

Returning Home Guide

(Emergency Landing Page / Evacuee Resources Tab / Re-entry (Returning to your home))

Returning Home

Following an Evacuation

The information provided here is an overview of things to consider when returning to your home. A re-entry package with incident/hazard specific information will be provided to evacuated residents prior to returning to their homes.

A State of Local Emergency may still be in effect and active hazards are still a concern nearby.

Returning home to an area that was affected or had the potential to be affected by an emergency may be stressful and traumatic. This will help you know what to do and where to get help.

The Grande Prairie Regional Partnership (GPREP) members, including First Responders and municipal employees, work very hard to protect our communities. Whether on the ground or coordinating various activities behind the scenes, everyone plays a part in protecting your lives, property, and livestock.

We appreciate your patience and cooperation during the evacuations. This is a crucial part in helping our crews manage emergencies.

Please exercise extreme caution and respect any restricted areas and any directions given to you by First Responders.

If you notice a hazard on or near your property, call 911, and let them know where you are in the emergency zone.

Questions or Concerns?

Please call the GPREP Call Centre at (780) 830-5002

Operation Hours are 8:30 am – 4:30 pm unless otherwise posted.

IMPORTANT

DO NOT DRIVE OVER ANY EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING HOSES.

FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS OF FIRST RESPONDERS

Fire Apparatus, water tanks, and heavy equipment may still be working in the area.

Please avoid them.

Please be aware of activity in your area.

FIRST STEPS WHEN YOU RETURN HOME

Wildlife may have taken shelter in/around your home, garage, or outbuildings. Leaving a door open will allow the animals to return on their own to their natural surroundings. Call a Fish and Wildlife officer at 780-538-5265 (24 hours) for animals that appear injured or unwilling to leave.

If you see stray livestock in your yard, please call the County of Grande Prairie's Agricultural Services Department at 780-567-5584.

Do not allow anyone to enter or play in areas damaged by the emergency.

There are many safety risks

Pits filled with ash which can be deep and hot.

Burned trees and branches which can fall over at any time.

Burning roots can cause trees to fall.

Debris and sharp objects.

Downed electrical lines.

Slippery surfaces covered with silt and mud.

Standing water with contaminants.

If you smell gas, exit your home IMMEDIATELY and call ATCO Gas at 1-800-511-3447.

Check for electrical hazards such as exposed wires. Avoid contact with damaged or fallen power lines and poles. If there are any hazards, contact ATCO Electric at 1-800-668-5506 (24-hours).

When you walk through your door

Possible disruption in utility service during this event. It is recommended that residents check gas, electricity, and water to make sure they are working and contact utility providers if required.

Water: drinking and household use

You should run all of your taps (hot and cold) for at least five (5) minutes to remove stagnant water out of your lines. You can then drink, shower, do laundry, and use your water as you normally would.

Check your water and sewer systems including sump pumps and livestock watering devices.

Refer to the "Aquaterra" reference material included in your Welcome Home guide for more detailed instructions.

For information regarding private wells or cisterns please refer to the "Alberta Health Services Returning to Your Home" reference material included in your Welcome Home guide.

CLEANING AFTER A WILDFIRE

If you have SMOKE CONTAMINATION, do not throw anything away until you contact your insurance company.

Disposing of food from your home

Refer to the "Alberta Health Services Returning to Your Home" reference material included in your Welcome Home guide for tips for disposal of food.

If disposal of your fridge and freezer is required, you may leave your food contained in the appliance and seal it shut with duct tape. Refer to the Waste Disposal section of this guide.

To assist with smoke decontamination or deodorizing inside

Wash interior walls and hard surfaces with a steam cleaner or white vinegar.

Wash or dry clean clothing, linens, and bedding.

Wash all movable items with a steam cleaner or microfiber cloth. This includes children's indoor toys.

Disinfect and deodorize upholstery and fabric window treatments with spray deodorizing products available at most supermarkets. Do not use odor-masking sprays as they only cover up the problem and do not fix it.

You can also steam clean items including carpets, window coverings, upholstered furniture, and mattresses. Steam neutralizes the odor and carbon film left by forest fires.

Consider having heating, ventilating and air conditioning units, and all ductwork professionally cleaned to remove soot, ash, and smoke residue. You can change filters when you first return home and then continue to replace them frequently.

Refer to the "Alberta Health Services Returning to Your Home" reference material included in your Welcome Home guide for additional tips for cleaning your home.

Remember to keep all receipts for cleaning and other expenses to provide to your insurance company for possible reimbursement.

To assist with smoke contamination or damage outside

Pressure wash or scrub exterior surfaces including walls, walks, drives, decks, windows, and screens.

Wash all children's outside toys, play structures, and recreational equipment to remove any residual smoke and ash. Replace the sand in sandboxes with clean sand.

Cut down and remove any trees around your property that have been damaged by fire.

Wash your hands if they come in contact with ash.

Refer to the "Alberta Health Services Returning to Your Home" reference material included in your Welcome Home guide for additional tips for cleaning your yard.

FireSmart your home

You may notice upon your return that flammable items on the outside of your property may have been moved away from your home (for example propane tanks, ATV's). This was done to further protect your home from fire.

Complete a scan around your home and property and take steps to remove combustibles.

Check vents on the roof, foundation and exterior walls to prevent embers from entering your home.

Refer to the "Last-Minute Checklist for Protecting Your Home and Property from Wildfire" reference material included in your Welcome Home guide.

