



## **PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE: SAFETY DURING ESCALATING WILDFIRE SEASONS**

As Canadians, we pride ourselves on our connection to the great outdoors. But in recent years, the increasing frequency and intensity of wildfires have brought new and serious risks—particularly to the air we breathe.

Wildfires are no longer rare or isolated events. Fueled by climate change, warmer temperatures, and prolonged droughts, they are becoming more common, more severe, and more widespread.

In fact, the 2025 wildfire season in Canada has already seen significant fires forming and spreading across British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, Ontario, Newfoundland & Labrador, Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Air quality warnings and states of emergency have been declared as a result of these fires. The Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service identifies 56 megatonnes of carbon dioxide emissions because of wildfires in 2025 and, as of publication, the 2025 season trails only 2023 as the most destructive in the nation's history.

And while the fires themselves pose immediate dangers to life and property, their impact doesn't stop at the fire line. Smoke from wildfires can travel hundreds, even thousands, of kilometres. It carries with it fine particulate matter that can penetrate deep into the lungs and even enter the bloodstream.

Exposure to this type of pollution can trigger asthma, worsen heart and lung conditions, and increase the risk of stroke and other serious health issues. Children, older adults, and people with pre-existing health conditions are especially vulnerable.

But no one is immune. Even healthy individuals can experience coughing, throat irritation, and reduced lung function during high-smoke events.

This is why air quality awareness has become a critical part of public safety. Monitoring tools like the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) can help provide real-time information and health guidance.

During wildfire season, it's essential to pay close attention to local alerts from municipal authorities, health agencies, and Environment Canada. When air quality reaches moderate to high-risk levels, limiting outdoor activities—especially strenuous ones like running or yard work—can help reduce your exposure to harmful pollutants.

Vulnerable individuals, including young children, seniors, and people with respiratory or cardiovascular conditions, should take extra precautions. Indoors, keep windows and doors closed, and use high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) purifiers to filter out fine particulate matter that can seep inside. If you must go outside when smoke levels are high, wearing a well-fitted N95 respirator can provide meaningful protection against inhaling dangerous particles.

As we face longer wildfire seasons and more days with hazardous air quality, let's all take proactive steps to protect ourselves and our communities.

***Make Safety a Priority!***



Gareth Jones  
President and CEO





### *Staying Safe Around Water (Continued from page 1)*

Children are also at risk, especially those under five. Most child drownings occur in and around the home — bathtubs, backyard pools, and even buckets of water pose serious threats when young children are left unattended.

#### **Where and How It Happens**

Open water is the most common setting for drowning fatalities in Canada. Lakes, rivers, and oceans account for more than 60 per cent of incidents, while pools, bathtubs, and other locations make up the remainder. In many cases, the victim was not wearing a lifejacket or personal flotation device (PFD) and was either alone or out of sight when the incident occurred.

Drownings often happen silently and quickly — in as little as 30 seconds. There may be no splashing, yelling, or visible struggle. That's why awareness and prevention are key.

#### **Preventative Measures That Save Lives**

The good news is that almost every drowning death is preventable. With proper preparation, education, and caution, we can significantly reduce the risk.

#### **1. Wear a Lifejacket**

This is one of the most effective ways to prevent drowning, especially during boating or paddling activities. Despite this, many victims are found without one. Make it a habit to wear a properly fitted, approved PFD every time you're on the water.

#### **2. Supervise Children Closely**

Always keep children within arm's reach when they are in or near water. Assign a designated adult to supervise during gatherings — don't assume someone else is watching.

#### **3. Learn to Swim... and Keep Learning**

Swimming is a life skill. Enroll children in lessons early and refresh your own abilities if it's been a while. Many local communities offer programs tailored to all ages and abilities.

#### **4. Stay Sober Around Water**

Alcohol and drugs impair judgment, coordination, and reaction time. Avoid consuming them before or during any water-related activity, especially when boating or supervising children.

Let's enjoy Canada's beautiful waters responsibly, respectfully, and with an eye toward prevention.

## **UTV OPERATORS COURSE**

The Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV) Operators Course is a 6-1/2 to 8 hour training program with curriculum based on field-tested techniques. Check out the link below for more information on how to register!

<https://canadasafetycouncil.org/utv>



On a warm summer day — even one that feels mild — the inside of a parked car can become dangerously hot in just minutes.

It's a risk that's easy to underestimate, but the consequences can be deadly.

Vehicles act like greenhouses. Sunlight enters through the windows and heats the interior rapidly, and that heat has nowhere to go. Even on a 22°C day, the temperature inside a car can soar past 47°C within an hour.

On hotter days, it climbs even faster — a 35°C day can heat the interior of a small car to over 50°C in just 20 minutes, according to research funded by General Motors of Canada. After 40 minutes, that can hit a staggering 65.5°C — hot enough to cause heatstroke, organ failure, or death.

#### Prevention Starts with Awareness

No one thinks it will happen to them — and yet, it does. Distractions, fatigue, and changes in routine can lead to forgetfulness, with heartbreaking consequences.

To help prevent these tragedies:

- **Look Before You Lock:** Make a habit of checking the back seat every time you exit your vehicle.

- **Put Something Important Back There:** Place your purse, phone, or even one shoe in the back seat so you're forced to turn around before locking up.
- **Keep Your Vehicle Locked at All Times:** Even when it's parked at home, a locked car prevents curious children from climbing inside.
- **Never Leave a Child or Pet Unattended:** Not even for a minute. Running inside "just for a second" can be the difference between life and death.
- **If You See a Child or Animal in a Hot Vehicle, Take Action:** Call 9-1-1 immediately. Emergency services are trained to respond and may advise you on how to help.

