

Emergency Preparedness: Evacuations

As the Town of High River continues to update and expand its Municipal Emergency Management Program, there is important information relating to evacuations that you should know.

POLICIES

When deciding to issue an evacuation alert or order, emergency officials have several policies that they follow:

- Saving lives is the most important factor in determining the need to evacuate.
- An evacuation is considered as a last resort.
- During an evacuation, your home and/or business will not be forcibly entered, except as a last resort in order to protect life safety.
- A State of Local Emergency is required for any mandatory evacuation under the Emergency Management Act.
- Certain agencies, such as the High River Fire Department and Alberta Health Services, can issue evacuation orders outside of a State of Local Emergency. All evacuations within the Town of High River will be coordinated with the Town.

When you hear the outdoor sirens you should:

- Tune in to local television and radio
- Log on to the Town website
- Look for notifications from High River ALERT and Alberta Emergency Alert
- If it is safe to do so, notify neighbours, friends, and family of the situation who may not have heard the siren

If there is enough time, an evacuation will follow the stages listed below. This depends on what the emergency is and how fast it is moving. It may not be possible to follow all stages as outlined.

Stage 1: Evacuation Alert

An Evacuation Alert is intended to provide you with the opportunity to prepare your home and/or business, and to encourage you to pay close attention to official communications channels. It may not always be possible to issue an evacuation alert.

Stage 2: Evacuation Order

There are two types of Evacuation Orders: voluntary and mandatory.

Voluntary: A Voluntary Evacuation order is issued when emergency officials believe that your safety may be at risk and conditions could worsen very quickly and without notice.

If you have children, are caring for seniors, and/or require special needs, you are encouraged to leave as you may need extra time or support.

If you who choose to stay you should be prepared to leave at a moment's notice. During a voluntary evacuation, you would be permitted to return to your home.

Mandatory: A Mandatory Evacuation order is issued when emergency officials believe that the public is in danger and/or the Town is not able to provide basic services (9-1-1 response, water and wastewater treatment, etc.).

There will be no forced evacuations; however, a perimeter will be established and you will not be permitted to re-enter the area until the order is lifted.

Stage 3: All Clear

The All Clear is issued when you are able to return to the affected area. Depending on the nature of the emergency, this may be done in stages and/or with restricted re-entry.

Emergency Preparedness: Evacuations

continued

NOTIFICATION

Emergency officials will notify you of an evacuation alert or order through a variety of channels. Information will be provided about the nature of the hazard and suggested actions, as well as updates to the situation as they become available. Information channels include:

- Town website www.highriver.ca
- Town Facebook page www.facebook.com/highriver.ca
- Twitter @TownOfHighRiver
- Outdoor sirens
- Local radio stations (Sun Country 99.7FM, Eagle 100.9FM, and AM1140)
- High River ALERT (Subscribe at www.highriver.ca) and Alberta Emergency Alert

DURING AN EVACUATION

If an evacuation order is issued you should:

- Continue to monitor communication channels for updates
- Shut off utilities if instructed to do so
- Take your evacuation kit including clothing, medication, personal hygiene items, electronics and chargers
- Lock up your home
- Register at the Reception Centre

For more information on emergency preparedness visit www.highriver.ca and click on “High River Emergency Management” under the “Residents” menu.

IF YOU CHOOSE TO STAY

By choosing to follow an evacuation order you will be given the support and time to do so. If you choose NOT to follow a voluntary or mandatory evacuation order it is important that you know the following:

Voluntary Evacuation

- You should monitor news and media channels for updates and watch for a mandatory evacuation order
- You need to be prepared to leave at a moment’s notice
- There may not be time for first responders to come back; you are responsible for getting yourself and your family out

Mandatory Evacuation

- You are putting yourself and family at risk
- The Town cannot guarantee the provision of basic public services (9-1-1 response, water and wastewater treatment, power and gas, etc.)
- Emergency responders may not be able to reach you if something happens
- Anyone who comes to rescue you will be put at greater risk
- If a rescue is required later on, resources will be taken from the overall emergency to rescue you – impeding the overall response
- Continued use of infrastructure (water, wastewater) puts a strain on the system and will delay the re-entry of your neighbours

SHELTERING-IN-PLACE

Under certain circumstances it may not be possible to be safely evacuated in the face of a hazard (hazardous material release, tornado, active shooter, etc.). In these instances you will be given instructions and be notified to shelter-in-place.

If told to shelter-in-place you should go indoors immediately, close windows and doors, and turn off air conditioners and fans. Remain inside until you receive further instructions through communications channels.