other (e.g., social distancing)?
- Are plans in place to reduce face to face contact in situations of pastoral care?
- Are policies in place on flexible work locations for staff and flexible hours?
- Do you have the appropriate IT infrastructure to support remote worship and community interaction?

STEP 9

Plan for How You Will Continue to Care for Staff, Congregation and Community

Now that you have planned how you will prepare for and address emergencies when they arise, *it is also important* to consider how your congregation will continue to offer the support and services that are necessary for your church and wider community in the aftermath.

Look at the emergency mission statement you created in Step 4, paying particular attention to how you answered the questions:

- Which essential services must continue? Why?
- What additional services (if any) will you be asked (and be able) to provide?

Some examples are provided in the chart below. Please adapt the chart to best suit your own context. What are considered essential support and services will vary depending on the nature, scope and duration of the emergencies your congregation could potentially face.

Essential Support & Services	How will we continue to offer these services? Is there anyone we can partner with to do so?
Liturgical & Worship Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Plan for alternative options for worship in the event that gathering together is not viable (e.g., online, partnering with another local church, distributing sermons, etc.). ➤ Train and equip lay leaders to offer appropriate prayer and pastoral care. ➤ Promote morning and evening prayer as a dispersed community activity. Set a common time for community prayer so that individuals and families can feel part of a larger community of prayer.

(chart continued on next page)

Pastoral Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Establish pastoral “neighbourhood care” networks (grouping church members/adherents in same area) and identify a leader/contact person for each network.➤ Distribute “care cards” containing essential information such as a contact tree, pastoral contacts, prayer contacts, etc.➤ Identify and equip lay people who can provide telephone support and prayer for those who are fearful or otherwise distressed.➤ Purchase/assemble necessary protective equipment (alcohol-based hand sanitizer, cleaning wipes, masks) for ministry personnel so that they can continue to do pastoral visits if public health allows.
Fellowship/Community	<p>A key element of worship and the church in general is the community. How will you keep people connected after an emergency?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Develop a list of volunteers who are willing and able to get groceries and run errands for others.➤ Plan to host online fellowship gatherings (e.g., virtual coffee hour).
Supporting Church Staff & Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Prepared for an increase need for employee/volunteer wellness services and support (EAP, pastoral care, etc.).➤ Have prepared policies on sick leave, compassionate leave, and work-from-home.➤ Ensure you have access to payroll information to ensure that employees will continue to be paid after an emergency.
Outreach Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ If there are food banks, daycares, community closets, breakfast programs that are run out of your church, consider how will you continue to offer these forms of support.➤ Identify alternative locations you could offer these services out of if part of your church building damaged in an emergency event.
Community Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Identify other churches and organizations that you could potentially coordinate with in an emergency.

Additional Service Your Church May Be Asked to Provide in/after an Emergency

In some cases, depending on the type and scope of the emergency event, people from the community may turn to your congregation for support. It is helpful to have thought through what you may be asked to provide and what your capacity is to provide that support.

Examples of possible areas of support include:

- pastoral care, counselling and support to neighbours
- emergency shelter for congregation members or neighbourhood residents
- facility space for other congregations forced to relocate
- food preparation or distribution
- facility for information resources
- transportation hub
- volunteer hub

***See Appendix B for more ideas of additional ways your congregation may be called on to help.**

Alternative Building Options

An emergency may render portions or all of your church building(s) uninhabitable. Plans are needed for alternative work and worship spaces.

- Determine if there is an accessible location, perhaps another church, for an alternative office that can be used in an emergency situation (e.g., offices damaged, no power, etc.).
- Develop an agreement with that site that you will offer your facilities to them for emergency use if they will reciprocate.
- Plan for an off-site worship location; it may be the same location as the alternative office space.
 - You are required to cancel in-person worship services if advised to do so by local health or safety authorities; however, if safe to do so, meeting for worship after an emergency event in a neighbouring church or other building can be a great time of healing and connection for church members.
- Develop off-site capabilities to keep the website operational. Ensure that several people are trained to manage the website and social media in order to post updates, schedule changes, etc. as directed.

Alternative Office Space

Name of Site:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Name of Contact Person:

Alternative Worship Space

Name of Site:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Name of Contact Person:

Website and Social Media Off-Site

Name of Person with Website & SM Control:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Name of Backup Website/SM person:

STEP 10

Educate about Plan and Keep Plan Up-to-Date

Once the emergency plan is complete, it is vital to begin educating church staff, leaders, members, and adherents about it.

