

An aerial photograph of the North Shore of Vancouver, showing a dense residential area with many houses and trees, situated along a large body of water. In the background, the city skyline of Vancouver is visible across the water. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark green rectangle containing the title text.

North Shore Evacuation Guide

Version 1 – August 2025

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Introduction

With its mountains, rivers, waterfronts and forested areas, the North Shore is a beautiful place to live, work and visit. However, its natural features, in combination with a dense urban environment, heavy industry and several major tourist attractions, result in a set of hazards that can impact people living, working or recreating on the North Shore. These hazards may result in the need to evacuate small or large parts of the North Shore.

North Shore Emergency Management (NSEM) is the emergency management department for the District of North Vancouver, City of North Vancouver and District of West Vancouver. In partnership with municipal departments, police and fire, NSEM is responsible for planning how evacuations unfold within the municipal jurisdictions on the North Shore.

Throughout 2024 and 2025, NSEM updated municipal evacuation plans with updated evacuation strategies, procedures, and policies. These plans guide the municipalities and their response partners to effectively manage an evacuation.

Due to the size and complexity of the North Shore, it is not possible to plan for every evacuation scenario. Instead, the focus is to have strong internal procedures in place, which capture essential information about the community, and to train municipal staff and responders to make strong and timely decisions, regardless of the size and scale of the unfolding emergency.

This resource is a public-facing document. It outlines the key components of the strategies and procedures, and informs the public about what they can expect from local authorities in case of an evacuation on the North Shore.

1.0 Evacuation types

1.1 Planned/Strategic

If there is enough advance warning about a potential threat to one or more North Shore municipalities, a State of Local Emergency (SOLE) will be declared before any evacuation alerts or evacuation orders are issued to the public. This is known as a planned, or strategic, evacuation.

1.2 Tactical

If there is an immediate threat and little to no time to warn the public, the Incident Commander at the scene—likely Fire or Police—will order an immediate evacuation of the area at risk. This is known as a tactical evacuation. Once the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is activated, formal steps, like declaring a State of Local Emergency (SOLE), will follow.

2.0 Evacuation stages

Evacuations typically happen in stages, each with different legal actions and instructions. Ideally, each stage is followed in order; however, an Evacuation Alert may not always be issued before an Evacuation Order. Learn more about each of the evacuation stages below.

2.1 State of Local Emergency (SOLE)

Before ordering a planned or strategic evacuation anywhere on the North Shore, a **State of Local Emergency (SOLE)** must be declared. This aligns with [Section 95 of the Emergency and Disaster Management Act \(2023\)](#).

A SOLE declaration will clearly identify the nature of the emergency, the municipality it applies to, and the date and time in which the emergency is occurring. The declaration must be signed off by a representative of the local authority (i.e., municipality) declaring the SOLE, typically the Mayor.

By declaring a SOLE, the municipality is permitted to exercise emergency response powers as detailed in the [Emergency and Disaster Management Act \(2023\)](#). These powers include:

1. Identifying essential goods, services, property, or facilities and, in relation to those things, doing any of the following:
 - a. Establishing price controls.
 - b. Rationing or providing for their distribution or use.
 - c. Providing for their restoration.
2. Authorizing a qualified person to provide a service or give assistance.
3. Requiring a qualified person to provide a service or give assistance.
4. Providing for the provision and maintenance of necessities.
5. Appropriating, using, or controlling the use of goods.*
6. Using or controlling the use of land.*
7. Authorizing entry into structures or onto land to take emergency measures.*
8. Prohibiting entry into structures or onto land by any person.*
9. Authorizing or requiring alterations, removal, or demolition of trees, crops, structures, or landscapes.*

10. Authorizing or requiring the construction, alteration, removal, or demolition of works.*
11. Requiring structures to be assessed for damage.
12. Requiring the evacuation of persons or authorizing the evacuation of persons or animals.*
13. Authorizing the removal of goods.*
14. Controlling or prohibiting travel.*
15. Controlling or prohibiting business activities.
16. Controlling or prohibiting events.
17. Requiring a person to stop doing an activity or putting limits or conditions on doing an activity.
18. Adopting a bylaw to borrow money to pay response or recovery expenses.

*Indicates a duty to consult and cooperate with Indigenous governing bodies prior to taking certain actions related to municipal land and property during a SOLE. Indigenous governing bodies should be informed and consulted throughout the entire process as information becomes known, both before and after a SOLE is declared.

