

Emergencies happen. Expect the unexpected. Then plan for it.



by Regional Chair Gary Carr

Emergency preparedness starts with you. Whether it's a chemical spill, power outage, or a natural disaster such as a tornado, we all need to be prepared because emergencies can happen, any time and any place.

In Halton, our emergency response partners work together to assume a coordinated approach to the planning and management of emergencies. Halton Region, the Halton Regional Police Service, the City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills, the Town of Milton, and the Town of Oakville plan together to address emergency management issues. Our goal is to ensure Halton is a disaster resilient community. Working together, we have implemented an extensive Emergency Management Program that incorporates five phases – prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

We are prepared. However, while governments and partners at all levels work hard to keep residents safe, individuals also have an important role to play. Are you prepared? Emergency preparedness is a shared responsibility.

Learn how to deal with emergencies and minimize the impact to your family. Residents need to be prepared to cope on their own for at least the first 72 hours of an emergency, while fire, police and paramedics help those in desperate need. Being prepared really is your best defence.

Take three steps to protect yourself and your family from all types of emergencies.

Step 1. Know the Risks

Although the consequences of different disasters can be similar, knowing the risks in your area can help you better prepare for them. In recent years, we've seen a number of natural disasters occurring in heavily populated areas. Halton Region can be vulnerable to a variety of natural and human-caused hazards such as severe storms and health epidemics. For any incident, make sure you know general precautions you should take. Learn more about these precautions and the risks that may occur in Halton by visiting www.halton.ca/beprepared.

Step 2. Make a Plan

You and your family need a plan to know what to do in case of an emergency. Your family may not be together when an emergency occurs. Talk about how or where to meet or how to contact one another and plan what you would do in different situations. Make an escape plan for your home and learn about sheltering-in-place. Keep your plan in an easy-to-find, easy-to-remember place (for example, with your Go-Kit). Photocopy your plan and keep it in your car and/or at work. Review and use our *Personal Emergency Preparedness Guide* for tips.

The Community Emergency Notification Service (CENS) is Halton Region's emergency telephone notification system. It will be used in the event of a major disaster or catastrophe to communicate updates about emergency conditions, what to do, where to go or other vital information. CENS supplements, but does not replace, information you'll receive from television, radio and other sources. CENS is tested annually.

Step 3. Get a Kit

In an emergency, you will need some basic supplies. Make a Go-Kit for your house, car, pets or service animals in case you need to evacuate. Make sure your Go-Kit is easy to carry and everyone in the household knows where it is.

You may also need to cope in your home without power or running water. Be prepared to be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours. This will allow emergency responders to focus their attention on the emergency situation itself.

Emergency Preparedness Week, May 1 to 7, 2011, is a Canada-wide initiative to increase awareness about individual and family preparedness. From April 29 to May 31, 2011, visit www.ontario.ca/beprepared and *Take the Challenge*, an online Emergency Preparedness Quiz. Let's see if we can beat last year's record of 321 entries and show we are the most prepared community in Ontario!

Prepare your Go-Kit

A basic kit includes:

- Backpack/duffel bag (to hold the kit items)
- Flashlight
- Battery operated or crank radio
- Spare batteries
- First-Aid Kit
- Candles and matches/lighter
- Extra car keys and cash
- Important papers (identification, insurance)
- Food and water – as much as you can carry
- Manual can opener
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Hygiene items
- Clothing and footwear
- Whistle
- Playing cards, quiet games
- Special needs items – medications, baby food or equipment for people with disabilities
- Emergency plan

...or buy one

You can buy an emergency kit online, by telephone or from local retailers.

Visit www.halton.ca/beprepared for more information and to download/order useful resources, such as our Personal Emergency Preparedness Guide and video, and our pamphlet series for people with special needs/disabilities. These resources are also available at Regional and Local Municipal government offices and facilities or through Access Halton.

Halton Region Meeting Schedule

- May 3, 9:30 a.m.** Health & Social Services Cte
- May 4, 9:30 a.m.** Planning & Public Works Cte
- May 4, 1:30 p.m.** Administration & Finance Cte
Statutory– Tourism Exemption
- May 4, 1:45 p.m.** Administration & Finance Cte
- May 11, 9:30 a.m.** Regional Council
- May 23** Offices closed for Victoria Day
- May 24 9:30 a.m.** Health & Social Services Cte
- May 25, 9:30 a.m.** Planning & Public Works
Statutory– ROPA #39
- May 25, 10:00 a.m.** Planning & Public Works Cte
- May 25, 1:30 p.m.** Administration & Finance
Sinking Fund
- May 25, 2:00 p.m.** Administration & Finance Cte
- May 25, 3:00 p.m.** Administration & Finance Audit

Meetings can be viewed at www.halton.ca.

Please let us know as soon as possible if you will have an accessibility or accommodation need at a Halton Region hosted event or meeting.

This page has been donated by this newspaper to communicate important information to Halton residents at no cost to taxpayers.

Learn more about how you can be prepared by visiting www.halton.ca/beprepared.