

EMERGENCY & DISASTER PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

As we learned in the past few years, emergencies and natural disasters can occur anytime, anywhere. Hotels face numerous challenges to ensure the safety of their employees, their guests, and their property. Being prepared for such emergencies helps management and employees respond calmly and safely in these situations.

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ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

Objectives

Safety of guests, employees & management
Preservation of buildings, facilities & equipment
Hotel reputation & business continuity

Contact the AHLA

Phone: 1.888.436.6112
Email: wehelphotels@ahla.ca

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PLANNING AHEAD

1. Prepare and document emergency response plans for the most likely emergencies at your hotel.
 - a. Use the guide *Emergency response planning: an occupational health & safety tool kit for the hospitality industry* which is available through the Emergency Response Planning for Hotels course in tourismworks.ca.
 - b. NOTE: Your plans must reflect your specific property based on location, building structure, type of operation and staffing levels.
 - c. Types of emergencies to consider:
 - i. Site/location-based emergencies, e.g. proximity to railway line
 - ii. Biological/chemical/medical emergencies
 - iii. Workplace violence
 - iv. Extreme weather/natural disasters
 - d. Assess the risk and probability of each emergency to prioritize for your property. (Hint: if you are located in an area with a high risk of wildfires, this should be a top priority).
 - e. Consider seasonal factors. Your response to different emergencies may be different in the winter than in the summer.

2. Consider the “what-ifs” and your options to respond:
 - a. No power for an extended period of time – back-up generator for front office, kitchen, lighting
 - b. Limited or no water – options to reduce water consumption
 - c. Disrupted cell phone service – alternative communication methods
 - d. Main access roads closed – options to move people and/or supplies in/out of property
 - e. Extreme outdoor temperatures – alternative accommodations
 - f. What other circumstances could impact your property?

3. Maintain an up-to-date [contact list](#):
 - a. Management team
 - b. Emergency contacts
 - c. Insurance company
 - d. Power/water/natural gas

4. Determine your [planning and response teams](#):
 - a. Document the team’s roles and contact information (email, phone)
 - b. Identify a clear chain of command
 - c. Don’t rely on one person to be the only person who knows what to do

5. Prepare a [Crisis Communications Checklist](#) for internal and external communications:
 - a. Ensure communications with staff living off-site, in staff accommodation, as well as those working at the hotel
 - b. Consider alternative methods of communication – cell phone, electronic (apps or emails), in-person, signage, etc.
 - c. Designate a spokesperson for the property

6. Coordinate with local, provincial, and federal emergency response team(s) as appropriate for your location:
 - a. What disaster response plans are in place for your local community?
 - b. Who are your primary contacts?
 - c. What role could your hotel play in their emergency response planning, e.g. providing accommodation for first responders or displaced residents from another community?
 - d. Ensure you are on their communications list for timely notifications and alerts.

7. Plan for evacuation from property and from town:
 - a. Muster point(s)
 - b. Transportation, including staff without personal transportation
 - c. Procedures
 - d. Accountability
 - e. Alternative work site for reservations, etc.
 - f. Shared resources with other hotels in the area

8. Build relationships with your neighbours – hotels and other businesses – to share resources

9. Train your staff:
 - a. Communicate emergency response plans
 - b. Train your staff
 - c. [Conduct drills and simulations](#)
 - d. Update plans as required based on feedback from drills and training
 - e. Communicate with staff and then communicate again

10. Take pictures or short videos of your premises

11. Gather financial records in electronic form and save them offsite. This includes receipts, copies of lease or rental agreements, records of renovations/upgrades, sales records, financial statements, and payroll records.

12. Schedule regular property inspections:
 - a. Training and templates available through Hotel Workplace Inspections course in tourismworks.ca.

NOTE: You must have an account on tourismworks.ca to access the templates in the [ERP Channel](#). There may be a fee for the training courses on tourismworks.ca.

