



COUNTY *of* ANNAPOLIS
NATURALLY ROOTED



2025

**Trout Lake, Zwicker Lake and
Highway 10 Areas
Re-Entry Information Package**

Message From Warden Diane LeBlanc

As we reach the re-entry phase following the West Dalhousie wildfires, I am grateful we have arrived at this moment together. This milestone brings hope and a sense of progress, but we must also remember that the fire remains active and will continue to be a concern for months ahead. The road to full recovery will take time, and our thoughts remain with those who have suffered loss. To those who lost their homes, please know that our hearts are broken alongside yours, and we are committed to standing with you as you rebuild your lives.

In response to these devastating events, the Municipality of the County of Annapolis, in partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia, has initiated the Navigator Program to assist evacuees, particularly those facing the most significant challenges. The province has been an incredible partner throughout this crisis, with the Departments of Natural Resources and Emergency Management providing vital expertise and support. We have also been uplifted by the compassion and dedication of organizations such as the Salvation Army in Bridgetown, the Canadian Red Cross, local fire departments, the West Dalhousie community, and the many volunteers who have given so much of their time and energy.

This re-entry plan has been developed with one clear purpose: to make your transition back to your community as safe, smooth, and supported as possible. While the journey ahead may still feel uncertain, please know that every effort is being made to ensure you have the resources, guidance, and care you need. Together, we will navigate these challenges, adapt to the ongoing situation, and rebuild stronger than before.

On behalf of Council, staff, and all our partners, thank you for your patience, resilience, and strength during this unprecedented time.

With deepest respect and commitment,

Warden Diane Le Blanc

Stages of Re-Entry

The process of re-entry needs to follow a controlled process that ensures the safety and security of everyone involved. The following general steps are planned for re-entry and subject to changes if required.

1. Department of Natural Resources will confirm there is no longer a fire threat.
2. Municipality of the County of Annapolis will contact all evacuees to provide re-entry plan and any information available on specific properties.
3. Municipality of the County of Annapolis will perform property inspections on all affected properties in conjunction with the Office of the Fire Marshall.
4. Scheduled re-entry times will be provided to all evacuees in coordination with Department of Emergency Management, RCMP, and the Municipality of the County of Annapolis.
 - a. Re-entry will proceed with the least affected properties first until all evacuees have been provided re-entry.
5. Areas affected will continue to have restricted access until all evacuees have been re-entered.
6. Ongoing support will be provided as required to affected residents as per the information provided in this document as well as Municipality of the County of Annapolis, Annapolis County REMO and Department of Emergency Management.

Wildfire Re-Entry Plan for Residents Not Directly Effected By Wildfires

Welcome Home

We know the past days have been stressful, and returning home is an important step toward recovery. As you come back, please remember that the community may look a little different. Roads may be busier with emergency crews, some services may take time to return to normal, and certain areas may still show signs of fire operations.

Here are a few tips to help with a safe and smooth return:

- Take your time when you arrive. Walk around your property before going inside. If you notice anything unusual (such as damage or an open door/window), contact the RCMP by calling 9-1-1.
- Check your home carefully. Look over doors, windows, power, and water. If utilities were off, restore them with caution.
- Drive carefully. Emergency vehicles and equipment may still be moving through the area.
- Watch out for hazards. Be mindful of weakened trees, damaged fencing, or hot spots that could still smolder. Even though the fire did not reach this community, smoke may still drift into the area, and new hazards can appear. If you notice unusual smoke, fire, or anything that looks unsafe, please report it right away by calling 9-1-1.
- Smoke and soot. Some homes may have light smoke or ash inside. Ventilate by opening windows and use gloves and masks when cleaning. If damage is significant, consider contacting professionals for cleanup.
- Stay connected. Keep an eye out for updates from the County of Annapolis www.annapoliscounty.ca or Annapolis REMO at www.AnnapolisREMO.ca and check in on your neighbours.
- Returning can be emotional, and support is available (local mental health or community resources).
- Pets may be stressed or disoriented when returning home, and livestock areas should be checked for fence damage or hazards.
- Be prepared for the future. Emergencies can happen quickly. Take this opportunity to refresh or build an emergency kit, make a family plan, and ensure arrangements are in place for pets and livestock if you ever need to leave again on short notice.

