

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This plan is a public review draft from The Second Emergency, an independent project. It is not an official government document. It has not been reviewed, approved or endorsed by Emergency Management Ontario, any municipality, or any emergency management authority or professional body.

It is general information to help households think ahead. It is not professional, legal, medical or financial advice. It does not replace the instructions of emergency services, public health, your municipality, your doctor or pharmacist, or your bank.

In an emergency, call 911 first. Always follow the instructions of officials.

Why it is published now. The services people rely on can fail without warning. We are not aware of official household guidance written for this kind of failure, so this draft is shared openly: so households can prepare, and so the people responsible can review, correct, adopt or replace it.

Use it at your own discretion. Check anything that affects your health, safety or money with the right professional or official source. The Second Emergency makes no guarantee that this plan is complete or suits every household, and accepts no responsibility for decisions made using it.

Versions in languages other than English are machine translations being checked. If a translation differs from the English, the English version applies.

When the Things You Count On Stop Working

A household emergency plan for outages and wrong answers

Review status: Public review draft, Version 1, 29 September 2026. Emergency Management Ontario and other emergency management authorities have not reviewed or endorsed it.

THE SECOND EMERGENCY

The Plan

Everything your household needs, in one place.
Work through it section by section.

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- A** Right now: if this happens today
 - B** Before: prepare now, in twelve parts
 - C** After: when service comes back
 - D** Your household sheets

Right now

If this happens today

Start here. One step at a time.

- 1** Is anyone in danger right now? Call 911 or get emergency help.
- 2** What has actually stopped, or given you an answer you don't trust? Write it down.
- 3** Check an official source through something that still works: a radio, a different phone, your city's website.
- 4** Contact your household and anyone who depends on you.
- 5** Use the backup you prepared. Keep a note of payments, instructions and appointments you will need to check later.

A declined card, a dropped call and a strange text may be separate problems. Deal with each one on its own.

This plan works alongside official help, never instead of it

911

For emergencies happening now: a life at risk, a fire, a crime in progress. Please don't call 911 to ask what is going on.

Can't reach 911?

Try another phone, a landline or a neighbour's phone, or ask someone nearby to call. Follow instructions from local emergency services about where to go for help.

311

Where your city has it, for city services and information.

Local plan

Every Ontario municipality is required to have an emergency plan. Search your city or town's name with "emergency plan."

Councillor

Ask your municipal councillor how your community would manage a long outage.

Before: prepare now, in twelve parts

1 Know what your household depends on

Sit down together and list the things you count on every day. Most people have never seen this written down, and the list alone is an eye-opener.

- ☐ Money: paying for things, bills that come out automatically, pay and benefit deposits
- ☐ Talking to family: phones, texts, video calls
- ☐ Health: prescriptions, appointments, equipment that needs power
- ☐ Water and food: safe tap water, food that needs a fridge or freezer
- ☐ Home: heat, cooling, lights, locks, elevators, entry fobs
- ☐ Getting around: transit cards, gas pumps, ride apps
- ☐ Work and income: who in the house loses pay if things stop
- ☐ News: where you normally find out what is happening

2 Money

- ☐ If you can, keep some cash at home, in small bills
- ☐ Write down which bills are paid automatically, so you know what may bounce
- ☐ Write your bank's phone number on paper, not only in your phone
- ☐ If you can, keep a card from a second bank or credit union
- ☐ If your household depends on a payment arriving on time, such as pay, ODSP, CPP or another benefit, write down who to call if it doesn't arrive

Not every household has spare money. Knowing who to call is part of the plan too.

3 Reaching your people

- ☐ Keep a paper list of phone numbers. Few of us know them by heart anymore
- ☐ Choose a meeting place everyone can reach, including anyone who uses a wheelchair or walker, plus a backup in case the first one is closed
- ☐ Agree where to leave a message if plans change
- ☐ Agree who picks up the children from school or daycare if you can't reach each other, and make sure the school has that name
- ☐ Agree on a family code word

If someone calls or texts in a panic asking for money, stop. Hang up and call them back on a number you already know.

Voices and messages can now be faked convincingly. The code word is a useful extra check. Calling back on a number you trust is the real test.

4 Health and personal needs

- ☐ Write down each person's medications, doses, pharmacy and doctor, and keep it on the private sheet
- ☐ Ask your pharmacist whether you can keep a small supply on hand
- ☐ If a medicine must stay cold, ask your pharmacist how long it can safely go without a fridge
- ☐ If someone relies on equipment that needs power or charging, make an individual backup plan with their care provider
- ☐ Think about mobility, hearing, vision and memory needs in your household, and any service animal
- ☐ Keep health cards where you can reach them without a screen

Ontario publishes an emergency preparedness guide for people with disabilities. It is a good companion to this part.

5 Mental health and staying steady

During the pandemic, many people found the isolation, worry and disruption hard on their mental health. A long outage can bring some of the same strain. Plan for it the way you plan for water.

