

Desert Cove Fire Evacuation

Introduction

On average there are more than 1,600 wildfires in British Columbia every year and increasing. The probability of damaging wildfires has increased in recent years. As we experienced in August of 2021, Desert Cove can be impacted by these wild fires. It is imperative that we all take the time to get ready. This guide will help you prepare your household, protect your property and understand what to do if a wildfire is close to our community.

We are on the Okanagan Indian Band Land, and as such, will receive our fire notice and evacuation information from the OKIB.

For more information or to monitor the OKIB status:

- Website: www.okib.ca
- Facebook page: if you have a Facebook Account enter "Okanagan Indian Band" in search and "Like and Follow" to receive current updates.
- Our address will be shown as **Desert Cove** or **155 Head of the Lake Rd.**

The BC Government fire emergency map is also helpful but may not be as up to date:

- <https://governmentofbc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=950b4eec577a4dc5b298a61adab41c06>

As a community, we will do our best to help you be prepared. We will communicate information as we receive it.

Note: contact numbers in this document may change over time. We will communicate this information as we receive it or check the website www.okib.ca for up to date contact numbers.

Desert Cove Fire Evacuation

Preparation for fire season

Prepare your home

- Prune branches off trees that are within 2 meters off the ground and clear deadfall
- Make sure your roof and gutters are clean of any combustibles such as leaves sticks and pine needles
- Clear a minimum of 1.5 meters of fire safe space around your home (bushes, wood etc...)
- Ensure that grass is cut in your yard and excess deadfall is cleared away
- Keep carports and porches clear of excess buildup of potentially flammable materials
- Check with your Homeowners Insurance Policy for “evacuation” coverage.
- Take pictures of each room in your home (drawers, closets etc..) and outside to keep with your insurance documents. This will help if you need to make a claim.

Prepare grab and go bags

- Take time **now** to build grab-and-go bags for each member of your household (including your pets) so you’re not caught off guard
- Create a checklist of items you wish to take with you if evacuated (top of the list; essential items, bottom of the list; items to take if you have the time to pack them)
- Determine how you will communicate with loved ones if you should be evacuated
- For a more complete list of what you can do to fire proof your home and prepare:
 - BC Wildfire Preparation Guide: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/embc/preparedbc/preparedbc-guides/wildfire_preparedness_guide.pdf
 - Firesmart Canada Resources: <https://www.firesmartcanada.ca/resources/>

Understand evacuation stages

Evacuation Alert: Be ready to leave on short notice

Evacuation Order: You are at risk: Leave IMMEDIATELY

Evacuation Rescind: You can return home

Desert Cove Fire Evacuation

What you should do when in Evacuation Alert:

- Your grab and go bag should already be packed and in your vehicle
 - Pack essential items such as:
 - Government-issued ID, valuable papers (e.g. insurance, credit, mortgage information, latest T4)
 - Medications, eyeglasses, cell phones and chargers
 - Immediate care needs for dependents
 - If time and space permits, keepsakes for quick departure
 - Prepare to take pets with you (kennel, leashes, food)
 - Arrange transportation for all your household members
 - Arrange accommodation for all members of the residence, if possible
 - **Reach out to your neighbours, make sure they are ready and able to evacuate!**
 - If you need assistance, reach out to a friend or neighbour **now** so they are prepared to help
 - Fill the gas tanks of personal vehicles
 - Move all flammable materials from your deck area (cushions, wicker, etc.)
 - Move propane tanks into garage or shed, turn off gas to Barbeque
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- Wait for an Evacuation Order to be issued before evacuating
 - Monitor website and Facebook page for information on evacuation orders and location of Reception Centres

Desert Cove Fire Evacuation

If an Evacuation Order is issued:

- If time permits, we will provide advance warning to alert you that we have been given the order to evacuate. Neighbours will most likely be knocking on doors as well
- Take critical items (medicine, purse, wallet, and keys) only if they are immediately available
- Take pets in pet kennels or on leash with food and water.
 - If you left pets behind or have brought your pets with you and need pet-friendly accommodations, please visit the ESS Reception Centre to register for support
- Close all windows and doors and turn on front porch light.
- Do not use more vehicles than you have to
- Do not use the telephone unless you need emergency service
- Unplug small appliances but do not turn off gas or power to your home unless instructed to do so. Gas and hydro will be turned off at a central location if a fire occurs in Desert Cove
- If you are planning on being away for a period of time (holidays, etc.) prepare a sign which your neighbour can post on your door with: the name of the occupants in your house, a phone number and date returning
- If you evacuate before the evacuation crew arrives, tape a sign to your front door stating “Evacuated” with the name of the occupants in your house and a phone number
- For those folks with RV units take them out of the cove sooner than later. This will reduce traffic congestion when everyone else is trying to leave. If you decide to park your unit in front of your home make sure it is not on the street. We will need the road available for the flow of traffic. Have your tow vehicle attached so that you’re not hindering traffic when the time comes to leave
- If you choose not to leave early, you will get a knock on your door by the evacuation crew. An information sheet will be provided with the location of the Evacuation Centre, which can provide resources/vouchers, and where to go if you do not have a place to stay
 - Because we are on OKIB Land, register with the OKIB ESS Center
- **Check the OKIB website www.okib.ca to find out where the current ESS Centre is located.**
 - If we have this information in advance, we will communicate the location to you.
 - *You will not be able to check into the Evacuation center unless we are in Evacuation Order status*
- **If you need transportation assistance from the area, advise the OKIB EOC**

Please leave immediately by the following routes:

- All residents **south of 7th avenue** - exit via the construction exit
- All residents **north of 7th avenue** – exit via the main gate
 - This is to avoid traffic congestion at the gates

Desert Cove Fire Evacuation

- Check in with the Evacuation Centre (you can do this online if you do not require accommodation and/or immediate support at <https://ess.gov.bc.ca/>)
 - The Desert Cove Admin office will direct calls regarding the whereabouts of residents to the ESS office so it is important to register
 - Complete the registration form showing your location as OKIB

Note: PLEASE EVACUATE WHEN TOLD TO DO SO.

Fire crews cannot dump water in an area if a house is occupied. You are putting yourself and other Desert Cove homes at great risk if a fire starts. You are also putting the fire crews at risk if they need to rescue you.

Evacuation Rescind

- Once officials determine the situation is safe, the evacuation order will be rescinded and you can return home. If your area continues to be in evacuation 'alert' status, keep your bags packed and ready.
- Continue to stay tuned for other possible evacuation alerts or orders.
- If the community lost power during the evacuation:
 - Discard refrigerated food that is spoiled, as well as food that has been stored in a refrigerator that has lost power, even if the power has been restored. *When in doubt, throw it out*
 - Frozen food: Discard food that's thawed. If your freezer has been exposed to fire, or has been without power for more than three days, toss the contents.

Please stay aware and stay safe!