Local officials, RCMP, and community partners have been working hard to keep the area safe and support your return. By taking a few simple precautions and looking out for one another, we can make this next step as smooth as possible.

Welcome back! we're so glad you're home.

This document provides a checklist when re-entering your property and home along with additional information guides.

Health

Air Quality

Healthy adults can consider returning to the evacuated communities when the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) is 6 or less, and favorable wind and weather conditions exist that minimize smoke entering the community.

At-risk individuals may want to delay their return until the AQHI is regularly 3 or less. At-risk individuals include:

- Individuals with respiratory conditions (such as COPD and asthma)
- Individuals with existing cardiovascular conditions (such as angina, previous heart attack)
- Pregnant women
- Children 7 years old and younger; and
- Seniors (>65 years of age).

For more information, please refer to Annapolis County Remo www.annapolisremo.ca, Environment Canada www.weather.gc.ca or PurpleAir <https://map.purpleair.com> or sign up for NSALERT <https://novascotia.ca/nsalert>

Taking Care of Yourself and Your Family After a Wildfire

Returning home after a wildfire can be physically and emotionally exhausting. It is important to take care of your health and well-being by eating nutritious meals, staying hydrated, getting adequate rest, and taking breaks during clean-up and recovery efforts. Allow yourself time to process your emotions, and do not feel pressured to make major decisions immediately. Lean on supportive friends, family, and community resources when needed.

Children may also be affected by the experience and may feel fear, sadness, or confusion as they return to their homes and routines. Supporting them through this transition is essential. Encourage open conversations about their feelings, provide reassurance, and

re-establish predictable routines to create a sense of safety. While most children adjust over time, if distress persists, families should seek guidance from school counselors, family doctors, or mental health professionals.

Nova Scotians have access to a variety of supports during recovery. The IWK Health Centre offers trauma-informed resources for families and children, while Text4HopeNS provides daily encouragement and coping tips via text messages. Residents in need of urgent mental health support can contact the IWK Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team at 902-429-8167 (or toll-free at 1-888-429-8167), or call 211 Nova Scotia to connect with local resources. Taking care of yourself and your family's emotional health is a vital part of rebuilding and returning to normal life after a wildfire.

More resources and guidance are available through the IWK Health Centre:
<https://www.iwk.nshealth.ca/wildfires>

HealthCare

For any life-threatening emergency: Call 911

If you're unsure whether it's an emergency, call **811** for non-urgent health advice from a registered nurse (24/7). If you're in crisis, see **Mental Health & Crisis Supports** below.

Hospitals & Emergency / Urgent Care

Soldiers Memorial Hospital (Emergency Department – limited hours)

462 Main St, Middleton

Main Switchboard: **902-825-3411**

ED typically open weekdays mornings/early afternoon; hours change—check NS Health before going.

Annapolis Community Health Centre (Urgent Treatment Centre)

821 St. George St, Annapolis Royal

Administrative Switchboard: **902-532-2381**

No Emergency Department. Urgent Treatment Centre is open Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays

Digby General Hospital (Emergency/Urgent Care – variable hours)

75 Warwick St, Digby

Main Switchboard: **902-245-2501**

Patient Switchboard: **902-245-6555**

Hours vary—check NS Health before going.

Community & Home Care

VON (Victoria Order of Nurses) — Annapolis Valley

General Inquiries: **902-678-3415**

Toll-free: **1-800-411-9646**

Home care, nursing, foot care and community support programs.

Senior Safety Program — Annapolis County

Coordinator (via Annapolis RCMP Detachment): **902-665-4481**

Free safety education, check-ins, and referrals for older adults.

211 Nova Scotia (Community & Social Services Navigation)

Dial **211** (24/7) or Toll-free **1-855-466-4994**

Find food, shelter, transportation, financial and health supports.