Cracking the windows does not make enough of a difference to keep the temperature safe inside. The only way to protect vulnerable occupants is to never leave them behind.

Protecting children and pets from heat-related harm in vehicles is everyone's responsibility.

Whether you're a parent, caregiver, neighbour, or passerby, staying alert and aware can save a life.

Let's all do our part this summer — and every season — to ensure no life is lost to this entirely preventable danger.

# HOME & COMMUNITY SAFETY

## PROTECT YOUR HOME FROM FLOODS

(NC) Flooding is Canada's most common natural disaster, affecting hundreds of thousands across the country. With the increase of frequent and severe rainfalls, the government of Canada cautions that flooding can happen anywhere, at any time—and the results can be costly.

Research from the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation at the University of Waterloo shows the average price to repair a flooded basement is \$53,000. There are preventative maintenance steps you can take to reduce the risk of flooding in your home, and many can usually be completed in less than a day. The centre offers many tips to help protect your home from flooding.

**Regular maintenance.** The first place to start is with simple maintenance. At least twice a year, remove debris from around storm drains and culverts and clean out your eavestroughs. This keeps the way clear for water to flow freely. Inside your home, test your sump pump, clean out the backwater valve and remove obstructions from around floor drains.

**Simple upgrades.** Outside of the house, simple changes will help direct water away from your home. Start by disconnecting downspouts and capping

the foundation drains. Then, extend the downspouts and sump discharge pipes to direct water at least two metres away from the foundation, about the length of a standard dining table. Next, consider installing window wells that sit 10 to 15 centimetres above ground, about the height of a smartphone, along with window well covers where fire escape requirements allow.

For inside your home, store valuables and hazardous materials that are kept in the basement in water-tight containers. These items should be kept at least 30 centimetres off the floor, or the height of a standard ruler. A flood alarm is another low-cost item that can be installed to notify you quickly of any issues that could be missed while at work or on vacation.

**Home projects.** Whether it's planting a rain garden to collecting stormwater or converting paved areas into vegetation to absorb more water, investing a little extra time and money in flood protection can help save you more in the long run. Check with your local municipality to find out if they offer subsidies and rebates for flood protection measures.

Learn more ways to reduce your home's risk at [intact.ca/protection](https://intact.ca/protection).

## YOUTH SAFETY TRAINING

Safety training for our youth remains important in building their confidence and life skills. We offer e-learning programs on youth safety topics including playing hockey, electrical safety and more!

Visit <https://csc.vubiz.com/safe-kids> for more.





The reintroduction of the School Resource Officer (SRO) program in Canadian schools represents a valuable opportunity to strengthen community safety and trust. At its core, the SRO program places trained police officers in schools not to enforce discipline, but to serve as accessible resources, mentors, and safety educators.

SROs play a critical role in delivering age-appropriate safety messaging on issues such as bullying, cyber safety, substance abuse, and conflict resolution. They are also important partners in traffic safety messaging, and have supported the Elmer the Safety Elephant program for decades.

Their presence fosters safer school environments and opens doors for honest conversations between students and law enforcement. When implemented effectively, the

program builds relationships rooted in respect and understanding — helping young people see police as approachable and supportive, rather than punitive.



**Toronto police Insp. Matt Moyer marks the school year's start last September at Tredway Woodsworth Public School with Elmer the Safety Elephant.**

School Resource Officers can also help schools respond more quickly and appropriately to emergencies while also offering support in crisis situations. Their ongoing involvement contributes to proactive, rather than reactive, approaches to safety.

Reintroducing SROs, with a focus on community engagement and education, offers a meaningful way to enhance student well-being and promote long-term safety.

Photo credit: Toronto Star, *Police need a plan for return to school*

## Looking Ahead

The summer months at CSC are an exciting time as we tackle new projects and review existing programs for curriculum updates.

Our Winter Service Driver Improvement Course, Paramedic Driving Enhancement Program and School Bus Driver Improvement Courses are all in final stages of development — contact us at [csc@safety-council.org](mailto:csc@safety-council.org) if you'd like to know more!

winning Defensive Driving Course in order to keep it up to date with the latest and most accurate safety information.

We're also planning a summer full of relevant and timely safety information on our social media channels, so be sure to check those out. Links are provided on the following page.

This summer, let's all do our part to keep ourselves and our neighbours safe!



Ticks are more than just a nuisance—they pose a serious health hazard for Canadians who work outside. Ticks carry several pathogens, including Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, babesiosis, and Powassan virus, all of which can be transmitted through a single bite.

Outdoor workers—such as forestry crews, landscapers, park rangers, and agricultural staff—are particularly at risk. Ticks inhabit wooded areas, tall grass, shrubs, and even urban parks, especially during the spring, summer, and fall seasons.

### What Employers and Workers Can Do

- 1. Conduct Risk Assessments.** Employers should evaluate work sites for tick exposure and take preventive measures. Start by reviewing the geography and natural features of the job site. Ticks are commonly found in wooded areas, tall grasses, brush, leaf litter, and even urban green spaces.
- 2. Use Layered Controls.**
  - Personal protective equipment:** Wear long sleeves, long pants, and closed shoes.
  - Permethrin-treated clothing:** Use repellent clothing and gear.
  - Insect repellents:** Apply DEET or picaridin to exposed skin.
  - Environmental controls:** Keep grass trimmed and remove leaf litter around work areas.
- 3. Practice Post-Work Checks.** Workers should inspect their bodies immediately after being outdoors. Showering soon after helps dislodge unattached ticks, and clothing should be washed in hot water and dried on high heat for at least 10 minutes to kill any lingering ticks.
- 4. Educate and Respond.** Ensure all staff recognize symptoms of tick-borne illnesses—such as fever, rash, joint pain, and neurological signs—and understand the importance of early medical treatment.



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