Due to the immediate nature of the threat, a **tactical evacuation** is the only instance in which emergency response powers may be exercised without the prior declaration of a SOLE. The legal authority for responders to exercise this right is found under Acts, such as the [Wildfire Act](#), [Fire Safety Act](#), and [Public Health Act](#).

2.2 Stage 1: Evacuation Alert

An **Evacuation Alert** is issued to inform the population at risk of a *potential* threat and the *potential* need to evacuate. This alert highlights the nature of the threat and provides instruction on what to do should an evacuation be deemed necessary.

Evacuation Alerts do not require a **State of Local Emergency (SOLE)** to be declared.

2.3 Stage 2: Evacuation Order

An **Evacuation Order** is issued to formally communicate that the population at risk *must* evacuate immediately. An Order is mandatory and does not allow for any discretionary action by the population at risk.

Evacuation Orders require a **State of Local Emergency (SOLE)** to be declared.

All persons in the identified area(s) must evacuate for their personal safety. While the Order is in effect, the area will have controlled access by authorized personnel only.

Individuals have the right to remain on their property during an Evacuation Order (i.e., refuse to evacuate); however, response personnel will not be permitted to return to assist anyone who has chosen to stay behind. In addition, movement within the area under Order is not allowed—those who choose to stay must remain on their property.

Children and youth under the age of 19 cannot stay behind. If a household refuses to evacuate and includes anyone under age 19, police are legally required to remove children and youth for their safety.

2.4 Stage 3: Evacuation Rescind

When an area previously under an Evacuation Alert or Order is determined to be safe for the population to remain in or re-enter, a formal **Evacuation Rescind** is issued. The declaration of a Rescind does not always mean the threat is completely gone—if conditions change, the public may again be placed under an Evacuation Alert or Order.

2.5 Shelter-in-Place Order

A **Shelter-in-Place Order** is issued to advise the population at risk to immediately take shelter in the building they are currently in or closest to, provided the building is safe. This applies regardless of whether it is a home, workplace, school, or other location.

A Shelter-in-Place Order may be used in several ways when there is a threat to life safety. Depending on the nature and location of the threat, an Order may require populations outside the immediate evacuation zone to remain in place and off

roads. This reduces traffic congestion and allows for a more efficient evacuation. Alternatively, an Order may advise populations to remain in place and seal air inflow portals such as doors, windows, and ventilation openings. This aims to reduce the exposure and risk levels to the threat, particularly with hazards such as:

- Chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear contaminants
- Severe windstorms or other severe weather
- Poor air quality caused by wildfire smoke or volcanic eruptions

3.0 First Nation reserve land

Tsleil-Waututh Nation and **Squamish Nation** are the two Indigenous Nations with both reserve land and traditional territories across the North Shore. As non-Treaty First Nations, Tsleil-Waututh Nation and Squamish Nation are recognized as Indigenous governing bodies, represented by their respective Chiefs or Chairpersons and Councils.

The municipalities of the City of North Vancouver (CNV), District of North Vancouver (DNV), and District of West Vancouver (DWV) are **not authorized to enforce evacuation measures**, including alerts, orders, or shelter-in-place orders, on reserve lands. Nor may municipalities take certain emergency actions on traditional Nation territory without prior consultation and cooperation with the respective Nation(s). Residents of leased lands should look to the respective Nation as the local authority for any evacuation information and processes.

