



## PREPARING FOR A MAJOR EMERGENCY

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, British Columbia has experienced a range of large-scale disasters, including extreme weather events, floods, and wildfires.

This has prompted many Sunshine Coast residents to ask important questions, such as:

1. What are local governments doing to prepare for a major emergency?
2. How can I best prepare for a major emergency in our region? and
3. What should I do if a major emergency occurs on the Sunshine Coast?

This document provides the essential information you need to answer those questions, as well as guidance on where to find more detailed information on these topics.

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

##### **How are local governments preparing for a large-scale emergency event on the Sunshine Coast?**

The Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD), through the Sunshine Coast Emergency Program (SCEP), is the lead agency for emergency management on the Sunshine Coast.

Municipal and regional district staff, along with volunteers, first responders, first nations, and non-government agencies plan, train, and exercise together to be ready for the next large-scale emergency or disaster.

When required, an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will be activated by the SCRDR. An EOC is responsible for various duties, such as declaring a state of local emergency, coordinating multiple agencies, providing media releases, and managing evacuees.

In case of an evacuation or emergency beyond local capacity, the local EOC will connect with the provincial emergency coordination centre, which will coordinate with BC Ferries, Canadian Coast Guard, or military, as needed.

In addition to establishing the SCEP, the SCRDR has invested significant resources to ensure it is prepared for a community emergency. Initiatives include:

- Hiring a full-time Emergency Management Program coordinator.
- Pre-identifying reception centres for people who may be displaced by an evacuation order.
- Purchasing equipment required to set up evacuation reception centres.
- Identifying and training an Emergency Support Services team to organize and staff evacuation reception centres.
- Establishing multiple early notification and communication methods, including the Voyent Alert! emergency alert system.

- Developing an overarching evacuation plan for the Sunshine Coast, as well as smaller evacuation plans for some more remote communities.
- Giving emergency preparedness presentations to neighbourhood community groups.

To learn more about the SCRD's Emergency Program, and to find links to detailed information on emergency preparedness, emergency support services, and evacuation plans, please visit [scrd.ca/emergency-program](http://scrd.ca/emergency-program).

## INFORMATION FOR RESIDENTS

### What can I do to prepare for a large-scale emergency event on the Sunshine Coast?

When a major emergency strikes, there is often no time to spare. That is why it's critical that individuals, families, and neighbourhoods prepare in advance for a large-scale event. An emergency-prepared community is better able to safely navigate a serious incident and helps ensure a safe, orderly evacuation, if that is required.

Here are four key actions you can take to prepare for a community emergency:

#### 1. Register for Voyent Alert!

Every resident on the Sunshine Coast should register for Voyent Alert!, a multi-purpose communication service used to send alerts during events like earthquakes, fires, or floods. Registration is free, simple, and totally anonymous. Simply download the Voyent Alert! app from the Apple or Google Play stores OR sign up online for email, text message, or voicemail alerts. For more information and to register for Voyent Alert!, please visit: [scrd.ca/alert-system](http://scrd.ca/alert-system)

#### 2. Prepare a "grab-&-go" bag

A grab-&-go bag contains the essential items your household (including pets) will require if you must leave your home quickly and cannot return for several days. Items will vary based on individual needs, but could include personal I.D., medications, eyeglasses, cash, phone charger, toiletries, food, water, flashlight, pen, and paper. For tips on preparing a grab-&-go bag, please visit: [gov.bc.ca/preparedbc](http://gov.bc.ca/preparedbc)

#### 3. Build an emergency kit

During a major event, some utility services may be lost temporarily and emergency crews may not be readily available. Accordingly, residents should have the supplies they need to cope on their own for at least 7 days. Typically, this includes non-perishable food, bottled water or water purification tablets, and medical supplies, as well as cash, a power bank, batteries, battery-powered or hand-crank radio and flashlight, and copies of important documents. For tips on preparing an emergency kit, please visit: [gov.bc.ca/preparedbc](http://gov.bc.ca/preparedbc)

#### 4. FireSmart your home

Individual property owners can dramatically reduce the risk of wildfires to their homes by conducting a FireSmart assessment of their property and then applying FireSmart principles to proactively protect their buildings. Assessments may be self-directed or completed with the assistance of a FireSmart representative. To learn how to significantly increase your property's resilience to wildfire, please visit: [scrd.ca/firesmart](http://scrd.ca/firesmart).

For more information on how to prepare for an emergency, including how to develop a household emergency plan and how to prepare for a power outage, please visit: [scrd.ca/emergency-preparedness](http://scrd.ca/emergency-preparedness)

## DURING A MAJOR EMERGENCY

### Where can I find accurate information during a large-scale emergency?

During a major event, the SCRD will communicate important information through multiple channels, including:

- Voyent Alert!
- SCRD website: [scrd.ca/emergency-alerts](https://scrd.ca/emergency-alerts)
- 91.7 FM radio
- SCRD Facebook page
- SCRD X (Twitter) account

We will also partner with RCMP, Fire, BC Ferries, and organizations such as the Ministry of Transportation and Sunshine Coast Tourism to help spread information.

### How will I be notified if there is an evacuation?

Evacuation alerts and evacuation orders will be communicated through the channels listed above, as well as through door knocking. An evacuation *alert* means you should be ready to leave the area on short notice. An evacuation *order* means those in the area are at risk and you must leave immediately. More information regarding evacuations can be found here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/preparedbc/evacuation-recovery/evacuee-guidance>

### Where do I go if my neighbourhood is ordered to evacuate?

We cannot tell you where to go without first knowing the type and location of the emergency. If an evacuation is ordered, the Sunshine Coast Emergency Program will determine which facilities to open as reception centres, and then share the site information with affected residents, through the channels listed above.

### Given that the Sunshine Coast has just one highway, how will everyone be evacuated?

A detailed transportation plan coordinating Highway 101, the Langdale and Saltery Bay ferry terminals, and pre-identified marine transportation sites has been developed to ensure an orderly evacuation of the Sunshine Coast. However, it is unlikely that the entire region will need to be evacuated at the same time.

If an evacuation is required, multiple organizations, including the RCMP, Sunshine Coast Fire Departments, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, Southwest Regional Emergency Operations Centre, Capilano Highways, local flagging companies, and others, will be employed to manage traffic congestion and flow.

We will also engage the Canadian Coast Guard, Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue, and local water transport companies to help move people to safety.

### What will happen if a wildfire breaks out?

The BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) is responsible for detecting, monitoring, and responding to wildfires in our province.

BCWS maintains an office on the Sunshine Coast and is prepared to react immediately if a wildfire is spotted locally. Additionally, the Coast has six fire departments that have mutual aid agreements to work together as needed.

Should a local wildfire become a safety threat, the SCRD will activate an Emergency Operations Centre to work with the BCWS and other responding agencies to keep residents informed, manage evacuations as required, and to extinguish the fire.

The position and status of all current wildfires in BC can be tracked by visiting the [BC Wildfire Service](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-management/preparedbc/evacuation-recovery/evacuee-guidance) website or by downloading the free BC Wildfire Service mobile app at the [App](#) or [Google Play](#) stores.