

RESIDENT RE-ENTRY GUIDE

A guide for returning to Sturgeon
County after a wildfire.



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Mayor's Message

A Message from Sturgeon County Mayor Alanna Hnatiw

I imagine today is one of mixed feelings as you return to your property. Though it may look and feel a little different today, it is still the place you cherish, your refuge from life's storms, the little slice of this glorious county you call home.

Thank you for your patience as our emergency fire response crews worked around the clock to get this fire under control. We know it's been a stressful, trying and difficult time over the past few days. While we weren't able to save everything, we were able to save the vast majority of homes and no injuries were suffered, and that is a victory in a battle that seemed so insurmountable only days ago.

We have a long road of rebuilding ahead. But I am touched by the outpouring of support and generosity from the community. The way neighbours offered pens for livestock, taking in stray pets until they could be reunited with their families, the words of support for tireless front line responders – this is the very best of Sturgeon County, and our neighbouring communities, on full display.

I am heartbroken by the trauma you've experienced and the losses our community has suffered; however, I am confident in our ability to rebuild and renew. I hope the actions taken by our community gives you every confidence in our commitment to be there for you on the journey ahead. On behalf of my fellow council members, welcome home.



Mayor Alanna Hnatiw

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Welcome Back: Be Safe

Your safe return is our priority. This guide provides a step-by-step process of returning home after the Redwater Recreation Area Fire. Please read the 'Statement of inherent dangers' in this guide prior to returning to the area.

Re-entry vs Re-occupation

Do not assume or expect that your home is ready to occupy.

This guide will help you make an informed decision based on your specific situation. We have included resources and additional supports to contact for assistance.

What to Expect

The state of the area is very different now. Your home may be impacted by smoke, soot and ash, chemicals, structural damage and water damage. This information is a collection of health and safety considerations during initial work to restore your home. This document is intended to be broad-serving, so some of the information may not apply to your situation.

- There is significant damage and possibly triggering sights. Please read the 'Mental health resources' section of this guide before your return.
- There may be fire apparatus, water tanks, sprinklers and other fire equipment. Please do not touch or move the fire equipment.
- Dozer guards (fire breaks) have been created to limit the spread of fire. Stay a safe distance from the fire breaks as the ground may be steep or unstable.

You may see fire retardant on fences, grass, trees, or structures. Fire retardant is non-toxic; you can wash it off with warm soapy water.

Plan Your Return

You are returning to an area that was significantly affected by a large and aggressive wildfire. Services may be limited or unavailable for some time.

Use extreme caution and respect signage or directions given to you by emergency services and/or Sturgeon County. If you notice a fire, call 911.

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Re-entry Support Centre

Effective May 13, there is a Re-entry Support Centre at Pembina Place* with resources and information about:

- Mental health
- Utilities
- Insurance
- Waste management
- Alberta Health Services

Residents are encouraged to visit the Re-entry Support Centre before returning to their homes. You may also visit the Support Centre after you return home; please refer to the Sturgeon County website for Support Centre operating hours.

Location

Pembina Place
4944 53 St, Redwater, AB

Contact

587-570-6610

**The location of the Support Centre is subject to change. Please refer to the Sturgeon County website for any updates.*

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Essential Supplies

You are advised to bring essential supplies to last for up to 72 hours, including ...

- Water
- Gloves
- N95 Masks*
- Boots
- Long Pants
- Long-sleeved Shirts
- Flashlights
- Food Supplies
- Camera/ phone and charging cables
- Medications
- Cleaning Kits

** Use N95-rated masks to filter out and reduce exposure to fine dust particles, such as ash and soot. An N95 mask is the most effective to block particles from ash. An N95 mask is not the same as a dust mask. Ensure that your N95 mask is fitted properly. If an N95 is not fitted to your face properly, it's not useful for your safety.*

Hazards

Call 911 if you see wildfire activity.

