



## York Region Emergency Management Fact Sheet

### EVACUATING DURING AN EMERGENCY

#### In the event of an evacuation

- If a flood, fire, hazardous materials spill or another emergency poses a threat to your safety, or that of your family or property, local authorities may advise you to evacuate.
- An evacuation order may come with little warning, so it is important to include plans for evacuation as part of family, business, and neighbourhood preparedness plans. Should an evacuation be necessary, law enforcement officers, fire department personnel or other local officials will notify you directly through the local media and/or public address systems.
- When an evacuation order is issued, listen to your radio to make sure the evacuation order applies to you, and to understand if you are to evacuate immediately or if you have time to pack some essentials. Stay tuned to a radio or television for information on evacuation routes, emergency shelters, and procedures.
- It is important to stay calm, listen carefully, and follow all instructions.
- If you are advised by the authorities to evacuate your home, then do so. Ignoring the warning could jeopardize the safety of your family or those that might have to rescue you.
- Avoid using the telephone. Use your phone only in life-threatening emergencies. Telephone lines are frequently overwhelmed in disaster situations. They need to be clear for emergency calls to get through.
- If at all possible, try to seek shelter with friends or relatives outside of the affected area.
- For those who are unable to shelter with friends or relatives, emergency shelters will be set up in locations such as schools, municipal buildings or community centres. At the time you are advised to evacuate, you will also be advised of the location of the nearest emergency shelter.
- When you are evacuated, regardless of where you are sheltering, register with the reception centre so that you may be contacted by, and reunited with, your family and loved ones.

#### Before you evacuate

- If you have time, seal your house so contaminants cannot enter:
  - Shut off all vents
  - Close fireplace dampers
  - Close and lock your windows and doors
- Make arrangements for pets as they are not allowed in reception centres.
- You don't need to turn off your refrigerator or freezer, but you should turn off all other appliances and lights as you leave. Before you leave, turn off power, water. Leave the gas on unless you've been instructed to turn it off.
- If time allows, leave a note informing others when you left and where you went. If you have a mailbox, leave the note there.

#### On the road

- Follow the routes specified by officials. Don't take short cuts. They could lead you to a blocked or dangerous area.
- Travel very carefully, and only if absolutely necessary through flooded areas. Roads may be washed away or covered with water. If you come across a barricade or flooded road, take a different route.
- Watch out for power lines that are down.
- If you need a ride, ask a neighbour. If no neighbour is available to help you, listen to local radio or television stations for further instructions. Check on neighbours to make sure they have been notified, and offer help to those with disabilities or special needs.



## Sheltering in place

- ❑ Any time you are required to stay indoors because of an emergency situation, you are sheltering in place. In-place sheltering may be short-term, such as going to a safe room for a short period of time while a tornado warning is in effect. It may also be longer term, such as when you stay in your home for several days without electricity or water services following a severe storm.
- ❑ The appropriate steps to take in preparing for short-term in-place sheltering will depend upon the particular emergency situation you are facing. See sheltering details in York Region's *Emergency Preparedness Guide* in the sections dealing with specific hazards.

## Returning home

Care should be taken when re-entering your home after a flood. Flood water is heavily contaminated with sewage and other pollutants that can pose a serious health hazard.

- ❑ Remain in your shelter until told by local authorities that it is safe to return home.
- ❑ Keep tuned to local radio and TV stations for advice and instructions from municipal officials about medical help, emergency housing, clothing and food assistance, and ways to help yourself and your community.
- ❑ Drive only when necessary and be especially careful! Streets may be filled with debris and downed power lines. Roads may collapse under the weight of cars.
- ❑ Avoid loose or dangling power wires and report them immediately to the local Hydro Utility.
- ❑ Stay away from disaster areas. Do not impede crucial rescue and recovery work.
- ❑ Use a flashlight to inspect for damage inside your house. Do not strike a match or use an open flame. Firefighting may be made difficult following an emergency as municipal water pressure and availability of personnel may be low.
- ❑ Report broken gas, sewer or water mains to the municipality.
- ❑ Before entering a flooded building, check for foundation damage and make sure all porch roofs and overhangs are supported.
- ❑ If your basement is full of water, drain in stages, about a third of the volume of water per day (draining too quickly can structurally damage your home).
- ❑ Wear rubber gloves, rubber boots and protective eyewear when cleaning up.
- ❑ Do not use wet appliances or motors unless they have been serviced by a qualified electrician.
- ❑ Contact your local heating repair company to inspect your furnace and chimney.
- ❑ Do not use your regular water supply or septic system until it has been inspected and declared safe to use.
- ❑ Dispose of all contaminated food. Don't risk eating spoiled food.

## Resources

Emergency Management Ontario

[http://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/pub\\_security/emo/esk.html](http://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/pub_security/emo/esk.html)

Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cepr-cmiu/>

Public Safety Canada

[http://www.getprepared.ca/index\\_e.asp](http://www.getprepared.ca/index_e.asp)

Public Health Agency of Canada Office

Emergency Preparedness, Planning and Training

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cepr-cmiu/oeppt-dmupf/index.html>

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

World Health Organization

[www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

## Want to know more?

To view an online version of York Region's *Emergency Preparedness Guide*, visit [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca).

