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# Guide to re-entry after an Evacuation

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## Before you go back to your community and home

You are returning to a community where the surrounding area was profoundly affected by a wildfire. Unseen dangers may linger, ranging from gas leaks and weakened foundations to exposed wires and power lines. Using caution can help reduce potential injuries. Play it safe. When in doubt, ask for help or seek advice from an expert. Services that you are used to or rely on may be limited for some time. You are advised to bring basic necessities with you.

### DO YOU HAVE

A full tank of gas?

Proper clothing, a flashlight and clean-up materials?

Water for the next 7 days?

Food for 7 days, including any special dietary needs?

Medications?

**If you suffer from a respiratory illness, it may be desirable to delay your return until air quality improves.**

## Insurance Information

- If your home has a mortgage, call the bank or company that holds this mortgage to let them know about the wildfires as soon as possible to discuss mortgage or loan payment deferrals if needed.

### **If you are insured:**

- Contact your insurance company/broker as soon as possible. The sooner the insurance company is notified, the quicker your insurance claim can be processed.
- Try to create an inventory of household items, both inside and outside of the buildings, which have been damaged by fire. Photograph or videotape the damage as much as possible.
- Work with your insurance company to find out what is covered, what is not covered and what may be subject to further discussion.
- Work with your insurance company and their accredited fire restoration companies to try to restore or rebuild your home.
- Do not throw away any damaged goods until the insurance assessor says to do so.

### **If you are not insured:**

For information on available assistance, check with:

- Canadian Red Cross: 1-800-863-6582 or [www.redcross.ca](http://www.redcross.ca)
- Samaritan's Purse: 1-866-628-6565

Can assist residents with:

- debris clean up
- ash sifting
- possession recovery
- fridge/freezer and furniture removal

## Be safe when entering your community

Once you are able to enter burned out areas safely, be very careful.

Give way to all emergency and fire fighting vehicles.

Some areas may be fenced for safety and security purposes. Please respect these restricted areas and any directions given to you by first responders or utilities workers.

Do not re-enter any areas that were heavily damaged or destroyed by the wildfire until the area has been cleared by the local fire authority.

Take basic precautions and be aware of hazards to your health and safety in the community.

- Slip, trip and fall hazards from unstable structures, open pits or wet and slippery surfaces.
- Charred trees are unstable and may be a hazard.
- Fire damaged buildings may be a hazard.
- Standing chimneys are a hazard
- Ash, soot and demolition dust.
- Hazardous materials such as kitchen and bathroom cleaning products, paint, batteries, and fuel containers which have been partially damaged or destroyed.
- Pesticides or herbicide containers potentially damaged or destroyed.
- Propane cylinders for heating or from BBQ.

## Inspect your home carefully before entering.

Walk carefully around the outside and check for loose power lines, gas leaks and structural damage. If you have any doubts about safety, do not enter.

Do not enter if:

- You smell gas.
- Your home was damaged by fire and the authorities have not declared it safe.

## Re-Entry Checklist

- ✓ Check to ensure no structures were lost in the wildfire.
- ✓ Thoroughly check for hazards before entering your house and exercise safety, caution and good judgement when returning to property.
- ✓ If you smell natural gas as you enter your home, leave immediately and contact FORTIS BCGas Emergency Line at 1-800-663-9911.
- ✓ Hydro - If you have questions, no service or are experiencing fluctuations in electrical service quality contact BC Hydro at 1-888-769 3766 (1-888-POWERON) or \*49376 on your cell phone.
- ✓ Bring basic necessities to last for up to 7 days including food and prescriptions. Remember to bring pet food and supplies.
- ✓ Clean any ash off your belongings and furniture. Your regular cleaning regime should be adequate to bring your home back to normal.
- ✓ All perishables and spoiled food in your home should be disposed of. Thoroughly clean your refrigerator.
- ✓ Contact your insurance provider as soon as possible to discuss claim options if you have any damage. Take pictures and/or video and start a list of damaged belongings, if any.
- ✓ Contact your bank to discuss mortgage or loan payment deferrals if needed.
- ✓ Wash your hands if they come into contact with ash.

## Information & Resiliency Centre

A Resiliency Centre has been set up on the second floor of Boitano Mall, located at 850 Oliver Street. The Resiliency Centre is meant to be a one-stop setting to inform and support residents with information after an emergency.

