

PreparedBC: Guide for Tourism Operators

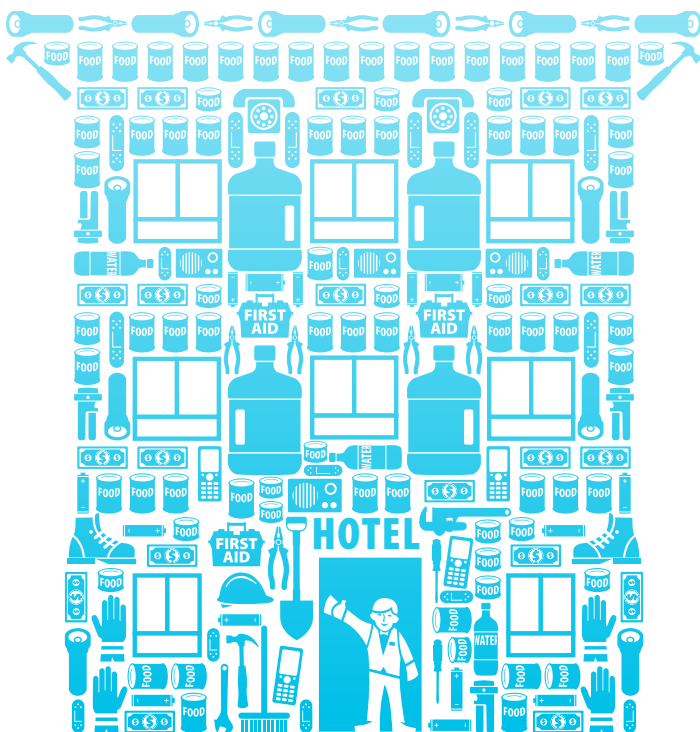


GUIDE FOR TOURISM OPERATORS

British Columbia is a world-class tourism destination with rolling ranch lands, snow-crested mountains and a sweeping coastline. Yet with that natural splendour comes some potential risk to visitors, who may not be familiar with B.C.'s hazards, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and wildfires.

During a disaster, phone, gas, electrical and water services may be disrupted. Roads could be blocked, stores could be closed and gas stations out of service. Food and water could be limited and supplies cut off. It may be weeks before travel routes, utilities and essential services are restored. Are you and your staff prepared to help your guests cope?

Completing the steps in this guide will help you to answer “yes”, and ensure your tourism operation will respond effectively, recover quickly and keep your guests safe.



GUIDE FOR TOURISM OPERATORS

Step 1 *Know the risks*

Tourists are usually not familiar with the local area and its potential hazards. That means tourism operators are a vital source of information and direction during emergencies. Understanding the risks for your region will ensure your disaster planning is effective.

Top 10 risks in B.C.

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| ■ Earthquakes | ■ Avalanches |
| ■ Tsunamis | ■ Severe Weather |
| ■ Floods | ■ Power Outages |
| ■ Wildfire | ■ Hazardous Material Spills |
| ■ Landslides | ■ Disease Outbreaks |

TIP: For additional information about potential hazards, visit www.gov.bc.ca/PreparedBC for an interactive map of risks by regional district. It's also a good idea to contact your local authority to ensure all your bases are covered.



Step 2 *Make a plan*

Thinking ahead means you will be able to respond quickly and effectively during an emergency. The following tips will help get you started. For more comprehensive information, refer to the *PreparedBC: Emergency Plan for Tourism Operators* at www.gov.bc.ca/PreparedBC.

What are your operation's core needs?

In other words, what procedures, systems, materials and equipment are absolutely necessary for ongoing operation? Which ones can tolerate being disrupted? Once you have prioritized your needs, plan for how you'll manage.

TIP: Form an emergency planning team that ideally has representation from across your organization. This will likely include people with technical skills, as well as managers and executives depending on the size of your business. In some cases it may make the most sense for the business owner to take on this function.