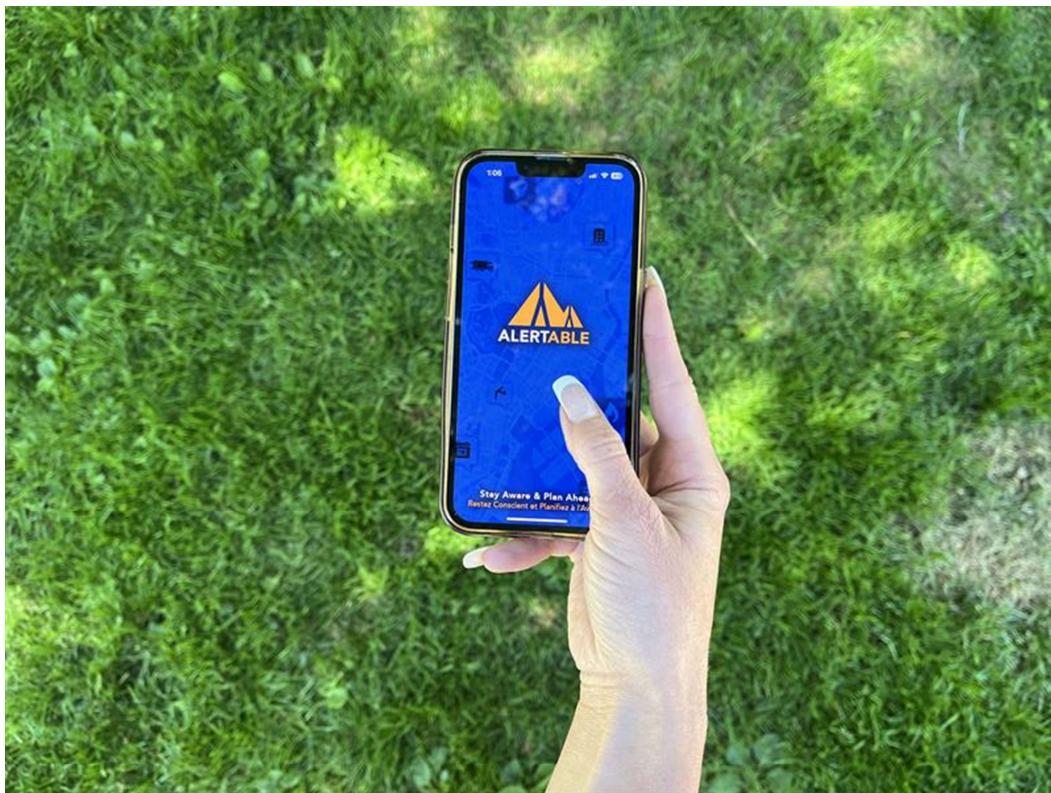
While it is often advantageous for local governments and First Nations to follow the same guidance for planned evacuations, the [Emergency and Disaster Management Act \(2023\)](#) does not require Nations to follow the same evacuation steps as neighbouring municipalities. For more information on evacuation planning for both Nations, please visit the respective websites: [Tsleil-Waututh Nation](#) and [Squamish Nation](#).

4.0 Communications

To ensure as many people as possible are informed during an emergency, **Evacuation Alerts, Orders, and Rescinds** are shared across multiple platforms—including **Alertable**, **BC Emergency Alerts**, **website**, and **social media**. Learn how emergency information is communicated to the public in the sections that follow.

4.1 Alertable

Alertable is the official emergency notification system used by North Shore Emergency Management on behalf of the three North Shore municipalities (CNV, DNV, DWV). Anyone who lives, works or travels on the North Shore is encouraged to download the Alertable app or sign up for alerts by text, email or phone (including landlines). Alertable includes a translation feature, allowing alerts to be viewed in 30 languages. Learn more about Alertable and sign up at nsem.ca/alertable.



4.2 BC Emergency Alerts

BC Emergency Alerts are issued by the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) at the request of a local government, First Nation, or partner agency like North Shore Emergency Management. Alerts are sent when there is an immediate and life-threatening danger and are delivered through compatible cell phones and/or by interrupting TV and radio broadcasts via the national Alert Ready system. Like Alertable, alerts include details about the hazard and what actions to take.

4.3 NSEM website and social media

Emergency information will be posted on the [Real-Time Emergency Updates page](#) at [nsem.ca](#). The page can be accessed using the red banner at the top of the homepage. The website is available in multiple languages—a translation icon is found in the top right corner of each page.

In addition, NSEM social media will be used to amplify evacuation alerts, orders, rescinds, and other key updates. NSEM accounts for emergency information include [X](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) (@NorthShoreEMO).

4.4 Municipal websites and social media

Municipalities will amplify information published on the NSEM website and social media channels. In some cases, municipal-specific updates will be posted first on the relevant municipal website and social media channels, and shared by NSEM, if appropriate.

Website	X	Facebook	Instagram
City of North Vancouver	@CityOfNorthVan	@CityOfNorthVancouver	@CityOfNorthVancouver
District of North Vancouver	n/a	@NVanDistrict	@NVanDistrict
District of West Vancouver	@WestVanDistrict	@WestVanDistrict	@WestVanDistrict

4.5 Door-to-door notifications



Door-to-door teams are responsible for visiting all homes in an area under **Evacuation Order** to alert residents of the need to evacuate and to identify community members who may require support to evacuate.

