

## **FACT SHEET #5**

### **Evacuating Your Home in Severe Flooding Conditions**

If you live in a low-lying or flood-prone area, you may need to evacuate your home during severe flooding conditions. Here are some things you should consider:

#### **Prepare to evacuate –**

- Prepare a personal needs checklist now, before there is an emergency. You may not be able to return for forgotten items
- Prepare an emergency supply kit ahead of time. If your home is no longer safe, you will not have time to gather food from the kitchen, fill bottles with water and grab a flashlight and portable radio from the bedroom. You need to have these items ready before an evacuation
- Your personal emergency kit should have at least a three-day supply of food and water for each family member, as well as prescription medications, first aid kit, important papers, blankets, pet needs, toiletries etc. Go to [www.pep.bc.ca](http://www.pep.bc.ca) for more information on preparing your family emergency kit
- Have a grab-and-go emergency kit ready if you have to leave in the middle of the night or on short notice
- Decide in advance on a family meeting place, in case you are separated
- Make arrangements for any pets or livestock
- Know how to safely turn off all utilities: water, gas, electricity
- Move hazardous materials such as cleaners and pesticides to a higher level
- Move outdoor furniture, barbeques, children's toys to an upper floor, or to higher ground
- Move basement valuables to an upper floor
- Know that there is a possibility that drinking water may become contaminated

#### **When flooding occurs –**

- If rising waters become a threat to your safety, follow the instructions of local officials who are involved in rescue or flood response operations
- Ensure that each member of your family has waterproof footwear and outerwear
- Turn off and unplug appliances and lock doors and windows
- Turn off all utilities at the main switches or valves. Know how to do this safely
- Leave a note in your mailbox saying where you've gone and let an out-of-province contact know your situation
- Vacate your home when instructed to do so by local authorities
- Take your grab-and-go emergency kit with you
- If you are evacuated, register all family members at the reception centre
- Check on neighbours who may need help
- Remember that water can be deeper than it appears. It only takes 60 cm (2 feet) of fast moving water to sweep a car away, and as little as 15 cm (6 inches) can cause you to fall

- Take extra care when driving. Familiar roads will appear drastically different when covered by floodwaters. Be on the lookout for damaged bridges, slides and washouts, and be particularly alert for downed power lines
- Register with the reception centre when you evacuate your home, even if you don't plan to stay there. Emergency personnel need to know you are safe and how to reach you

### **Stages of an evacuation**

There are three key stages in the evacuation process:

**Evacuations Alert:** Local authorities issue a warning about an imminent threat to life and property and *people in the defined area should be ready to leave on short notice.*

**Evacuation Order:** When an evacuation order is issued by the local authority, *people should leave the area immediately.*

**Evacuation Rescind:** *People under an evacuation order may return.* An evacuation order or alert may be reinstated by the local authority if the threat returns.

### **Evacuation of seniors and/or disabled –**

- Visually impaired people are generally familiar with their immediate area. During an evacuation, help guide them through any dangerous areas, and don't leave them alone until they are in a safe environment
- A person with a hearing impairment may not have heard any warnings or instructions to evacuate. Write out what is happening and tell them the evacuation procedure
- Other people may have physical and mobility challenges and will need additional help

### **When to return home –**

- Do not return home until instructed to do so, and there is a safe supply of water and a satisfactory system for disposal of human waste and garbage
- Continue to monitor radio and television reports in your area
- Once you are able to return, be prepared to take stock of the damage and begin cleanup
- If your home was flooded, bring large containers to soak bedding and clothing
- Bring pails, mops and sponges
- Do not go inside if there is standing water around the house. The water could be contaminated or carry electric current
- Take pictures of the damage inside and out, for insurance claims
- Listen for news reports to learn whether the community's water supply is safe to drink
- Clean and disinfect everything that got wet. Mud left from floodwater can contain sewage and chemicals

- Do not turn on electrical switches or wet electrical equipment unless okayed by an electrician
- Natural gas safety information is available at [www.terasengas.com/\\_Safety/SafetyHomeWork/EmergencyPreparedness/Floods/default.htm](http://www.terasengas.com/_Safety/SafetyHomeWork/EmergencyPreparedness/Floods/default.htm)
- Get information about electrical safety [www.bchydro.com/safety/](http://www.bchydro.com/safety/) or [www.safetyauthority.ca/?q=flooding\\_information](http://www.safetyauthority.ca/?q=flooding_information)
- To avoid a health hazard from eating food contaminated with flood waters, or left in an unplugged fridge or freezer – *if in doubt, throw it out*. Contamination can spoil foods and medicines, making them dangerous to consume
- Contact your insurance and utility companies
- For detailed clean up and other information, access the *One Step at a Time Disaster Recovery Guide* <http://www.pep.gov.bc.ca/floods/docs/floodrecoveryguide.pdf>

*Contact:*

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