Mental Health & Crisis Supports (24/7)

Provincial Mental Health & Addictions Crisis Line: 1-888-429-8167 (or 902-429-8167)

Suicide Crisis Helpline: 988 (phone or text)

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868

<https://www.iwk.nshealth.ca/wildfires>

Health and Safety in and Around the Home

- **Spoiled food:** Discard any food exposed to heat, smoke, or without proper refrigeration. When in doubt, throw it out.
- **Ash and smoke exposure:** Use an N95/KN95 mask, gloves, and protective clothing when cleaning. Wipe down everything inside your home as you may have been exposed to smoke. Avoid sweeping ash—dampen lightly to reduce dust.
- **Vulnerable individuals:** Children, seniors, pregnant people, and anyone with heart or lung conditions should minimize outdoor exposure until air quality improves.
- **Monitor smoke conditions:** Check trusted sources for updates on local air quality and wildfire status before spending extended time outdoors.

Cleaning Your Home After a Wildfire

When returning home after a wildfire, it's important to take safety precautions while cleaning. Ash, soot, and smoke residues can be harmful if breathed in or touched. Wear protective gear such as gloves, long sleeves, eye protection, and an N95 while cleaning.

Ventilate your home by opening windows and using fans to bring in fresh air.

Hard surfaces can be wiped with a mild soap or detergent solution, followed by rinsing with clean water. Avoid dry sweeping as it may stir up ash. Vacuum preferably with a HEPA filtered vacuum regular household vacuum, or use caution. Porous items such as carpets, mattresses, insulation, and drywall are often difficult to clean and may need to be discarded depending on the degree of smoke damage. Use an upholstery cleaner.

Smoke and soot damage can linger deep within structures so **professional fire-restoration services** may be necessary to fully remove odors and contamination.

Remember to check and clean **outdoor playsets, toys, furniture, and garden equipment**. Wash thoroughly with mild detergent and water and rinse well to remove ash before allowing children to use them again. Soil and sand in play areas may need to be replaced if heavily contaminated.

If in doubt about whether an item can be safely cleaned, it is best to err on the side of caution and replace it.

For updates on household waste pick up please visit www.vwrm.com or call the Hotline - 1 877 927 8300 or 902 679 1325

Disposing of Spoiled Food After the Wildfire

If you were evacuated and your power was shut off, food in fridges and freezers may no longer be safe to eat. Please discard all spoiled food to avoid health risks. Refrigerators and freezers that cannot be cleaned and reused should be disposed of properly—appliances must have refrigerants (CFCs) safely removed before disposal and doors should be removed.

Spoiled food can be bagged and placed in green carts or taken to local waste drop-off sites. For larger volumes, or if your appliance needs disposal, please contact **Valley Waste Resource Management** at **1-877-927-8300** or visit www.vwrm.com.

The Municipality is working with Valley Waste to help accommodate with your re-entry. For the latest updates on compost, waste, and special pick-up services in your area, visit the **Municipality of the County of Annapolis website:** www.annapoliscounty.ca

Caring for Soot-Affected Electronics and Appliances

After a wildfire, homes may be contaminated with soot and ash, which can damage electronics, appliances, and other sensitive equipment. Smoke particles and heat exposure can cause long-term damage to wiring, circuit boards, and mechanical components, even if the device appears to work.

Before using any appliances or electronics, ensure they are **thoroughly cleaned and inspected**. Lightly wipe surfaces with a damp cloth to remove soot but avoid immersing devices in water. For sensitive electronics, such as computers, televisions, and small appliances, it is often safest to have them **professionally inspected or serviced** before use.

If devices are severely contaminated, damaged, or no longer safe to operate, they should be **disposed of properly**. Contact **your local waste management provider**, such as **Valley Waste** in Annapolis County, for guidance on electronics recycling and safe disposal of appliances containing refrigerants or other hazardous components. For up-to-date information on **special pick-up services, composting, and waste drop-off locations**, visit the **Municipality of the County of Annapolis website** at www.annapoliscounty.ca.

Handling electronics and appliances carefully after a wildfire protects your safety, prevents further damage, and ensures compliance with environmental regulations.