These teams are used when there is ample time for evacuation and little or no threat to individuals. In situations where an area under **Evacuation Order** is in immediate danger, only trained first responders must enter.

Door-to-door teams will fill in evacuation forms and apply flagging tape to the front doors of properties to mark the evacuation status. In apartment buildings or condos, door-to-door teams will enter the building and mark each door.

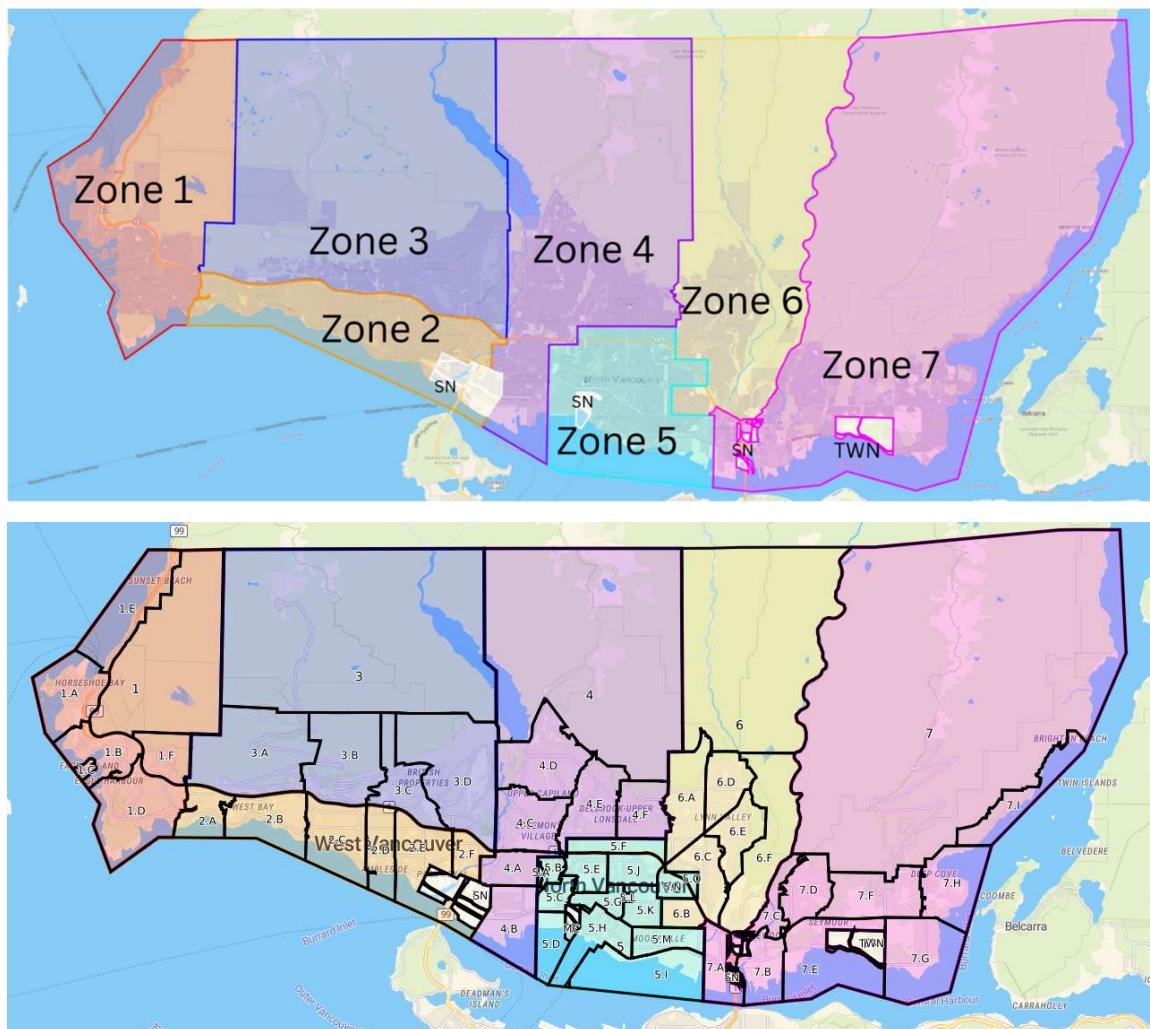
Flagging tape colour	Tape colour meaning	Follow-up action
Blue	Not home/no answer.	Canvas again, if time permits.
Pink	Notified of evacuation order.	Confirm if house is clear, if time permits.
Yellow	Verified as evacuated.	None.
Orange	Notified, but refusing to evacuate.	Remove minors, if applicable.
Red	Notified, and need assistance.	Provide assistance.