Air quality

People with breathing difficulties may want to delay returning home until the air quality improves.

For more information visit Latest Alert For: Air Quality Alert (weather.gc.ca)

CLEANING UP AFTER A FLOOD

Utilities

Make sure your utilities are working and are safe by checking

With your municipality and local utility providers to see if power, gas, water and sewage services are working.

That drinking water is safe, and that no boil water orders are in place.

If there is water above any electrical outlet in your home. If there is, leave until you have confirmed with your electricity supplier that the power is off.

Get a certified technician to examine any flood-damaged utilities before you use them, including

furnaces

water heaters

appliances

electrical equipment

Safety equipment

Use appropriate safety equipment for all clean-up activities, including

Puncture-proof and water-proof boots

Rubber gloves

Sturdy work gloves for cleaning and removing flood-damaged items

A tool, such as a shovel, to dislodge or move any debris. Avoid using your hands to recover submerged items

Face masks, including an N95 respirator mask, if cleaning in areas that could contain mould, asbestos or heavy dust

A first aid kit (including supplies to clean and cover any cut or wound before commencing clean-up)

Avoid touching contaminated gloves or items with bare skin.

Cleaning

Clean your basement first, kitchen second, then the rest of your house.

Be aware that any household chemicals or dangerous items stored in your house may be spilled or dislodged as a result of floodwaters. Use standard safety equipment meant for handling dangerous items during your post-flood clean-up.

Thoroughly clean interior wall cavities using soap and water.

Do not just clean up the affected wall surfaces

When cleaning up, be sure to remove

wet floor coverings and soaked materials

wet furniture

walls that have been soaked through

Thoroughly clean interior wall cavities using soap and water.

Do not just clean up the affected wall surfaces.

Sanitize

Wash your hands and any exposed skin regularly with soap and warm water while cleaning your space.

Bathe or shower after you finish any cleaning activities

Wash

Wash your hands and any exposed skin regularly with soap and warm water while cleaning your space.

Bathe or shower after you finish any cleaning activities.

Wash contaminated laundry items separate from non-contaminated items.

Disposing of dead livestock

We are sorry for your loss and understand that this will be upsetting for you and your family. Livestock carcasses can be taken to a class 2 registered and approved landfill. The Clairmont Centre for Recycling & Waste Management on RR63 is a Class 2 Registered and Approved landfill. Please note that disposal fees will be waived for evacuees.

If you require guidance or assistance with the disposal process please contact the Call Centre at (780) 830-5002

Debris Removal

Debris removal is usually covered by your home insurance. Some non-Governmental Organizations may be able to provide assistance if the damage is uninsurable. If you require assistance please call the Call Centre at (780) 830-5002.

INSURANCE INFORMATION

IF YOU ARE INSURED

Take the following steps

Call your insurance representative and/or company and follow their instructions.

Assess and document the damage. Taking photos can be helpful.

List all damaged or destroyed items.

If possible, assemble proofs of purchase, photos, receipts, and warranties. Take photos of the damage and keep the damaged items unless they pose a health hazard.

Keep all of the receipts related to cleanup, and if you've been ordered to leave your home, keep the receipts for your living expenses.

Ask your insurance representative what living expenses you're entitled to be reimbursed for and for what period of time.

IF YOU ARE NOT INSURED

For information on available assistance, check with

Government of Alberta 310-4455

Canadian Red Cross 1-800-565-4483 or www.redcross.ca

If you can't remember who your provider is, or can't reach your insurance provider, contact the Insurance Bureau of Canada to help understand fire insurance coverage.

Rob de Pruis, Liaison at IBC (Insurance Bureau of Canada)

Phone: 1-587-337-3200 (toll-free) Email: redpruis@ibc.ca Website: www.ibc.ca/ab

Refer to the media release from the Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC): IBC Media Release included in this guide.

DO I NEED PERMITS TO BEGIN REPAIRING MY HOUSE?

Depending on the extent of the damage, permits may be required. There are a number of different licenses and permits that the municipality administers.

Please visit contact your municipality for more information or visit their website.

PROVINCIAL FUNDING AND SUPPORTS

Disaster Recovery Funding

The municipality apply for the Hazard Assistance Resilience Program for financial assistance. If the municipality receives approval, affected residents may be eligible to apply for financial assistance under the Program to help cover damages that were not covered by their existing insurance. This program limits the number of claims per property.

Please refer to the 'Hazard Assistance Resilience Program' reference material included in your Welcome Home guide or visit Disaster financial assistance and recovery support | Alberta.ca

Mental health

For those impacted by the Alberta wildfires, AHS has supports and resources in place to help you through these challenging times.

Go to www.ahs.ca/wildfire or call the Mental Health Help Line 24/7 at 1-877-303-2642.

For health advice or information on health services, including mental health services, call Health Link at 811 or 1-866-408-LINK (5465)

For professional, emotional support and/or referral to community resources contact the Lifeworks Community Crisis Support Line at 1-844-751-2133 (24 hour).

If you are having a medical emergency, call 911 right away.

Handy phone numbers

The GPREP Call Centre has received calls from residents offering support and volunteer services. If you are needing assistance please reach out to the Call Centre at 780 – 830 – 5002

For all other inquiries, please contact your municipality.

Supporting materials

Alberta Health Services – Returning to Your Home

Disaster Financial Assistance and Recovery

FireSmart – Last-Minute Checklist for Protecting Your Home and Property from Wildfire

Service Canada