Water Safety- Water Systems (Cisterns, Tanks, Wells)

After wildfire, your well water may be contaminated with bacteria and chemicals that can make you sick. Even if fire didn't reach your area, heavy smoke and ash can still contaminate wells, cisterns and storage tanks.

Test the water for bacteria before you use it for anything other than household cleaning.

Free water testing kits are available for pick-up and drop-off at:

Soldiers Memorial Hospital- 462 Main Street, Middleton. Water testing kits and testing fees will be covered by the Province of Nova Scotia for residents affected by evacuation orders.

Do not use your well, cistern or storage tank water for drinking, cooking, and washing yourself, until your well has been tested and approved for use. **Remember: Potable drinking water includes water used for drinking, making formula, juice, and ice cubes; washing fruit and vegetables; and brushing your teeth.**

Hire a certified well contractor to check your well and make repairs, if needed. You can find a list of well drillers and diggers and a list of pump installers at <https://novascotia.ca/nse/water/wellcontractors.asp>

To prepare your well, cistern or storage tanks for testing, follow these steps:

- Flush the well, cistern or water storage tanks. Run a tap until the water runs clear.
- Disinfect the well. Find instructions at:
<https://novascotia.ca/nse/water/docs/DisinfectWaterWell.pdf>
- Flush the well again. Make sure that you run the tap long enough to flush all the disinfectant from the well.
- Test the water for chemicals if a spill occurred near your well, such as from
 - a damaged oil tank
 - Firefighting occurred near your well, such as water bombing.
 - The water is cloudy or has an unusual smell
- It is recommended that all property owners test after two years have passed since the last chemical test
- After the test results:
 - If the water does not run clear or the test shows bacteria or chemicals in your well, contact Nova Scotia Environment for advice. Visit <https://novascotia.ca/well-water-testing> for information on how to make sure your well water is safe and how to read the results of a water test or call your local environment office at 1-877-9ENVIRO (1-877-936-8476).

Rainwater Collection Systems

- Clean out gutters, downspouts, and collection barrels, which may have collected ash, soot, or debris.
- Drain and disinfect before using the water again.

Residential Pools

Wildfires may impact residential pools and make them unsafe to use. There may be structural damage to the pool basin or equipment. Ash, soot, or heat may have impacted the quality of water. If the pool water was not circulating or was not treated, harmful bacteria may have grown in the stagnant water. Work with a pool service company to restore your swimming pool and ensure it is safe to use. Small whirlpools (hot tubs) should be drained, scrubbed clean, and re-filled.

Insurance Claims and Financial Assistance

If your home or property has been affected by the wildfire, contact your insurance provider as soon as possible to begin the claims process. Your insurer will guide you on what is covered, including damages, repairs, replacement of belongings, and—if you've been displaced—possible coverage for additional living expenses such as accommodations, food, and essentials.

This package includes information from the **Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC)** to help answer common questions and outline the steps in the claims process.

If you need help completing documents or have questions about financial supports, please reach out to our **Support Navigator** at navigator@annapoliscounty.ca. The Navigator is available at the **Bridgetown Fire Hall (31 Bay Rd., Bridgetown) daily from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week**. This program was developed in direct response to the **West Dalhousie Wildfires** to support evacuees—particularly those who lost their homes—as they navigate recovery and are guided through the necessary processes.

In addition, **financial assistance for wildfire evacuees** is available through the **Nova Scotia Department of Emergency Management**, and the Navigator can help connect you with these programs.

