

Extreme Weather

Preparedness Tips for Extreme Weather Events

Common extreme weather events in Nova Scotia are most often heavy rain, freezing rain, ice storms, heavy snow, and hurricane force winds. These weather events may lead to power outages, fire, flooding, or other necessary evacuation of your farm.



Here are some tips on protecting your property, minimizing losses, and preparing for extreme weather:

- Harvest crops, if possible.
- Put away or anchor any outdoor furniture, equipment or material that would easily blow away or become flying objects in strong winds.
- Sandbag any areas that are susceptible to flooding.
- Back up electronic documents to remote servers.
- Unplug and turn off work equipment, machines or office equipment that don't need to be running.
- Turn off power to areas on the farm which do not require power during the storm.
- Protect buildings against overland flooding, where possible.
- Have copies of all important phone numbers, insurance documents, prescriptions, and emergency response plans together in an easily accessible location.
- Review your crop insurance policy and coverage options as well as home, farm and vehicle insurance policies.
- Have required records to file an insurance claim for crops, farm buildings, vehicles or equipment.
- Create a written emergency response plan for all farm operations to include evacuation for livestock.
- Note government assistance programs available to help with disaster recovery.
- Store valuable items including important documents such as tax, bank, lawyer, accountant, supplier, and insurance information in a watertight container above potential flood level.

- Take inventory of your farm. Use a video camera to record or take photos.
- Refill prescriptions and medications needed for yourself and livestock.
- Put away machinery, tools and equipment and anything that could be damaged by flying objects.
- Clear waterways such as culverts, ditches, drains and manholes of any debris that may prevent drainage.
- Conduct a structural assessment of all buildings and reinforce weak areas.
- Board up windows.
- Stock up on fence-repair materials: wire, posts, and staples.
- Check generators and chainsaws to ensure they are ready and in working order.
- Locate chains and check winches for tree movement off fences and buildings.
- Fuel up vehicles, machinery and equipment and have spare fuel available.
- Move livestock to secure area or higher ground.
- Prepare livestock trailers for travel.

Keep the following items on hand:

- ✓ Flashlight
- ✓ Wind up to battery operated radio
- ✓ Portable phone chargers for cell phones
- ✓ To save battery power turn off Bluetooth, WiFi, and location services
- ✓ Three – day non-perishable food and water supply
- ✓ An overnight bag in the event you need to leave for a few days (Include medications, personal documents in a plastic bag, change of clothes and jacket, small first aid kit, personal care items, extra car keys and house keys, dust mask, paper & pen, family photos, pet supplies, etc.)
- ✓ Coolers and containers for water
- ✓ Blankets, pillows, chairs
- ✓ First Aid kit
- ✓ Fire Extinguisher
- ✓ Tool kit with basic tools
- ✓ Camera to document damages
- ✓ Flares or a way to signal for help
- ✓ Tarps, plastic bags, duct tape
- ✓ Cleaning supplies, antiseptic wipes or hand sanitizer
- ✓ Generator
- ✓ Extra gas for vehicles and generator or other equipment
- ✓ Emergency building materials available such as plastic sheeting & lumber
- ✓ Emergency Phone Numbers list. Use Farm Safety's template or prepare your own. You may want to include neighbours' phone numbers / who can help out on farm, if needed, and to check in to see if others can use your help

The Power of Generator Hazards:

As farms become more automated and depend on electricity to run vital equipment, a backup supply of electricity is essential if there is a power outage. A back up power supply can be used in sustaining life of livestock and plants by providing electricity for robotic milking systems for dairy producers and providing lights, heat and irrigation for greenhouse operations. As much as generators can sustain life by providing electricity to keep operations functioning, they also create risk to life from shock and electrocution, fire, and carbon monoxide poisoning.

Only fully-trained, qualified and authorized personnel should perform any work on generators and electrical systems. Generators can be wired directly into a building's existing electrical system, as long as the generator is powerful enough to support the load and the wiring is done by a certified electrician. Some generators require manual start up when the power goes out and only trained and competent workers should be in charge of manual start up. Be sure to check your surroundings prior to starting the generator to prevent related incidents.

Best Practice for Portable Generators

- ❖ Read and follow all safety precautions outlined in the manufacturer's operating manual, including instructions on grounding and ventilation.
- ❖ Choose the correct generator for the job. Do not exceed the load rating recommended by the manufacturer.
- ❖ Connect the equipment you want to use directly to the generator.
- ❖ Do not connect a portable generator directly to a farm building or home wiring system.
- ❖ Run the generator only in a well-ventilated area to prevent the buildup of carbon monoxide. Ensure the area is dry.
- ❖ Turn off the generator when refueling as gas vapours can ignite and explode if there is a spark.
- ❖ Keep cords out of walkways to prevent tripping.
- ❖ Do not cover cords with objects that can overheat and start a fire.

More Information:

- <http://www.redcross.ca/how-we-help/emergencies-and-disasters-in-canada/be-ready-emergency-preparedness-and-recovery/generator-safety>
- <https://www.redcross.ca/how-we-help/emergencies-and-disasters-in-canada/types-of-emergencies/>
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/hurricane-forecasts-facts/storm-preparedness-taking-action-hazards/your-action-plan.html>



Potential Hazards:

Electrocution

Losing power during a flood is not uncommon. However, never use a generator in a flooded basement or wet area. It's important to keep the generator in a dry place and ensure your hands are dry when touching or operating the generator. Do not walk in water surrounding a generator, either to start or stop the generator. Covering the generator with a canopy or well ventilated shelter may be necessary to protect it from rain.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide poisoning happens when someone breathes in too much carbon monoxide, an odourless and colourless gas that can be deadly. Be sure to keep and operate the generator somewhere with proper ventilation. If the generator is outside, don't place it close to any windows or vents because carbon monoxide can travel through open passages into the house. Always ensure carbon monoxide detectors are distributed throughout your house and are in proper working order. These should be tested at regular intervals along with smoke detectors. If the detectors are wired to the house's electricity supply, make sure they have battery-powered back-ups. Batteries should be replaced once per year. The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include dizziness, headaches, nausea and tiredness. If you experience any of these symptoms go outside for fresh air immediately.

Fire

Generators become extremely hot during operation. Turn off the generator and let it cool prior to refueling. Store your fuel outside in approved containers away from any fuel-burning appliances or the generator itself. Ensure the generator is run on fire retardant surfaces, is well ventilated, and the exhaust is pointed away from buildings or flammable materials.