- At a Session or Board meeting at least once a year, review this emergency plan and update as necessary.
- Provide staff and key volunteers training and practice in initiating and following through with the emergency plan each year.
 - As part of this training be sure to conduct security, evacuation and shelter-in-place drills.
- Make emergency training part of your usher/greeter training. Also educate your children and youth leaders about the evacuation, shelter-in-place and security plans in case the emergency occurs while children are in Church School.
- Consider using gatherings like annual meetings to provide members and adherents with an overview of the emergency plan highlighting particularly the security, evacuation and shelter-in-place procedures.
- Keep plans in an easy to reach location. Make sure that leaders know where to find it.

Who do we need to educate about this plan?	Date they reviewed the plan
Session and/or Board	
Staff	
Key Volunteers	
Ushers/Greeters	
Children/Youth Ministry Leaders	
Congregation (Members & Adherents)	

Emergency plan approved on:	We will review this plan on:
Date:	Date (one year in future):

Signatures	
Emergency Preparedness Committee Convener:	Clerk of Session:

Appendix A

Communication Tools

Use the chart below to help plan ahead for **what** information you will communicate and **how** you will communicate it after an emergency event happens. The examples in the chart are meant as suggestions; add or take away as you see fit.

What should you communicate?	To whom are you communicating?	Who should communicate the message?	How should you be communicating?	What can you prepare in advance?
Congregation status	Emergency service partners	People with proper training (e.g., the primary crisis manager, who will be familiar with the church policies and the emergency plan)	Church website	Talking points
Damage assessment	Staff and volunteers Insurance Company	Those with proper authority (e.g., primary crisis manager, Minister or Interim Moderator, Clerk of Session)	Social Media	Key messages
Services offered or changed	Congregation Members	People who share a consistent message	Verbal	Website Contact-Tree
Funds needed	Funders		Paper By Email Phone call	Emergency related funding solicitations
	Media		Combination of methods	List of ways people can help
	Community Residents			

Appendix B

Additional Ways a Church May Be Called on to Help During an Emergency Event

Advocacy	Animal care	Casework
Childcare	Cleanup (homes and neighbourhoods)	Counselling
Transportation	Food services (cooking, feeding or distribution)	Health services
Home visits/care	Housing	Language translation
Legal assistance	Listening	Office support
Mental health services	Managing donations	Outreach & support to vulnerable populations
Organizing/leading volunteer groups	Pastoral services/spiritual care	Rebuilding/repair/restoration
Relocation or moving assistance	Resource development	Shelter services
Special worship services	Warehousing & distribution of relief supplies	

Appendix C

Resources for Creating Emergency Preparedness Plans for Home

Encourage staff and congregants to have an emergency preparedness plan for their homes. They will be able to cope much better with an emergency event at church if everyone at home is safe and healthy.

The Government of Canada has a free emergency preparedness guide available online that includes a Family Emergency Plan template and list of emergency kit items:
<https://www.getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/yprprdnssgd/index-en.aspx>

The Provincial and Territorial Governments also have guides and resources for creating emergency preparedness plans for home:

Prince Edward Island

Telephone: (902) 894-0385 / After hours: (902) 892-9365
www.peipublicsafety.ca

Newfoundland and Labrador

Telephone: (709) 729-3703
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/fes/>

Nova Scotia

Telephone Toll-free 24 Hour line: 1-866-424-5620
<https://beta.novascotia.ca/government/emergency-management-office>

New Brunswick

Telephone: (506) 453-2133 / Toll-free 24 Hour line: 1-800-561-4034
<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/emo.html>

Quebec

Telephone (toll-free): 1-866-644-6826
General information (Services Québec): 1-877-644-4545
<http://www.securitepublique.gouv.qc.ca/en.html>

Ontario

Telephone: (647) 329-1100 / Toll-free 24 Hour line: 1-800-565-1842
www.ontario.ca/beprepared

Manitoba

Telephone: (204) 945-4772 / Toll-free: 1-888-267-8298
www.manitobaemo.ca

Saskatchewan

Telephone: (306) 787-9563
<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/environment-public-health-and-safety/disaster-prevention>

Alberta

Telephone: (780) 422-9000 / Toll-free: 310-0000
www.aema.alberta.ca

British Columbia

Telephone: (250) 952-4913 / Emergency: 1-800-663-3456
<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/preparedbc>

Nunavut

Telephone: (867) 975-5403 / Toll-free 24 Hour line: 1-800-693-1666
<https://www.gov.nu.ca/community-and-government-services/information/nunavut-emergency-management-0>

Northwest Territories

Telephone: (867) 873-7538 / 24 Hour line: (867) 920-2303
<http://www.maca.gov.nt.ca/en/services/emergency-preparedness>

Yukon

Telephone: (867) 667-5220
Toll free (within the Yukon): 1-800-661-0408
<https://yukon.ca/en/emergencies-and-safety>



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1-800-619-7301
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