Be aware of the following hazards:

- Unstable structures, open pits, uneven ground and wet areas
- Sharp objects like nails, metal, concrete or wood debris
- Ash, soot and demolition dust
- Partially destroyed materials like cleaning products, paint and batteries
- Confined or poorly ventilated areas where carbon monoxide may be present from pumps, generators, or pressure washers
- Tight spaces that could collapse
- Propane or fuel tanks for heating or from BBQ
- Increased wildlife in the area
- Standing dead or burnt trees
- Fire equipment, sprinklers and water tanks that are still in the area
- Deep burning ash pits in forested areas. An ash pit is a hole in the ground filled with ash, possibly containing hot embers. They are often found near the base of trees and in areas with deep soil. If you see an ash pit, do not step in or around it.
- Fire retardants. They can make people and pets sick if ingested, cause eye irritation, dry skin, and stinging to cuts and scrapes.

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Air Quality

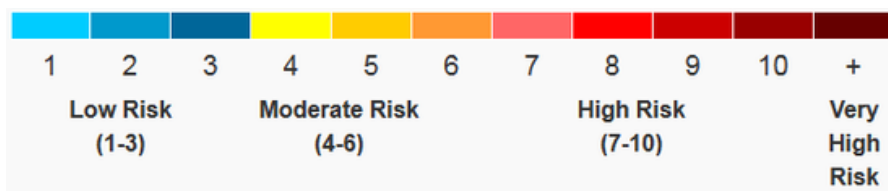
There are several air quality monitoring stations in the vicinity of the Redwater Recreation Area fire. Residents are encouraged to monitor local air quality alerts and indices to understand current smoke levels and make informed decisions about outdoor activity.

Air quality information is available at:

- www.alberta.ca/air-quality
- www.heartlandairmonitoring.org

Remaining smoke and fire ash can cause breathing issues. Call Health Link at 811 prior to re-entry if you are concerned about the air quality and your specific health status.

Consider following these guidelines from the Air Quality Health Index:



Health Risk	Air Quality Health Risk	Health Messages At-Risk Population	Health Messages General Population
Low Risk	1 - 3	Enjoy your usual outdoor activities.	Ideal air quality for outdoor activities.
Moderate Risk	4 - 6	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you are experiencing symptoms.	No need to modify your usual outdoor activities unless you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
High Risk	7 - 10	Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also take it easy.	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
Very High Risk	10 +	Avoid strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also avoid outdoor physical exertion.	Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors, especially if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.

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At-risk individuals include:

- Individuals with breathing conditions (such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and asthma)
- Individuals with existing cardiovascular conditions (such as angina, previous heart attack)
- Pregnant women
- Children seven years old and younger
- Seniors (65 years old and older)

Area Closures

The Redwater Recreation Area is closed for safety and security purposes.

Please do not enter the Redwater Recreation Area as there is still an active fire in the park. Respect signage or directions given to you by Alberta Parks, Sturgeon County or other emergency personnel. Doing so will keep you and our community safe.

Assess Your Home

No one has entered your home to inspect for damage inside. Do not assume your home is safe to occupy. There may be hazards on your property or in your home, even if it is still standing. Be cautious and thorough when re-entering your home or property.

Please refer to the 'Stay Safe' section of the following webpage:

www.albertahealthservices.ca/news/page14070.aspx

Insurance Note

Standard home insurance may cover the costs for necessary repairs and cleaning from fire and smoke damage. Make sure you have a plan with your insurance adjuster and understand the process. Please refer to the 'Insurance' section and 'Cleaning checklist' in this guide.

Assess Outside Hazards

Assess damages outside your home:

- Check the stability of the trees around your property. Any trees that have been damaged by fire or wind will need to be removed.
- Check for electrical hazards such as exposed wires.
- Avoid contact with damaged or fallen power lines and poles. If there are any hazards, contact your power provider.

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Danger Trees

Wildfires can leave behind more than just burned landscapes — they can also create danger trees that pose a serious risk to public safety.

What are danger trees?

Danger trees are burned or damaged trees that are unstable and likely to fall without warning. Wildfire heat can weaken roots, damage trunks and compromise the structural integrity of trees—even if they look alive.

Why are they dangerous?

- Trees may fall suddenly, even on calm days.
- Branches can drop without notice.
- They can block trails, roads or damage property.
- Falling trees or limbs can cause serious injury or death.