- ☐ Know who you would talk to when things feel heavy: a friend, a relative, a faith leader, a counsellor
- ☐ Write a support line on your everyday sheet. In Canada, you can call or text 988 at any time for suicide crisis support. Young people can reach Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 or by texting 686868
- ☐ For help finding community and social services in Ontario, call 211
- ☐ If someone in your home lives with a mental health condition, plan for their medication and routine the same way you would for any other health need
- ☐ Keep some comfort that doesn't need a screen: books, cards, a radio, a daily walk
- ☐ Watch for children and older relatives who go quiet, and check in with them
- ☐ Check the news at set times from official sources, rather than all day

Feeling overwhelmed in an emergency is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. Reaching out early is part of the plan.

6 Home and basic needs

- ☐ How would you find out whether your tap water is safe to drink? Keep some stored drinking water
- ☐ Decide what you would eat first if the fridge stopped working
- ☐ Think about heat in winter, cooling in summer, light at night and a way to charge phones
- ☐ Learn how to open a smart lock without the app, release a garage door by hand and work the thermostat manually
- ☐ Know where the physical keys are, and who else has a set
- ☐ In an apartment or condo, ask building management what happens to elevators and entry fobs, and where notices will be posted

7 Pets and service animals

Many households welcomed a pet during the pandemic. Pets count on you completely, so give them a plan of their own.

- ☐ Keep at least a week of food, fresh water and any medication for each animal
- ☐ Keep a carrier or leash near the door, with a copy of vaccination records
- ☐ Ask ahead which friends, family, hotels or shelters would take your pet if you have to leave, because not every place accepts animals
- ☐ Keep a photo of each pet on paper as well as on your phone, in case you are separated
- ☐ If someone uses a service animal, plan its food, water and care as part of that person's needs
- ☐ Write your pets and your veterinarian on the everyday sheet

8 Information you can trust

Decide now where your household will get official news, so you are not deciding during a rush of rumours.

- ☐ Alert Ready, Canada's emergency alert system, reaches phones, television and radio
- ☐ Your city's official website and social media accounts
- ☐ A battery or crank radio, and the local station you would tune to
- ☐ Before you act on anything or share it, check it against one of these

Treat any message asking for money, a password or a verification code as suspicious. Don't use the link or number in the message. Check through an official website or a number you already know.

9 Neighbours

Whether you live in a high-rise, a townhouse row or a street of houses, part of the plan is the people around you.

- ☐ Know who nearby lives alone, is older, cares for someone, or relies on medical equipment
- ☐ Agree on one simple check: a knock on the door, a note under it
- ☐ Share this plan with them. It works better when a whole floor or street has one

10 The second emergency

The first emergency is the failure itself. The second is everything that follows: schools closed, businesses shut, children home, tempers short, rumours moving faster than facts. We learned during the pandemic that the fallout can last longer than the event.

- ☐ Keep a daily routine, especially for children
- ☐ Buy what you need, not what you fear. Empty shelves hurt the people who shop after you
- ☐ Check on someone every day, even briefly
- ☐ Verify before you forward anything

11 Your two household sheets

Some information is safe for anyone in the house to see. Some is not. Keep two sheets: an everyday sheet the household can see, and a private sheet kept somewhere secure. Both templates are below, and both can be filled in by hand.

12 Practise once

Choose one evening and put the phones in a drawer. Keep on any device someone needs for health or safety. Then try to answer these questions as a household:

- ☐ Could we buy groceries?
- ☐ Could we reach our elder family members?
- ☐ Could we find out what is happening in the city?
- ☐ Could everyone get into the house?

This is a starting exercise. Whatever you could not do shows you what to fix. It is also a surprisingly pleasant evening.

After

When service comes back

The emergency doesn't end the moment the screen lights up. In the days after, take an hour to check:

- ☐ Payments: did anything go through twice, or not at all?
- ☐ Pay and benefit deposits: did they arrive?
- ☐ Prescriptions and appointments: did you miss any? Rebook them
- ☐ Instructions you acted on: were they real? Check anything you did because of a message
- ☐ Errors: tell your bank, pharmacy, landlord or other provider what went wrong, in writing if you can
- ☐ Your plan: what worked and what didn't? Update your sheets

Your household sheets

Everyday sheet

Safe to keep where the household can see it, such as on the fridge or inside a cupboard door.

Household members

Emergency contacts

Meeting place

Backup meeting place

Where to leave a message

Building management or landlord

Pharmacy

Doctor or clinic

Radio station

Neighbour to check on

Pets and veterinarian

Someone to talk to, and a support line

Additional notes

Private sheet

Keep this one somewhere secure, not on display and not in the car. Make sure the adults who need it know where it is.

Family code word

Medications and doses

Health equipment and backup plan

Where spare cash is kept

Spare keys are with

Bank phone number

Who has a copy of this sheet

Additional notes

**End of the plan. The Plan is part of The Second Emergency,
TheSecondEmergency.com**

ABOUT THIS PLAN

This plan is general information for households. It is not professional advice, and in an emergency the instructions of emergency officials come first. It adds to the Government of Canada's 72-hour kit guidance and does not replace it. In emergency planning, extra pages like these are called annexes: each one builds on the core plan for a particular situation. This is a working paper, and every change will be recorded in the site updates log. It is free to use, copy, adapt and share, with attribution to TheSecondEmergency.com.