QUESTIONS? Call 1.888.436.6112 or email wehelphotels@ahla.ca

WILDFIRE PREVENTION & PREPARATION

1. Review recommendations on [FireSmart Alberta](#)
2. Review recommendations from your insurance company:
 - a. For example, review the [Wildfire Preparation document](#) from Western Financial Group
3. Reduce the risk of wildfire damage to your property:
 - a. Cut and water grass around property
 - b. Store firewood and propane tanks at least 100 metres away from any buildings
 - c. Thin trees from the buildings
 - d. Enclose the undersides of wood balconies, decks and crawl spaces with flame resistant materials (if applicable)
4. Encourage staff to prepare personally in event of a natural disaster:
 - a. Build a personal emergency kit with supplies for a minimum of 72 hours
<https://www.alberta.ca/build-an-emergency-kit>
 - b. Follow [FireSmart Alberta](#) recommendations to prepare their home

POTENTIAL/IMMINENT THREATS

1. Monitor weather channels and subscribe to provincial alerts:
 - a. [Alberta Emergency Alert](#)
 - b. [Alberta Wildfire](#)
 - c. [Air Quality Health Index](#)
 - d. [Environment Canada Weather Alerts](#)
2. Know the difference between an [Evacuation Alert and Evacuation Order](#)
3. Review and update your property's [Crisis Communications Plan](#)
4. Provide timely communications to employees
5. Contact your local emergency response team to review/verify response plans and role of property in community emergency response
 - a. Advise team of any key dates for events at your property
 - b. Arrange to provide accommodations for first responders
 - c. Donate goods (e.g. food, water, blankets, pillows, etc.) and/or services (e.g. conference room space, paid volunteer time for employees, etc.).
6. Ensure back-up generators, etc. are available/in-place. Clarify what areas of the hotel will continue to have power.
7. Ensure offsite back up of guest and employee data, and financial information for 3–5 years.
8. Advise staff to prepare by stocking up on drinking water, food, medications, fuel for transportation
9. Review cross-training if hotel may operate with limited staff.:
 - a. Ensure clearly defined roles and responsibilities
10. Review and communicate evacuation procedures to staff and guests as appropriate
11. Create a “Go Box” to take with you on the possible evacuation:
 - a. Emergency reports
 - b. All guest registration cards
 - c. Building keys
 - d. Cash floats
 - e. Hotel cell phone
 - f. Team member phone list
12. Print signs for the entrance doors “Property closed due to evacuation. For information call, [hotel number]. No cash on premises.”

If there is an active fire within 30 m (100 ft) to your property, call 911, and let them know you are in the fire zone. A fire crew will be sent to your location.

ONGOING OPERATIONS IN MIDST OF EMERGENCY

1. Monitor weather channels and subscribe to provincial alerts:
 - a. [Alberta Emergency Alert](#)
 - b. [Alberta Wildfire](#)
 - c. [Air Quality Health Index](#)
 - d. [Environment Canada Weather Alerts](#)
2. Communicate with local emergency response team:
 - a. Provide accommodations for first responders
 - b. Donate goods (e.g. food, water, blankets, pillows, etc.) and/or services (e.g. conference room space, paid volunteer time for employees, etc.).
 - c. Provide accommodations for those evacuated from other locations
 - d. Receive and provide timely updates of current situation
3. Consider what-ifs:
 - a. No power, cell phone service or water
 - b. Limited supplies
 - c. Limited transportation routes
4. Support your guests:
 - a. Ensure timely communications, especially alerts for evacuation notices
 - b. Extend your very best rates to evacuees and those affected by wildfires, floods or other disasters
 - c. Remember that Alberta's *Consumer Protection Act* prohibits businesses from inflating prices during an emergency. This legislation allows provincial authorities to seek orders to cease the conduct and potentially impose significant fines for charging prices that are deemed to take unfair advantage of the situation.
 - d. Work with guests who may be without identification due a sudden evacuation.
 - e. Relax 'no pets' policies for evacuees travelling with animals.
 - f. Remember that guests and staff alike may feel the emotional strain of the current situation.
 - g. Stay in touch with your fellow hoteliers to ensure you can help travelers find accommodation in the event you are full.
 - h. Provide [guidelines for water conservation](#) to guests if appropriate:
 - **Reuse Towels:** To minimize water usage and reduce the frequency of laundering, we encourage you to reuse towels during your stay. Simply hang them up if you are willing to use them again.
 - **Take Shorter Showers:** Consider taking shorter showers to conserve water. A brief shower can still be refreshing, and this small change can have a significant impact on water consumption.
 - **Turn Off Faucets When Not in Use:** Remember to turn off the faucet while brushing your teeth or lathering your hands with soap.
 - **Report Leaks Promptly:** If you notice any leaks or plumbing issues in your room, please inform our front desk staff immediately. Timely repairs help prevent unnecessary water usage.