Preparedness and Emergency Readiness

- **Stay prepared for re-evacuation:** Keep a 72-hour emergency kit ready, including water, food, medications, and important documents.
- **Communication plan:** Ensure all family members know how to reconnect if separated and have emergency contacts updated.
- **Fuel and supplies:** Maintain a safe amount of fuel for vehicles and ensure cell phones or radios are charged.
- **Sign up for NovaScotiaAlert :** <https://novascotia.ca/nova-scotia-emergency-alert-app/>
- **Civic Signs:** It's important emergency service providers can identify where your property is. If you don't have a civic sign, please contact the Municipality of the County of Annapolis Civic Addressing Department at planning@annapoliscounty.ca or call 902-532-3141

For more information, please visit Annapolis REMO at www.annapolisremo.ca

Pets, Livestock, and Wildlife

After a wildfire, farm animals may be at risk from ash, smoke, and potential contamination of feed, water, or pasture. Residents who have concerns about the health and safety of their livestock or potential contamination on their property can contact the **Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture (NSDA) Regional Services Division** for guidance. They can be reached **toll-free at 1-800-279-0825** or through the nearest office listed on their website, likely the **Kentville office**. More information is available at <https://novascotia.ca/agri/programs-and-services/regional-services/>

- **Pets and livestock:** Ensure animals have food, water, and shelter. Have transport cages, trailers, and contacts arranged in case evacuation is required again.
- **Livestock food & Water:** Ensure livestock food and water sources have not been contaminated. If in doubt, contact NS Department of Agriculture for information or advice.
- **Wildlife awareness:** Wildfires may displace wildlife into residential areas. Use caution outdoors, store food securely, and keep pets on leashes or contained.
- **Report dangerous wildlife sightings to the Department of Natural Resources 1-800-565-2224**

Livestock Loss After a Wildfire

Losing livestock to wildfire or smoke is a difficult and emotional experience. Beyond the personal loss, there are health and safety concerns related to the disposal of deceased animals, as well as risks to surviving animals exposed to smoke, damaged pasture, or contaminated feed.

Farmers are responsible for managing livestock disposal and should follow safe practices to protect human health, water sources, and the environment. On-farm options include **burial or composting**, following the guidelines in the [Perennia Dead Stock Guide](#). If on-farm disposal is not possible, contact your local **Nova Scotia Department of Environment office** for advice on alternate options. In some cases, landfills or composting facilities may accept carcasses, depending on local approval.

- If you need immediate assistance with animal health or welfare, reach out to your **veterinarian**.
- Proper handling and disposal are important to reduce risks of disease spread, protect water sources, and ensure community health and safety.
- Residents experiencing the stress of livestock loss are encouraged to seek support through **211 Nova Scotia**, the **Farm Family Support Centre (1-800-464-9555)**, or **Provincial Mental Health & Addictions Crisis Line: 1-888-429-8167** (or **902-429-8167**)

Fire Safety and Property Protection

- **Watch for embers or flare-ups:** Remain alert for smoke, hot spots, or small fires around your property and report any concerns immediately. **Call 911**
- **FireSmart your property:** Clear away dry leaves, needles, or flammable debris near structures. Maintain defensible space by keeping grass trimmed and wood piles at least 10 metres from buildings.
- **Check propane/fuel tanks:** Ensure they are intact and not leaking. Contact your supplier if you notice damage or unusual odours.

Rebuilding, Renovating or Repairing Your Home or Outbuildings

If you are planning to rebuild or repair your home or outbuildings after a wildfire, please contact the Municipality of the County of Annapolis Planning and Development Department before starting any work. Building or development permits may be required

under Nova Scotia regulations, and staff can guide you through the process to ensure your project is safe and compliant.

Contact Annapolis County Planning and Development at planning@annapoliscounty.ca or call 902-532-3141

Looking After Yourself and Your Community

- **Take care of your wellbeing:** Re-entry after an evacuation can be stressful. Reach out for support if needed and take breaks when cleaning or repairing.
- **Check in on neighbours:** Some residents may need help with information, cleanup, or evacuation readiness.
- **Stay informed:** Follow updates from the Municipality of Annapolis County, Annapolis County REMO and Department of Emergency Management.
- **Nova Scotia Emergency Alert:** Download the app- <https://novascotia.ca/nova-scotia-emergency-alert-app/>

Monitor alerts by visiting:

- www.annapolisremo.ca
- www.annapoliscounty.ca
- <https://beta.novascotia.ca/government/emergency-management>

The Importance of Wildfire Mitigation for Homeowners

Wildfires are a growing risk across Nova Scotia and many other parts of Canada. Even if your property is not directly surrounded by forest, wind-blown embers can travel long distances and ignite homes and yards. Research shows that the condition of homes and the immediate surroundings often determines whether a structure will survive a wildfire.