5.0 Evacuation zones & sub-zones

The North Shore is divided into seven evacuation zones, each containing smaller sub-zones. Zones and sub-zones follow municipal and First Nation boundaries and attempt to follow features such as major roads, rivers, creeks, and forested areas.

Zones help organize the North Shore community and support clear communication during major emergencies. Each zone includes a **Disaster Supply Cache (DSC)** with supplies to establish a **Reception Centre** and a **Group Lodging Facility**.

In a large-scale evacuation, emergency personnel may evacuate one sub-zone at a time to ensure a safe and efficient process.



6.0 Evacuation strategies

When an **Evacuation Order** is issued, it will include important instructions for the public to follow, such as the direction to travel and the location of the designated reception centre(s).

There are two main evacuation options on the North Shore: evacuating to a safer area on the North Shore or evacuating off the North Shore. The decision to evacuate on or off the North Shore depends on the situation and will be made with safety as the top priority.

6.1 Evacuating on the North Shore

Evacuating to other parts of the North Shore helps move people quickly to safety while keeping them close to home. This option is usually used in smaller evacuations affecting only a few sub-zones, where the risk of the evacuation area expanding is low.

6.2 Evacuating off the North Shore

Evacuating off the North Shore may be necessary when multiple areas are at risk or the hazard is growing.

In such cases, traffic may be controlled by limiting entry to the North Shore, establishing one-way roads, and evacuating zones in stages while issuing **Shelter-in-Place Orders** for less-affected areas to reduce congestion.

Where possible, carpooling and alternative transportation methods—such as e-bikes or other modes—may be encouraged to reduce congestion.

7.0 Evacuation routes

There are no fixed evacuation routes for individual homes, zones or sub-zones. The safest route will depend on the situation and the type of hazard. Any road that leads away from danger and toward safety may be used as an evacuation route.

For a general idea of which routes may be used, the following criteria will be applied:

Priority	Definition	Use
1	Major arterial streets, bus routes, and access to emergency services, like hospitals.	Primary road to lead people away from the hazard, with traffic control measures in place.
2	Collector streets and streets leading to schools.	These streets may be used if priority roads are unavailable or to supplement priority roads.
3	Local streets.	These streets should only be used to lead people to primary evacuation routes.

Major roads leading away from an area will be prioritized as an evacuation route, meaning responders will be working to keep traffic flowing as smoothly as possible on those roads.

To know which evacuation route to use in an emergency, refer to official emergency information releases/sources, instructions from emergency personnel, and on-the-ground signage.

8.0 Security and safety of evacuated areas

When an area is under evacuation order, the local authority issuing the order is obligated to keep the area secure.

All access roads into an area will be blocked off by physical barriers or access control teams.

Access control teams may consist of police, municipal staff or contracted private security companies. These teams are responsible for granting access to responders or authorized utility providers, or in rare cases, individuals with access permits.

Mobile patrol units will be established to patrol inside the evacuated area provided it is safe to do so.

9.0 Transportation Staging Areas

Transportation Staging Areas (TSAs) are designated areas capable of accommodating multi-modal transportation, such as boats and helicopters. These areas may be used to transport personnel, goods, and supplies to and from evacuated areas, and in some cases, evacuees under evacuation order.

10.0 Transportation Hubs

Transportation Hubs are designated locations where people under an evacuation order can gather for transport to a reception centre. These hubs can be used by anyone, including those without access to a private vehicle, and people will be encouraged to use them to help reduce the number of vehicles on the road.

Each sub-zone on the North Shore has one or more transportation hubs. These hubs are familiar sites with enough space for buses, and, where possible, are located closer to multi-unit residences.

11.0 Accessibility Teams

Accessibility Evacuation Teams assist anyone who needs support evacuating due to accessibility needs.

It is important to understand the difference between accessibility evacuations and medical evacuations. Individuals being evacuated by an accessibility evacuation team must be able to safely get on and off a bus on their own. Teams cannot lift or carry people or provide medical assistance. If someone needs help being physically moved or requires medical assistance, a medical evacuation team will be able to assist. **Health Emergency Management BC, Vancouver Coastal Health,** and **BC Emergency Health Services** coordinate medical evacuations.