5. Communicate with and support your staff:
 - a. Ensure timely communications, especially alerts for evacuation notices
 - b. Clearly define and communicate roles and responsibilities:
 - i. If limited operations, determine who will be onsite and what their roles and responsibilities will be.
 - ii. Communicate with all staff (onsite and offsite).
 - c. Determine if staff will need onsite accommodations and meals
 - d. Cross-training if operating with limited staff
 - e. Support and resources for mental health

6. Implement staff supports for those not working:
 - a. Ensure your employees have [registered with the Alberta government](#) so they have access to available supports.
 - b. Issue Records of Employment (ROEs) to your employees so that they can access Employment Insurance and other supports as soon as possible.
 - c. Provide Employment Insurance information for your employees so they can make a claim.
 - d. Provide Emergency Financial Assistance information to your employees.

7. Notify the AHLA of your current property status at wehelhotels@ahla.ca or 1.888.436.6112
 - a. Request additional information, resources if necessary, from the AHLA

8. Be prepared to close and evacuate your property

QUESTIONS? Call 1.888.436.6112 or email wehelhotels@ahla.ca

ONGOING OPERATIONS IMPACTED BY SMOKE

Poor air quality may impact your business, even if you are not in the near vicinity of a wildfire. The smoke from a wildfire, or other major fires, may impact your staff and your guests.

1. Monitor weather channels and subscribe to provincial alerts:
 - a. [Alberta Emergency Alert](#)
 - b. [Alberta Wildfire](#)
 - c. [Air Quality Health Index](#)
 - d. [Environment Canada Weather Alerts](#)
2. Review the guidelines from Alberta Occupational Health & Safety for [working in smoky environments](#)
3. Lower the risk of poor air quality in your hotel:
 - a. Close windows and doors
 - b. Clean fresh air intakes and make up air intakes if possible
 - c. Turn on the HVAC and set it to recirculate
 - d. Install the highest quality HEPA filters you can
 - e. Do not use air cleaners that may produce ozone
 - f. Use humidifiers if possible
4. Consider the health of your staff:
 - a. People with breathing difficulties may need to take additional precautions.
 - b. Limit outdoor work
 - c. Provide face masks
5. Consider implications for your guests. Outdoor activities, particularly sporting events, may need to be rescheduled or permanently cancelled.
 - a. Be flexible. You may need to relax your cancellation policy.
6. Remember that guests and staff alike may feel the emotional strain of the current situation.
7. For more information visit <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/Pages/wildfire-smoke-health.aspx>