Be aware of danger trees and always maintain a safe buffer distance of a minimum of two times the height of impacted or affected trees (i.e., two tree lengths). For example, for a 10-foot tree in height, maintain a safe distance of at least 20 feet from the tree.

Municipal crews and forestry professionals are working to assess and safely remove danger trees. Your cooperation helps protect everyone.

For more information or to report a concern, please contact 780-939-8349.



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Assess Structural Damage

Before entering your home or any accessory buildings, be aware of structural failure or collapse.

Do not enter the structure if there are any of the following signs:

- Structural damage
- Damaged roofs and floors that look like they may collapse
- Damage to the foundation
- Damage to brick or cement fireplace chimneys
- Cracked or leaning concrete foundation
- Heat or smoke. Call 911 as soon as possible to deal with any hot spots
- Smell of natural gas. Call 911 or your utility provider

Electricity, Gas and Water

Avoid contact with damaged or fallen power lines and poles. Contact with an energized line can seriously injure or kill you.

If you see a downed power line, please stay at least 10 metres away, call 911 and keep others away from the area.

Electricity

Power companies have restored power to most residential customers within the town. Restoration work continues in surrounding areas, including Redwater Recreation Area and at commercial and industrial sites in the region.

If you do not have power:

- First, check your main electric panel and breaker — a blown fuse or tripped breaker could be the cause.
- Moving any tripped switches all the way to the 'off' position and then to the 'on' position may restore power.
- If that doesn't fix it, call your utility provider's 24/7 emergency outage line.

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Water

Residents are highly encouraged to have their water quality tested prior to drinking it.

If you have a cistern:

- Check your cistern for damage. Look for damage to cistern parts (such as collars, lids, fill ports, or screened vents), damage to the structure, or nearby overland flooding. Contact a local repair company if you notice damage.
- Clean and disinfect your cistern. Drain your cistern completely, then use a pressure washer or stiff brush with a mild detergent on all surfaces. You may also use a chlorine disinfectant rated for cistern cleaning.
- Ensure you fully flush the cistern after cleaning.

To have your water tested:

Please visit alberta.ca/getting-my-water-tested for instructions on how to have your water tested. You will be given a water sample bottle; once you get it, follow these steps:

- Do not open the sample bottle until you're ready to collect your sample.
- Rinse the sample bottle.
- Let water overflow or splash down the side of the bottle.
- Put the bottle cap on a countertop (it can get contaminated).
- Do not touch the inside of the cap, mouth, or neck of the bottle.
- Collect samples from a garden hose, outside tap, or other places that might be dirty.

The Provincial Laboratory for Public Health will conduct the testing results. You should get your results in 48 hours.

Until your water quality has been tested, you are strongly encouraged to drink bottled water.

Gas

If gas service has been disrupted, please contact your utility provider to have gas lines inspected, repaired, and turned back on. If you smell sulfur or rotten egg, or notice a disrupted gas line, please call 911 and leave the area.

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Re-Enter Safely

Follow this checklist when you re-enter your home:

- Wear the appropriate safety gear: N-95 masks, gloves, long pants and boots.
- Return during daylight hours.
- Continue to assess structural damage in each new area you go.
- Use flashlights.
- Do not use electrical appliances that may have been affected by fire. They need to be cleared by a qualified electrician.
- Keep children and pets under direct supervision. Do not allow children or pets to play in the areas damaged by the fire.
- Do not try to retrieve any items or climb into small spaces to see damage.
- Wash your hands if you touch ash, soot or other unusual particles.

Cleaning Checklist

Now that you have assessed hazards and entered your home safely, you can start to clean.

You can choose to clean yourself or work with your insurance provider to have a professional cleaner. Please refer to the 'Insurance' section of this guide.

