



When Disaster Strikes, Will You Be Prepared?

What to do to be ready for unexpected emergencies By Donald Dillon

Summer weather in Niagara has brought unexpected fury. High heat and humidity, torrential rain, winds and even tornado sightings. We see disasters on the daily news, yet we might conclude optimistically they could never happen in our neighbourhood. "That would never happen to me". Yet according to a Government of Canada Fact Sheet¹, 44% of St. Catharines-Niagara residents has faced a major emergency or disaster either in Niagara or in a community previously lived in. Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ (73%) reported severe disruptions to their daily activities as a result.

Readers of the Foghorn will recall the January 2023 explosion at the Ssonix Products building on Keefer Road in Port Weller East. Three weeks later, an earthquake would rock New York state and southeastern Ontario, including our neighbourhood. My wife and I were awoken early morning in both instances by the house shaking. It was frightening and disorienting. These events nudged my attention towards emergency preparation.

Following this article are emergency contacts in Niagara you will want to keep on speed dial, a number of resources for First Aid and emergency preparedness, and a list of essential items for your First Aid and emergency response kits. Please share this article with your friends and family members, so they can be prepared too.



One of the best ways to prepare for emergencies is to form bonds in your community. Get to know your neighbours! According to the previously cited Government of Canada Fact Sheet, "high levels of sense of belonging, self-efficacy and neighbourhood trust – as well as civic engagement – were often associated with a higher level of emergency preparedness."¹

In her book *The Unthinkable: Who Survives When Disaster Strikes, and Why* (2024), author Amanda Ripley confirms, "In most major disasters, the people who will save you will not be wearing badges. They will be your neighbours, (family members) and your co-workers." Consider getting together with neighbours and family to plan escape routes and emergency responses. You might role-play emotionally-charged emergency situations, so that First Aid and emergency response best-practices become automatic for you. Disasters are increasing in frequency and intensity – 2024 being one of the worst years on record – and hit the collective pocketbook hard. "From December 2019 to December 2025, insurance premiums for homeowners' home and mortgage insurance increased 45.0% and passenger vehicle insurance premiums increased 23.9%, both outpacing the all-items Consumer Price Index, up 21.0% over the same period."¹

There are a number of organizations that can help you prepare for emergencies. The City of St. Catharines offers a [Home Emergency Preparedness Guide](#). Both [St. John Ambulance](#) and the [Canadian Red Cross](#) offer First Aid and CPR (Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation) workshops. The Government of Canada offers [emergency planning](#) resources. You might consider volunteering with the [Ontario Corps](#) to support government emergency responses, or take free virtual courses with [DisasterReady.org](#). *Continued on next page*



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Disaster readiness story continued.....

There is some good news – referring to the Fact Sheet again, the proportion of St. Catharines-Niagara residents with an emergency exit plan (66%) or an alternative water source (52%) outscored the Canadian average (60% and 43%, respectively). Given that Niagara residents seem more likely to be prepared, there is momentum to bring that level of preparedness even higher.

Consider initiating a community emergency response team in your neighbourhood. Get to know your neighbours. Reduce the risk of fire and flooding to your home. Compile First Aid and emergency response kits for both home and automobile. Store extra water and food. Gather friends and family and role-play emergency responses, so your training and reflexes are solid. Your best response to disaster, is to prepare for it.

Let's carefully consider the words from the Greek poet, Archilochus, "We do not rise to the level of our expectations. we fall to the level of our training."

Niagara Emergency contacts:

Niagara Regional Police 905 688 4111

Niagara Health System (St. Catharines) 905 378 4647

Fire & Rescue #6 (465 Scott Street) 905 646 9697

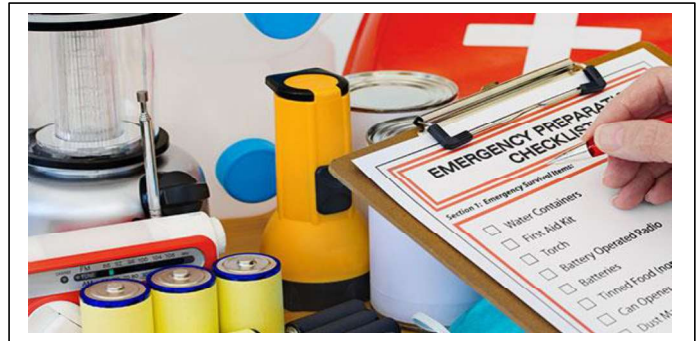
Alectra power outage 1 833 253 2872

Enbridge gas leak 1 866 763 5427

Ontario Poison Centre 1 800 268 9017

Niagara Sexual Assault Centre 905 682 4584

Kids Help Phone 1 800 668 6868 or text 686868



[Emergency Preparedness](https://www.stcatharines.ca/fire-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness/emergency-preparedness-guide/?_gl=1*vucs3z*_ga*MTI1NjI2MTA0Ni4xNzgyNjc4MjAw*_ga_REK5JDJ8LR*cze3ODI2NzgXOTkjbzEkZzAkDDE3ODI2NzgXOTkkaJYwJGwwJGgw*_ga_KHMNVPMFQG*cze3ODI2NzgXOTkjbzEkZzAkDDE3ODI2NzgXOTkkaJYwJGwwJGgw) (Citizens First, Saint Catharines) https://www.stcatharines.ca/fire-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness/emergency-preparedness-guide/?_gl=1*vucs3z*_ga*MTI1NjI2MTA0Ni4xNzgyNjc4MjAw*_ga_REK5JDJ8LR*cze3ODI2NzgXOTkjbzEkZzAkDDE3ODI2NzgXOTkkaJYwJGwwJGgw*_ga_KHMNVPMFQG*cze3ODI2NzgXOTkjbzEkZzAkDDE3ODI2NzgXOTkkaJYwJGwwJGgw

[St. John Ambulance First Aid training](https://www.sja.ca/en/first-aid-training) <https://www.sja.ca/en/first-aid-training>

[Canadian Red Cross First Aid/CPR training](https://www.redcross.ca/training-and-certification/course-descriptions/first-aid-at-home-courses/standard-first-aid-cpr)

<https://www.redcross.ca/training-and-certification/course-descriptions/first-aid-at-home-courses/standard-first-aid-cpr>

[Canadian Red Cross 1st Aid Guide](https://www.redcross.ca/crc/documents/2018-First-Aid-Pocket-Guide_1.pdf) https://www.redcross.ca/crc/documents/2018-First-Aid-Pocket-Guide_1.pdf

[IFRC First Aid phone app](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cube.gdpc.fa&pcampaignid=web_share) https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cube.gdpc.fa&pcampaignid=web_share

[Home Emergency Preparedness \(Saint Catharines\)](https://stcatharines-ca.govstack.com/media/drxfkvp4/homeemergencypreparedness_2023.pdf) stcatharines-ca.govstack.com/media/drxfkvp4/homeemergencypreparedness_2023.pdf

[Fire Safety at Home](https://www.ontario.ca/page/fire-safety-home) (Government of Ontario) <https://www.ontario.ca/page/fire-safety-home>

[Get Prepared \(Government of Canada\)](https://www.getprepared.gc.ca/index-en.aspx) <https://www.getprepared.gc.ca/index-en.aspx>

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FIRST AID KIT BEST PRACTICES:

Are you prepared for an emergency at work, on the road, or at home? Would you be able to competently respond to someone suffering a stumble, resulting in a sprain, open wound, or fracture? Symptoms of a heart attack? Opioid overdose? Head trauma? Uncontrolled bleeding? Burn or bite?

Store your 1st Aid kits in a dry place; replace used/outdated contents regularly. Contents:

- Direct telephone numbers: emergency medical, fire & rescue, police, municipal, local poison control, personal physician/RNP
- Sterile gauze dressings (non-woven), all sizes
- Antiseptic wipes, antibiotic cream/gel
- Soap mixture*; large needle-less syringe (to rinse wound)
- Tweezers, scissors, cotton-tip applicators
- Adhesive tape; adhesive bandages all sizes;
- Roller and triangular bandages to hold dressings in place / make arm sling; eye patches
- Splints (stabilize) and tourniquets (uncontrolled bleeding)
- Emergency blanket; Instant ice packs
- PPE - disposable no-latex gloves; N95 masks, pocket mask (for CPR) and face shield
- Thermometer; Pencil and pad
- First aid manual
- Acetylsalicylic Acid (ASA/Aspirin) 160-325 mg – acute heart attack
- Benadryl – anaphylaxis/allergic reaction
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) – pain control
- NSAID (Ibuprofen) – inflammation control
- Home & office phone numbers for family members, friends and neighbours who can help

* Soap and water best application to clean wound. Caution with Isopropyl Alcohol (best for sterilizing 1st Aid equipment) and Hydrogen Peroxide (foams, mild anti-septic) which can damage tissue.

Emergency / Disaster Response Kit

Be ready for an emergency – floods, fires, earthquakes, tornadoes. Store supplies in a backpack or duffle bag in case of evacuation. Prepare:

- First aid kit & manual
- Prescription medications (monitor expiry)
- Phone numbers – emergency medical, fire & rescue, police, municipality
- Set designated meeting place, and emergency route out of neighbourhood
- Four litres water per person, per day (sealed, unbreakable containers; replace/six months)
- Packaged or canned food non-perishable (replace annually); can opener
- Walking shoes, rain gear, change of clothing
- Blankets / sleeping bags and tent
- Toilet paper; personal toiletries
- Plastic bags of various sizes
- Cash \$\$, extra car keys, eyeglasses (spare)
- Radio & flashlight (batt-power) + extra batteries
- Tool kit; matches and candles
- Whistle (draw attention in emergency)
- Shovel, axe, knife, rope
- Document outlining family physician, medical conditions and devices (eg: pacemakers)
- Personal identification + photocopies
- Required items - infants, elderly, disabled & pets
- Phone/contact information for family & friends