QUESTIONS? Call 1.888.436.6112 or email wehelphotels@ahla.ca

EVACUATION & CLOSURE OF PROPERTY

1. Monitor weather channels and subscribe to provincial alerts:
 - a. [Alberta Emergency Alert](#)
 - b. [Alberta Wildfire](#)
 - c. [Air Quality Health Index](#)
 - d. [Environment Canada Weather Alerts](#)
2. Activate Crisis Communications Plan and launch evacuation procedures
3. Contact the local incident command center, emergency response team
4. Notify head office or regional office, insurance, utilities, security company, etc.
5. Inform guests:
 - a. Provide evacuation centre information
 - b. Provide route out of town
 - c. Call the RCMP/city police for assistance with resistant guests
6. Follow [Property Closure Checklist](#)
7. Notify staff:
 - a. Follow evacuation and closure procedures
 - b. Ensure timely communications with staff on-site and off-site
8. Implement staff supports:
 - a. Provide transportation for staff to evacuation centres.
 - b. Ensure your employees have [registered with the Alberta government](#) so they have access to available supports.
 - c. Issue [Records of Employment \(ROEs\)](#) to your employees so that they can access Employment Insurance and other supports as soon as possible.
 - d. Provide [Employment Insurance information](#) for your employees so they can make a claim.
 - e. Provide [Emergency Financial Assistance](#) information to your employees.
 - f. Share mental health resources.
9. Notify the AHLA that your property has been closed and who to contact. Call 1.888.436.6112 or email wehelhotels@ahla.ca.
10. Ensure security of property:
 - a. Regular (at least 3 per day) property inspections if permitted
 - b. Contract security; cost share with other properties if applicable

QUESTIONS? Call 1.888.436.6112 or email wehelhotels@ahla.ca

RE-ENTRY & RE-OPENING OF PROPERTY

1. Monitor weather channels and subscribe to provincial alerts as weather conditions may change:
 - a. [Alberta Emergency Alert](#)
 - b. [Alberta Wildfire](#)
 - c. [Air Quality Health Index](#)
 - d. [Environment Canada Weather Alerts](#)
2. Notify head office, insurance, utilities, security company, and local emergency response teams:
 - a. Turn on water, power and natural gas, internet, etc.
3. Ensure timely communications with staff:
 - a. Contact team members with re-entry plans and work schedule
 - b. Determine if staff will need accommodation and meals on-site
 - c. Provide mental health resources
4. Ensure timely communications with guests:
 - a. Cautions and signage if any areas of the property are closed
 - b. Contact guests with upcoming reservations
5. Follow the guidelines in the [AHLA Re-Entry Resource](#):
 - a. Return items from the “Go Box” to their regular place (e.g. keys, floats, reg cards, etc.)
 - b. Keep doors locked until 24-hour desk service has resumed
6. Conduct a hazard assessment to determine any new hazards at your property:
 - a. Identify and assess any new biological or chemical hazards
 - b. Identify controls and ensure staff wear the appropriate PPE
 - c. Review the OHS guidelines for:
 - i. [Wildfire smoke](#)
 - ii. [Working in smoky environments](#)
 - iii. [Cleaning up burned structures](#)
 - iv. [Cleaning up after flooding](#)
7. Take photos and/or videos of any damaged furniture, fixtures, including smoke contamination and notify your insurance company
8. Follow the [Re-Open Checklist](#)
 - a. Consider having the heating, ventilating and air conditioning units professionally cleaned to remove soot, ash, and smoke residue
9. Maintain ongoing communications with local emergency response organization, if appropriate
10. Notify the AHLA your property has been re-opened wehelhotels@ahla.ca or 1.888.436.6112

QUESTIONS? Call 1.888.436.6112 or email wehelhotels@ahla.ca

REPORTING & DEBRIEF

1. Gather response team
 - a. Discuss what worked? What didn't?
2. Document the incident thoroughly, recording amount of damage
 - a. Work with your insurance adjustor, investigator
 - b. Take photos/videos of damage
 - c. Use the templates provided in the [Incident Reporting & Investigation course](#) in tourismworks.ca
3. Update your emergency response plan, communications plan and any other documentation:
 - a. Review on a regular basis to ensure information is current
4. Provide medical and financial support to affected employees:
 - a. File WCB injury reports if any employees sustained injuries during the incident
5. Provide mental health resources and supports to affected employees
6. Share your learnings with the AHLA by emailing wehelhotels@ahla.ca. Let us know what worked, what didn't and what additional resources the AHLA could provide.