Please be mindful that Nova Scotia Burning Restrictions are still in effect until October 15, 2025.

During wildfire risk season (15 March to 15 October), open fires like domestic brush burning and campfires are never allowed between 8:00 am and 2:00 pm. After 2:00 pm, burn restrictions depend on the conditions. Burn restrictions are updated daily at 2:00 pm, except when a provincewide burn ban is in place (you also need to follow municipal bylaws for your area). To report a wildfire or violations of the fire restrictions, call 1-800-565-2224 or 911.

Why Mitigation Matters

- **Protects your home and property:** Simple changes to landscaping, building materials, and yard maintenance can dramatically reduce the risk of ignition.
- **Supports firefighter safety:** Homes that are more fire-resilient are safer for fire crews to defend, allowing limited resources to protect more properties.
- **Builds community resilience:** When many homeowners take action, the overall risk of neighbourhood loss is greatly reduced.
- **Peace of mind:** Being prepared reduces stress and gives families confidence during wildfire season.

What Homeowners Can Do

Homeowners play a critical role in reducing wildfire risk. The most effective actions focus on the **“Home Ignition Zone”**—the house itself and the area within 30 metres of it.

Around the Home (0–1.5 metres)

- Keep this zone clear of combustible materials such as firewood, lumber, planters, or propane tanks.
- Use fire-resistant building materials where possible (metal or asphalt roofing, non-combustible siding).
- Install spark arrestors on chimneys.
- Clear debris from eaves, gutters, and under decks.

Yard and Landscaping (1.5–10 metres)

- Maintain a well-watered lawn and trim grass to under 10 cm.
- Choose fire-resistant plants and shrubs. Avoid evergreens, which ignite easily.
- Prune tree branches at least 2 metres from the ground.
- Store firewood and other combustibles at least 10 metres from the house.

Extended Zone (10–30 metres)

- Thin trees to reduce canopy contact and remove dead or downed wood.
- Create fuel breaks such as driveways, pathways, or gravel areas.
- Keep sheds, garages, and outbuildings clear of debris and fitted with non-combustible roofing if possible.

Year-Round Practices

- Regularly clean up leaves, needles, and yard debris.
- Check that your address is clearly visible for emergency responders.
- Maintain access routes for fire trucks (clear driveways, trim overhanging branches).

For more information on how you can help protect your home visit [FireSmartCanada.ca](https://firesmartcanada.ca)

Phone Numbers

All Emergencies	911
Non-Emergency Annapolis Royal Police	1-902-532-2427
Non-Emergency Bridgetown RCMP Detachment	1-902-665-4481
Non-Emergency Middleton RCMP Detachment	1-902-825-2000
Annapolis REMO	1-902-532-0258
Nova Scotia Power Outage	1-877-428-6004
Poison Control	1-800-764-7669
Mental Health Crisis Line	1-888-429-8167
Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources Emergency	1-800-565-2224
Environmental Emergencies (Such as oil spills or gas leaks)	1-800-565-1633
Annapolis County Public Works After Hours Emergency	1-844-944-4074
Town of Annapolis Royal Public Works After Hours Emergency	1-902-526-2429
Town of Middleton Public Works After Hours Emergency	1-902-825-4449
Nova Scotia Public Works After Hours Emergency	1-800-424-5620
Nova Scotia Environmental Health	1-877-936-8476
Bell Aliant Outage	1-800-663-2600
Eastlink Outage	1-888-345-1111
Drinking Water Safety	1-877-936-8476
Food Safety	1-877-252-3663
211 - Nova Scotia (Social Programs & Services)	211
Provincial Roads Information	511
Non Urgent Health Information and Advice	811
Suicide Crisis Helpline	988
Annapolis County Bylaw Enforcement and Animal Control	1-902-532-8407
Disaster Animal Response Team of Nova Scotia	1-902-954-1323
Nova Scotia Provincial SPCA Office	1-902-835-4798