The services and representatives that are available at the Resiliency Centre are:

- Representative from Red Cross, City of Williams Lake, Cariboo Regional District, First Nations, and Interior Health
- Representative from various private utility companies such as BC Hydro, Telus and Fortis BC
- Representative from BCSPCA and Ministry of Agriculture for pets and livestock
- Representative from Service Canada, Service BC, Ministry of Children and Family Development, Insurance companies, ICBC, BC Housing and Ministry of Social Development
- Clean Up Kit

## AirQuality & Health Care Services

It is important to note that air quality remains poor as a result of smoke from nearby fire activity. Community Health Centers may have limited operations available for the first few weeks after the evacuations order is lifted.

Residents with the following medical conditions or situations should consider the limited health services that will be available before returning back to the community:

- A chronic or acute medical condition, such as asthma
- Anyone requiring regular primary care, specialist care, laboratory or diagnostic services
- Anyone more than 36 weeks pregnant or with a high-risk pregnancy
- Anyone receiving cancer treatment, dialysis or other specialized medical services
- Anyone requiring home care, home oxygen or home health supports
- Anyone recently discharged from hospital or who has had a transplant

### **Air Quality Advisories**

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/air/air-quality/air-advisories>

## Taking Care of yourself and your family

Returning home after a wildfire evacuation can be stressful and traumatic experience.

Fear, stress and anxiety are natural reactions to a traumatic event. Eventually, these feelings will diminish and, for most people, completely subside.

To help yourself and your loved ones:

- Accept and offer help and comfort; seek counselling if necessary
- Focus on positive memories and the skills you've used to get through other hard times
- Be aware of your child's reactions: reassure them and encourage them to express themselves
- Give yourself and your family permission to grieve and time to heal
- Get physical activity, but rest as needed, eat well, hydrate and keep a manageable schedule

If you need to talk, call the

**Mental Health Support Line:** Call 310-6789 (do not add 604, 778 or 250 before the number). This number will connect you to your local BC crisis line without a wait or busy signal, 24 hours a day. Crisis line workers are trained to help provide emotional support as well as mental health information and resources.

### HealthLink BC

Call 811 or visit [www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca) to access free, non-emergency health information for anyone in your family, including mental health information. Through 811, you can also speak to a registered nurse about symptoms you're worried about, or talk with a pharmacist about medication questions.

## Water & Sewer

If you do not have municipal water and sewer services, check your water and sewer systems.



Before using your water for consumption, flush the system to remove all stagnant water from your household water lines by running all cold and hot water taps for at least 5 minutes before using them.

Municipal water systems may have been maintained throughout the wildfire event. Check with your local government agency upon your return.

## Cleaning Up

Your insurance policy may cover house cleaning by a fire restoration specialist. If you are going to clean your residence yourself:

- Wear gloves and goggles, keep children and pets away, and ventilate the area you're cleaning well.
- Smoke odours can last a long time, and you may need to clean everything several times.
- Vacuum all surfaces, change heating and air conditioning filters, and have ducts cleaned.
- Soot/smoke can be removed from painted walls with trisodium phosphate (tsp), but wallpaper may not be salvageable.
- Clean dirt off furniture, removing drawers and scrubbing wooden surfaces; let dry thoroughly.
- Linoleum flooring may require replacement, but wood and carpet can be vacuumed and washed.
- To remove odours from fridges and freezers, wash with baking soda/water, vinegar or ammonia.
- Locks and hinges should be taken apart, thoroughly cleaned and oiled.
- Dispose of hazardous materials like solvents and garden chemicals if they show signs of damage. Separate hazardous materials from landfill waste and dispose appropriately.

## Transfer Stations

Forest Grove – 4504 Canim Hendrix Lake Road

Wildwood – 360 Westcoast Road

Forest Creek – 2734 Dog Creek Road

150 Mile House – 280 Likely Road

Baker Creek – 4831 Nazko Road

Watch Lake – 7923 Watch Lake Road

South Cariboo (100 Mile House) – 1500 Gustafson Lake Forest Service Road (across from Ainsworth)

Lone Butte – 6106 Little Fort Hwy 24

Lac La Hache – 4202 Cariboo Hwy 97 S

Interlakes – 7377 Horse Lake Road

Central Cariboo (Williams Lake) – 5025 Frizzi Road

## Disposing of food from your home

When you are trying to decide what food to keep or throw away, be safe and always remember: “When in doubt, throw it out.”