- Do not throw anything away or start cleaning until contacting your insurance provider.
- Do not use bleach to clean areas where fire retardants have been used. Bleach can react with chemical fire retardants, resulting in toxic fumes.
- Clean all surfaces with warm water and soap.
- After your first clean, you may choose to sanitize using a mild bleach solution (on areas not exposed to fire retardant) one teaspoon of bleach to four cups of water.
- Wash or dry clean clothing, linens and bedding.
- Steam clean carpets, furniture and mattresses.
- Clean inside cabinets, drawers and closets.
- Wipe undersides of furniture, tables and chairs.
- Clean windows and glass.
- Ensure there are no wet or damp areas of your home.
- If you find mold, refer to the 'Mold' section of this guide.

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Mold

Call your insurance company if you find or smell mold in your home. Exposure to mold growth can be hazardous.

You can deal with mold yourself or hire a contractor through your insurance company.

Note: You should hire a contractor if you find expansive mold growth more than 10 square feet. That's about the size of a bath towel.

Mold Assessment

- Conduct a visual inspection with gloves and an N-95 mask.
- Check items like carpet, drywall and structural wood.
- Assess the extent of mold growth and the materials that are affected.

Mold Removal

- Wear gloves and an N-95 mask.
- Remove moldy materials in a sealed plastic bag.
- Remove and dispose of all effected soft materials.
- Remove and dispose of water-affected soft materials and drywall.
- Water-affected materials can grow mold.
- Dispose of the bagged mold waste appropriately. Refer to the 'Waste disposal' section of this guide.
- Assess items that can be saved, including:
 - Surfaces that did not absorb water;
 - Fabrics that can be dry-cleaned or laundered, and then bleached.

Clean

- Clean and disinfect items that can be saved.
- Clean all surfaces around the mold-affected areas with warm water and soap.
- Afterwards, sanitize all surfaces using a mild bleach solution
 - (one tablespoon of bleach to four litres of water).
- Dry any wet items as soon as possible.
- Use a dehumidifier to remove excess moisture.
- Open windows and use fans to circulate air.

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Waste Disposal

Waste Permit Passes issued to County residents will provide access to the Roseridge Landfill or the Redwater Transfer Station for resident disposal.

Residents may use their Waste Permit Passes to dispose of wildfire waste, with the exception of the below items:

- Household hazardous waste (e.g., paint, solvents, cleaners)
- Electronic waste
- Appliances
- Propane cylinders
- Scrap metal
- Concrete
- Trees and tree limbs

Sturgeon County Landowners are provided a permit to dispose of up to 8,000 kg of domestic waste a year at no charge.

If passes are misplaced, please contact the Utility & Waste Management Services Department at 780-939-0609.

Fridge, Freezer and Dishwasher

Before you assess your fridge or freezer, make sure you have a plan with your insurance provider and understand the process. Their advice may be to tape your appliance shut to remove risk of mold exposure. You will ultimately make your own choice on how to proceed.

If you find mold, contact your insurance company to see if you need to replace your fridge or freezer and if you have coverage for this. Refer to the 'Insurance' and 'Mold' sections of this guide.

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If you decide to clean your fridge, freezer, or dishwasher rather than disposing of it:

- Unplug the fridge and freezer.
- Rinse or blow out the coils and compressors.
- To clean the inside, use soap and water and then rinse with clean water.
- Sanitize the inside with a bleach/water mixture made by mixing a one teaspoon of bleach to four cups of water.
- Leave the doors of the fridge and freezer open to help them dry out.
- Once the appliance is dry, reconnect the power.
- Wait until the inside temperature of your fridge has reached 4°C before restocking it with food.
- Wait until your freezer temperature is at -18°C before restocking it with food.

Note: If you are unsure of what to do, contact your insurance provider. They can help you determine if you need to replace your fridge or freezer.

Dishwasher

- If you find mold, please refer to the 'Mold' section of this guide.
- Run a regular hot temperature cycle or a sanitization cycle.

Disposing of Large Items

If you choose to dispose of your fridge, freezer, or dishwasher:

- Appliances that have been fully emptied and cleaned may be brought to the Roseridge Transfer Station*
- Address: Township Rd 575 RR 215, Redwater, AB T0A 0E6
- Appliances that have not been emptied should be taped up and delivered to the Roseridge Landfill*
- Address: Range Rd 251, Morinville, AB T8R 1P4

**Please note, you will have to offload the appliance yourself upon arrival at either facility.*

For more information on waste management, please visit: [SturgeonCounty.ca/waste-recycling/](https://sturgeoncounty.ca/waste-recycling/).