12.0 Emergency Support Services

When an Order is in place, the impacted municipality is required to organize **Emergency Support Services (ESS)** for evacuees who may need it.

ESS is a provincially funded program. On the North Shore, it is administered by North Shore Emergency Management, on behalf of the local municipalities. It provides evacuees with food, shelter, clothing and incidentals for a minimum of 72 hours following displacement. If necessary, mutual aid support for ESS may be requested from neighbouring jurisdictions.

12.1 Reception Centres

A **Reception Centre** is a safe gathering place for evacuees to register to receive **Emergency Support Services (ESS)**, obtain information, and be reunited with loved ones.

The reception centre location depends on the emergency, but it is typically set up in a municipal recreation facility (i.e., community centre). Each evacuation zone has a pre-identified location for a reception centre. During an evacuation, the priority is to establish reception centres on the North Shore in adjacent zones, provided it is safe to do so. Reception centres may be located off the North Shore if required, and if other communities are able to provide mutual aid.

12.2 Group Lodging Centres

A **Group Lodging Centre** is a safe location where evacuees can stay indoors overnight. These centres are typically set up in gymnasiums at recreation centres or other large indoor facilities.

As with reception centres, the location depends on the emergency. When possible, group lodging centres will be located next to a reception centre.

13.0 Re-entry

The return phase begins when an official **Evacuation Rescind** is issued, informing evacuees they may return to the area. This phase continues until everyone has safely returned to their homes.

Once the danger has passed, the **Site Commander**, in partnership with the **EOC Director** and other response agencies, can declare the area "all-clear" and safe for re-entry.

The "all-clear" may apply to the entire area that was under **Evacuation Order**. Sometimes, only parts of the area may be cleared, while other sections remain under **Evacuation Order** for life-safety reasons.

13.1 Re-entry assessment

Before residents and businesses can return, the impacted area must be assessed to ensure it is safe. The assessment includes confirming the following:

- The threat that caused the evacuation has passed or has been resolved.
- Structures have been inspected and assessed; unsafe structures have been secured.
- There are no gas leaks, downed power lines or damaged water and sewer systems.
- Search & Rescue operations are complete.
- No hazardous materials are present that could harm the public.
- Water is safe to drink, or warnings have been issued (e.g., boil water advisories).
- Roads and major transportation routes—including bridges and tunnels—are clear and safe to use.
- An adequate firefighting water supply is available.
- All other safety risks have been addressed.

13.2 Re-entry process

Once an **Evacuation Rescind** is issued, a safe and orderly re-entry process will begin.

Re-entry will occur through **Access Control Points**. If possible, residents should provide ID verifying their address is in the **Evacuation Order** area. This helps ensure residents return home first and helps ensure the area remains secure. Mobile patrol units will continue to monitor the **Evacuation Order** area during re-entry.

Re-entry efforts will follow a similar structure to the evacuation process:

- **Transportation Hubs** will be set up so residents from **Reception Centres / Group Lodging Centres** can return by scheduled bus to their communities.
- Residents with accessibility needs will receive transportation support to return home safely.
- Individuals evacuated by medical teams will be brought back by medical staff.

13.3 Phased re-entry

If an evacuation happens in phases (i.e., one sub-zone or section evacuated at a time), efforts will be made to allow residents to return in the same order they were evacuated. This means that residents in the areas that were first evacuated will ideally be the first to re-enter.

14.0 Personal preparedness

Knowing what to do and where to go for credible sources of information is critical during an emergency. Being prepared means taking the time to complete the following steps in advance:

1. Make and review an emergency plan
2. Create an Emergency Support Services profile
3. Sign up for Alertable
4. Prepare grab-and-go bags
5. Stay informed with trusted sources of information
6. Know your evacuation zone

Visit nsem.ca/evacuation for resources and links to help you complete the preparedness steps referenced above. You can also review an interactive evacuation map to see your zone and sub-zone, as well as the nearest transportation hub and any pre-identified reception centres.

Keeping people safe is a shared priority for the North Shore municipalities and their response partners. Fire, police, and municipal staff work together to support the community in times of emergency.

Thank you for reading this plan and for taking steps to both understand evacuation procedures and prepare for emergencies on the North Shore.