QUESTIONS? Call 1.888.436.6112 or email wehelhotels@ahla.ca

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR OTHERS

1. Communicate with emergency response organization(s) coordinating the evacuation orders in or to your area:
 - a. Local municipal emergency response team
 - b. Provincial emergency response team
 - c. Others such as: Red Cross, Calgary Emergency Management Association, Edmonton Incident Response Command
2. Subscribe to provincial alerts and monitor weather channels:
 - a. [Alberta Emergency Alert](#)
 - b. [Alberta Wildfire](#)
 - c. [Air Quality Health Index](#)
 - d. [Environment Canada Weather Alerts](#)
3. Follow the AHLA's Group Evacuee Checklist template if you are working with a group of displaced/evacuated individuals.
4. Notify the AHLA that your property is/will be accommodating displaced/evacuated individuals by emailing wehelphotels@ahla.ca or phoning 1.888.436.6112.
5. Communicate with managers and staff:
 - a. Emphasis should be on cultural awareness and consideration of emotional strain.
 - b. Provide mental health supports and resources to staff.
 - c. Post the AHLA's ["Who to Call" poster](#).
 - d. Adjust staff scheduling as necessary.
6. Be flexible:
 - a. Relax 'no pets' policies for evacuees travelling with animals. Contact local vet clinics or animal shelters for alternative placements for pets.
 - i. Ensure pet agreement is in place and proper number of pets is documented to ensure guestroom entry for housekeeping.
 - b. Adjust your cancellation and early departure policies if possible.
7. Offer your best rates:
 - a. Remember that Alberta's *Consumer Protection Act* prohibits businesses from inflating prices during an emergency. This legislation allows provincial authorities to seek orders to cease the conduct and potentially impose significant fines for charging prices that are deemed to take unfair advantage of the situation.
 - b. Provide the government rate or the rate approved by your city/municipality.
 - c. Work with guests who may be without identification due a sudden evacuation.
 - d. Maintain accurate records of evacuees, including names, contact information and special needs or accommodation.

8. Be empathetic. Remember that guests may feel the emotional strain of the current situation:
 - a. Post updated information to evacuees regarding the situation, available resources and any special instructions.
 - b. Provide emotional support and reassurance while maintaining professionalism.

9. Provide a list of services in the area:
 - a. Community evacuation centre location
 - b. Salvation Army or other similar sources of clothing, etc.
 - c. Food bank
 - d. Service Canada office
 - e. Medical clinics
 - f. Animal shelters and veterinary clinics
 - g. Taxi/driving services
 - h. Food & beverage outlets, onsite and nearby

10. Encourage evacuees to register online with MyAlberta [Emergency Registration System](#) (MAERS).

11. Stay in touch with your fellow hoteliers to help travelers/evacuees find accommodation in the event you are full.

QUESTIONS? Call 1.888.436.6112 or email wehelphotels@ahla.ca

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. TourismWorks Training Platform <http://tourismworks.ca>
2. Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association <http://ahla.ca>
3. Insurance Bureau of Canada <http://www.ibc.ca/ab/disaster/wildfires/>
4. Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo <https://www.rmwb.ca/en/fire-and-emergency-services/fire-prevention-and-safety.aspx>
5. FireSmart <https://www.alberta.ca/firesmart.aspx>
6. Government of Alberta <https://www.alberta.ca/government-emergency-plans>
7. Government of Alberta 211 <https://ab.211.ca/>
8. Alberta Health Services Wildfire <http://www.ahs.ca/wildfire>
9. Alberta Health Services Mental Health Help Line 24/7 at 1-877-303-2642
10. Business Development Bank of Canada <https://www.bdc.ca/en/articles-tools>
11. Business Development Bank of Canada <https://www.bdc.ca/en/articles-tools/business-strategy-planning/manage-business/business-continuity-8-steps-building-plan>
12. Incident Command System Canada <https://www.icscanada.ca/>

DISCLAIMER

*This information is provided as a guideline only.
Users should customize this resource based their property's operations and the nature of the situation.*

*The Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) disclaims any liability with respect to
the use of the information or reliance thereon contained in this document.*