### **ALL PERISHABLE ITEMS SHOULD BE DISPOSED OF IMMEDIATELY UPON YOUR RETURN**

Dispose of:

- Any unrefrigerated raw vegetables or fruits, or any foods that were stored in porous containers (e.g. cardboard, foam containers, etc.).
- Food that was in bowls on counters/tables.
- Food that shows signs of damage from heat or fire, including ash or smoke.
- Any canned food that is bulging or rusted. Canned foods that look like they may be okay need to be cleaned with soap and water before being opened to make sure the contents don't become contaminated.
- Any food that has come in contact with liquid waste, sewage, chemicals or water.
- Any food displaying an off odour or signs of spoilage.
- If you do have a damaged refrigerator or freezer, contact your insurance provider about whether to clean it or throw it away.

If you have any questions about how to safely dispose of spoiled food, please contact an Environmental Health Officer your local Health Unit.

## Pets

If your pet is lost or missing, please contact the BC SPCA at: 1 855 622 7722

Remember to bring some pet food and supplies with you, as regular pet supply stores may take a short time to re-open normal operations.

## Yards and Gardens

Lawns and gardens will be very dry, they will welcome a thorough watering.

Please adhere to normal watering restrictions in your community to ensure adequate water supplies for everyone.

Power outages will also cause the circulation and treatment systems of pools and hot tubs to stop working. Private pool owners should ensure adequate disinfection (chlorine levels) and circulation prior to using the pool. Commercial pools may be closed temporarily as operators rebalance their chemicals.

## Documents

Keep track of lost documents, including birth certificates, passports and tax records.

To manage your insurance:

- Review your policy to understand what items to list, then take an inventory – you'll need to provide a list of lost or damaged items as part of your claim.
- Take photos or videos, noting serial numbers if possible and the approximate cost of each item.
- Keep your inventory with receipts related to living expenses, repairs and inspections.
- Notify your mortgage company and keep them informed about restoration of your property.
- If you have questions about your home insurance, call your insurance representative directly or call the Insurance Bureau of Canada toll-free at 1 844-2-ASK-IBC.

## Community Contacts

### Cariboo Regional District

<b>Resiliency Centre</b> Boitanio Mall (850 Oliver Street) 250-305-0226	<b>Cariboo Regional District Public Information Line</b> 1-866-759-4977
<b>Cariboo Regional District Emergency Operations</b> <a href="http://www.facebook.com/CRDEmergencyOperations/">www.facebook.com/CRDEmergencyOperations/</a>	<b>Cariboo Regional District Website</b> <a href="http://www.cariboord.ca">www.cariboord.ca</a>

### Other Contacts

<b>RCMP</b> <b>Emergency</b> 9-1-1 <b>Non-Emergency</b> Williams Lake: 250-392-6211 Quesnel: 250-992-9211 100 Mile House: 250-395-2456 Alexis Creek: 250-394-4211 Anahim Lake: 250-742-3211	<b>Insurance Bureau of Canada</b> 1-844-227-5422 <a href="http://www.abc.ca">www.abc.ca</a>
<b>BC Hydro</b> 1-800-224-9376	<b>Ministry of Health:</b> 1-800-663-7867 <a href="http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health">www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health</a>
<b>BC SPCA</b> Pet/Livestock 1-855-622-7722	<b>Ministry of Agriculture:</b> 1-888-221-7141
<b>BC Wildfire</b> 1-800-663-7867 (M-F 7:30am-5pm) <a href="http://www.bcwildfire.ca">www.bcwildfire.ca</a>	<b>Red Cross</b> 1-800-863-6582
<b>Drive BC</b> 1-800-550-4997 <a href="http://www.drivebc.ca">www.drivebc.ca</a>	<b>Shaw</b> 1-888-472-2222
<b>Emergency Info BC</b> 1-800-663-7867 <a href="http://www.emergencyinfobc.gov.bc.ca">www.emergencyinfobc.gov.bc.ca</a>	<b>Samaritans Purse</b> 1-866-628-6565
<b>Emergency Support Services (ESS)</b> 1-800-585-9559	<b>Telus</b> 1-844-443-8622
<b>Fortis</b> Customer Service 1-888-224-2710 (Mon – Fri 7am-8pm, Sat 9am-5pm) Emergency 1-800-663-9911	<b>First Nations Resources</b> <b>Cariboo Friendship Society</b> 250-398-6831 <a href="http://www.cariboofriendshipsociety.ca">http://www.cariboofriendshipsociety.ca</a>
<b>Health Link BC</b> Available 24 hours call 8-1-1	<b>First Nations Emergency Services Society</b> 1-888-822-3388 <a href="http://fness.bc.ca/">http://fness.bc.ca/</a>
	<b>First Nations Health Authority</b> 1-866-913-0033 <a href="http://www.fnha.ca/">http://www.fnha.ca/</a>