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Foods to Discard

- Food in refrigerators, coolers and freezers
- Open foods
- Fire- or smoke-damaged food
- Raw vegetables or fruits
- Foods affected by smoke
- Food in cardboard, foam or porous containers
- Canned food that is bulging, rusted or dented

Note: For insurance, take photos and make a list of food you throw away.

Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

Replace your Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) filter before you use it. This includes your heating and air conditioning system. If you don't know how to replace your filter, contact an HVAC technician for assistance.

If you choose to replace your filter yourself, wear proper safety equipment (N95 mask, gloves, etc.) and throw the filter out.

Cleaning Outside

Try to gather and contain ash, soot and debris. You want to prevent the spread of these materials and dispose of them safely.

- Pressure wash or scrub exterior surfaces.
- Scrape up ash and soot. Put it in plastic bags or other containers that will keep it from being spread.
- Do not use air hoses or leaf blowers.
- Wash all toys and play structures.
- Use water or biodegradable cleaners for fire-retardant residue.
- Replace sand, gravel or other loose materials around playground equipment if there is visible presence of ash, soot or other debris.
- Close the windows of your home when you clean outside, to reduce the amount of dust and smoke entering your home.

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Gardens

Don't eat fruits and vegetables that were growing in your garden during the fire. They are likely smoke-affected.

Garden produce/plants may be impacted by fire retardants. Dispose of garden produce potentially impacted with fire retardants.

Pets

- Thoroughly shampoo any pets that have been exposed to smoke, soot, ash or fire retardants.
- Absorb any puddles generated from shampooing with soil/sand.
- Ensure animals do not ingest water from puddles containing fire retardants or fire residue.
- If your pet appears to be ill from ingesting fire retardants or fire residue, take them to a veterinarian.

Medicine and Personal Items

Contact your insurance provider and take lots of photos before throwing anything out. Follow your local guidelines on where medicines and other chemicals can be dropped off for disposal.

Throw out medicines, cosmetics, and personal care products like soap, shampoo, and toothpaste that were exposed to smoke or high temperatures, even if the package isn't opened.

Bring any medicines that need to be thrown out back to a pharmacy. Do not flush any medicines down the toilet or sink.

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Insurance

If you have questions, contact your insurance provider or visit Insurance Bureau of Canada's (IBC) dedicated Wildfires and Insurance webpage.

You can also call IBC's Consumer Information Centre at 1-844-2ask-IBC (1-844-227-5422) or email AskIBCWest@ibc.ca.

Key Points

- Before you start any work on your property, make sure you have a plan with your insurance provider and understand the process.
- Standard home insurance can cover the costs for necessary repairs and cleaning because of fire, smoke or water damage from fire activity.
- If you want to clean and repair your property on your own, ensure you are safe and protect yourself. Talk to your insurance provider to discuss reimbursement for the work you do.
- Damage to homes will vary. There will be a different process for cleaning and restoring your home, depending on the damage.
- You can choose which service provider you hire to clean and restore your home.
- Your insurance provider may recommend a specific provider with the exact experience and equipment you need.
- Talk to your insurance provider before cleaning or throwing away any belongings.
- Work with your provider to find the solution that will work best for your situation.
- Fire and smoke damage to vehicles may be covered, depending on your policy.

Insurance Checklist

- If you haven't already done so, contact your insurance provider and start a claim.
- Work with your insurance provider. They are there to help you navigate the claims process.
- Create a list of all damaged belongings.
- Photograph and videotape damage as much as possible. If available, compile photos from before and after the incident with as much information as possible.
- Collect proofs of purchase, photos, receipts and warranties. This helps determine the make and model of damaged property.
- Keep all receipts related to cleanup.
- Ask your insurance provider about coverage for living expenses.

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Land Reclamation

There are two distinct types of damage within the fire area, which will need to be addressed separately:

1. Damage caused by the incident (wildfire) - please contact your insurance provider.
2. Damage caused by the response to the fire.