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Create key contact lists:

Develop contact lists of critical and emergency numbers and maintain easily accessible hard copies. It is important to update your lists regularly. The list may include, but is not limited to:

- ☒ Local authorities (regional districts, city officials, councillors, MLAs)
- ☒ City personnel (e.g. emergency program coordinator)
- ☒ Utility companies (Fortis, BC Hydro)
- ☒ Critical suppliers and contractors (partner businesses you rely on)
- ☒ Media contacts (radio/TV stations, newspapers)
- ☒ Emergency Management BC, RCMP, fire department (e.g. alternative to 911)
- ☒ Staff and spouses/key family members



Pick a meeting place:

Pick a primary and secondary meeting place where staff and guests should go during an emergency. You may be in separate locations throughout the property when disaster strikes, so it is important to map out your routes and practice getting there. Other factors to consider are:

- Find out what local authorities recommend for different emergency situations (e.g. moving to higher ground during a tsunami).
- Can staff and guests be moved safely and efficiently to another designated location if an evacuation order is issued? If so, by what method (e.g. vehicle, by foot)?
- Have you designated shelter-in-place rooms in the event of a hazardous material spill?

TIP: Share information on your property's emergency meeting places using a variety of channels and mediums to ensure guests are aware.



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Plan for people with additional needs:

Ensure staff know how to help guests with special needs, including seniors, children and people with disabilities. Ensure you communicate where the exits are located, including ramps and wheelchair accessible areas.

Know how you will get and share information:

Contact your local government's emergency management program to find out how it will share alerts and instructions during an emergency. The most important thing is to seek credible sources so you can make informed decisions during a disaster.

It is also critical that you plan for how you will communicate information and directions to staff and guests so your response is calm and orderly.

TIP: During an emergency, use data-based services such as text messaging, social media or email to gather and communicate information. Data-based services are less likely to experience major interruptions when phone lines are down.

Connect with us

Twitter: 

- @EmergencyInfoBC for alerts
- @PreparedBC for preparedness information
- @BCGovFireInfo for wildfire updates
- @DriveBC for road conditions

Facebook: 

- BC Wildfire Service

Web:

- www.EmergencyInfoBC.gov.bc.ca for alerts
- www.gov.bc.ca/PreparedBC for preparedness tips



Train your staff:

Your staff and co-workers are critical to an organized response during a disaster. Make sure they're trained in your operation's emergency response procedures. It is also critical they are personally prepared and have a household emergency plan to keep their own families safe. Employees will be more resilient knowing how to protect themselves at home and work.

TIP: Have ongoing conversations about preparedness with staff. Make preparedness the subject of newsletters, email correspondence or other internal communications. Consider hosting preparedness evenings and invite your local expert to give a presentation.

Step 3 ***Prepare your property***

Store emergency water:

Water is the most important item to store. You will need at least four litres (one gallon) of water per person per day.

TIP: Consider sources for back up water, keeping in mind the water will need to be purified. Example: catchment tanks.

Stock emergency supplies:

Stock enough food, water and medical supplies for a minimum of three days. A week to two weeks is better. Make sure your supplies are in easy-to-access locations and that all staff know where to find them.

TIP: Encourage staff to have portable emergency kits, customized to meet personal needs, such as essential medications.

GUIDE FOR TOURISM OPERATORS

Emergency supplies



First Aid kit and medications



Whistle to signal for help



Battery-powered or hand crank radio



Cell phone with chargers, inverter or solar charger



Battery-powered or hand crank flashlight with extra batteries



Local maps and some cash in small bills



At least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. Manual can opener for cans



Water, four litres per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation



Dust mask to help filter contaminated air



Garbage bags, moist towelettes and plastic ties for personal sanitation



Seasonal clothing and footwear



Hotel/Property Area map



Emergency Contact List

Protect critical paperwork:

Keep copies of important records such as site maps, building plans, insurance policies, employee contact information, bank records, contact lists and computer backups in a waterproof and fireproof portable container. You can also utilize cloud storage or USB sticks.

TIP: Perform regular computer back-ups to ensure your critical information is always saved and current.



Know how to turn off utilities:

Know where your electrical panel, gas and water shut-off valves are located and how to turn them off.

IMPORTANT:

If you suspect a gas leak, ensure staff know how to turn off the valves.