Sturgeon County intends to reclaim the areas that have been damaged in the response to the fire. This includes repairs to fencing damaged for firefighting access, rollback of dozer guards, weed management, seeding disturbed areas, water course management and access repairs (if required).

This process will be communicated to impacted residents by Sturgeon County.

Mental Health Resources

Be gentle with yourself. This is new territory for all of us.

Sturgeon County residents have now experienced a significant degree of loss. Each person's situation is different, and so is the processing experience.

Our mental health changes all the time. Check in with yourself often. How are you doing?

Use the chart on the following page to reflect on how you feel while you process this intense experience:

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Healthy	Reacting	Injured	Ill
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My mood changes are normal for me • I sleep as much as usual • I have enough energy • My body feels well • I'm going to school or work as usual • I enjoy being with others as much as usual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel more nervous, sad or irritable than usual • I sometimes have trouble sleeping • I'm tired • I have muscle tension or headaches • I'm putting off tasks • I'm less social than usual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel angry, sad or hopeless • I often have trouble sleeping • My energy level is very low • My body feels achy or sore • I'm missing school or work • I avoid being with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel very anxious • I'm easily angered • I can't fall or stay asleep • I have no energy • I feel sick • I can't complete tasks • I'm missing school or work • I avoid being with others
What to do Take care of yourself Check in with yourself	What to do Take breaks Talk to a friend	What to do Ask for help Put yourself first	What to do Ask for professional help Follow recommendations

- Create a plan on how to take care of yourself. This will allow you to take care of others.
- Use the resources available to you.
- Eat well, stay hydrated, stay active and get enough rest.
- When you feel overwhelmed, practice deep breathing.
- Remember, you are not alone.

Supporting your children:

- Model positive coping.
- Encourage open communication.
- Maintain routines to provide a sense of normalcy.

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Resources

Visit www.ahs.ca/wildfire or call the Mental Health Help Line at 1-877-303-2642.

- Alberta 211: Call or text 'INFO' to 211 or visit ab.211.ca
- Psychologists' Association of Alberta: 1-888-424-0297
- Mental Health Help Line (24/7): 1-877-303-2642
- Addiction Help Line: 1-866-332-2322
- First Nations & Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line: 1-855-242-3310
- Crisis Text Line: Text "CONNECT" to 741741
- Text4hope: Text HOPEAB to 393939
- Health Link: 811
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868

Key Contacts

- Emergency 911
- Alberta Health Link 811
- ATCO 1-800-511-3447 / 310-5678
- TELUS Mobility *611 on your TELUS mobile phone or 1-866-558- 2273
- TELUS Internet Toll-free 1-888-811-2323
- Shaw Internet 1-888-472-2222
- Direct Energy 1-866-374-6299
- Enmax 310-2010
- Fortis 310-9473

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What's Next?

To keep updated on the latest information related to this incident, please visit our website and follow Sturgeon County on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

General information for all Sturgeon County residents
[SturgeonCounty.ca](https://sturgeoncounty.ca)

Updates on fire situation
[SturgeonCounty.ca/active-fire/](https://sturgeoncounty.ca/active-fire/)

Information for residents of the fire-affected area
[SturgeonCounty.ca/emergency/](https://sturgeoncounty.ca/emergency/)

Statement of Inherent Dangers

Until otherwise advised, any access to the surrounding areas in general, and the conduct of any re-entry activities specifically, may involve inherent risks, dangers and hazards, involving all manner of injury or loss, including potentially serious or life-threatening injury or death, including but not limited to, as a result of:

- The actions or negligence of emergency services personnel, other members of the public, the County, or its council, employees, volunteers, agents, invitees, or representatives of any kind.
- Additional risks arising out of the re-entry activities and related events and activities; and in accessing areas of the re-entry zone, the public freely accept and assume all such risks, dangers and hazards and the possibility of injury, death, property damage, property loss or any other loss or expense resulting to the public.
- As a condition of being able to undertake such re-entry activities, you are accepting that you will have no claims against the County or its employees or agents arising out of any such losses, injuries or damages.