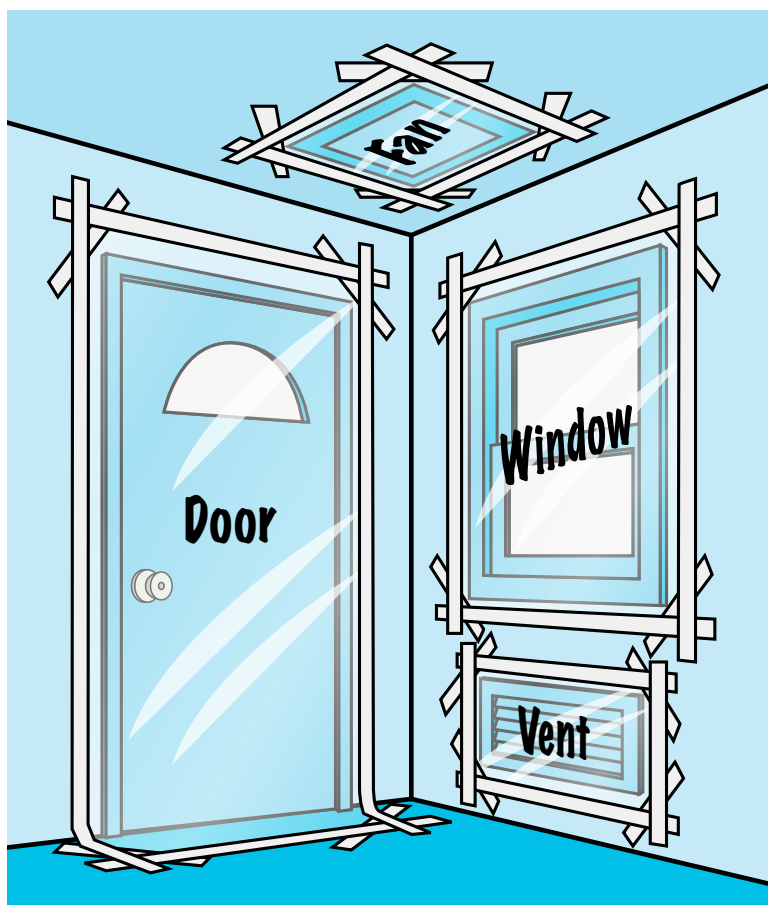
NOTE:

Do not try to turn gas back on. Only a registered contractor can do that safely.

GUIDE FOR TOURISM OPERATORS

Sheltering-in-place:

For some emergencies, such as hazardous material spills, it may be safest to stay inside your facility. This is called sheltering-in-place. Be ready for this possibility by pre-identifying shelter-in-place rooms and making sure they have plastic sheeting and duct tape for sealing cracks around windows and doors.



Secure your space:

If your operation is located in an earthquake zone, secure pictures, furniture and other items that can topple over or be displaced by shaking. For flood prone areas, keep important documents and equipment off the floor so they don't get wet.

TIP: Free-standing furniture can be secured using L brackets, corner brackets or aluminum moulding. Keep framed pictures, mirrors and wall shelving away from beds, couches and chairs.

Step 4 Practice your plan

Review and practice your plan with your entire team at least twice annually to ensure everyone is familiar with processes, procedures, available resources, evacuation routes and other relevant details. You may have additional considerations based on the size and location of your operation, such as: Are there enough staff to assist with the evacuation of all guests and customers? Is additional help from police, fire or other emergency personnel required?

TIP: Focus on a particular procedure each time you practice and make note of where training and procedures can be improved. Consider scheduling your practices around high-profile events, such as the Great British Columbia ShakeOut (October) or Emergency Preparedness Week (May).

GUIDE FOR TOURISM OPERATORS

Emergency Planning Checklist

Action	Complete	Incomplete	Partially Completed	Improvements
<i>Identify Local Hazards</i>				
<i>Create An Emergency Plan</i>				
Assessment of core operations				
Contact lists				
Meeting place & evacuation plan				
Considerations for people with disabilities or mobility issues				
Communications plan				
Emergency alert sources				
Staff emergency training				
<i>Prepare Your Property</i>				
Water storage				
Provisions & emergency supplies				
Secure critical paperwork				
Know how to turn off utilities				
Secure your space				
Sheltering-in-place				
<i>Practice Your Plan</i>				

Additional resources:

If your operation is located in an earthquake zone, practice your earthquake plan during the annual Great British Columbia Shake Out every October. The [*Shake Out BC website*](#) has resources specific to the tourism industry, including a Tourism Industry [*Participant Guide*](#), printable [*door hangers*](#), printable [*tent cards*](#) and tips for how to include a [*tsunami drill*](#).



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Notes:

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This resource was developed in partnership with PreparedBC and the Tourism Industry Association of BC, along with various tourism industry partners, including the BC Hotel Association, Tourism Tofino, Destination British Columbia and the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association.

