# After the Wildfire

## Returning Home and Back to Business

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Wildfires can leave behind serious hazards, even after evacuation orders are lifted. This manual provides health and safety guidance to support safe re-entry following a wildfire.

**Quick-reference checklists are provided in Appendix A (Returning Home) and Appendix B (Back to Business) to support safe re-entry and reopening.**

## 1. Before You Return

**Do not return to your home or business until the evacuation order has been officially lifted by the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency (SPSA) or your local authority. Re-entering too early may place you and emergency responders at risk.**

- Before returning, take steps to reduce the risk of injury, illness, or further damage. Where possible, have one or two adults conduct an initial safety assessment of the property.
- Children, older adults, pets, and individuals with medical vulnerabilities should not return until potential hazards have been identified and addressed.
- Tell a trusted person where you are going and when you expect to return, especially if cell service is limited.
- Plan to return during daylight hours to improve visibility and hazard awareness.
- Seek medical attention for puncture wounds, deep cuts, or injuries sustained during cleanup, as even minor wounds contaminated by debris can become infected.
- Bring a re-entry kit to help manage hazards and limited services. This should include:
  - ✓ Personal protective equipment (PPE): N95 respirator, work gloves, sturdy closed-toe footwear
  - ✓ Safety supplies: flashlight, first aid kit, food thermometer (to check refrigerated or frozen food if power was disrupted)
  - ✓ Basic necessities: bottled water and non-perishable food
  - ✓ Cleanup supplies: garbage bags
  - ✓ Documentation tools: fully charged phone or camera and a battery pack (for photos, videos, and emergency contact)

## 2. Structural Safety

Wildfires can weaken buildings in ways that may not be immediately visible. Structural damage can pose a serious risk of injury or collapse.

- Approach the building cautiously and conduct a visual inspection from the outside before entering.
- Inspect the surrounding area, including trees, for fire damage (particularly at the trunk and root base). Burn-damaged trees may fall unexpectedly and should be assessed or removed by a qualified professional.
- Look for signs of structural instability, including:
  - ✓ Sagging or partially collapsed roofs
  - ✓ Cracked or shifted foundations
  - ✓ Leaning walls, chimneys, or columns
  - ✓ Fire damage to siding, decks, eaves, or roofing materials

- Do not enter the building if there are signs of structural damage or potential collapse.
- Contact a qualified building inspector or structural professional before re-entry.
- Inspect porches, stairs, ramps, and decks carefully before putting weight on them, as fire and heat may have weakened supports and fasteners.
- Where it can be done safely, check crawlspaces, basements, and foundations for signs of heat damage, shifting, or cracking.

## 3. Gas Leaks and Propane:

Fire, heat, and shifting structures can damage natural gas and propane systems, creating a risk of explosion or fire.

- If you smell gas or hear a hissing sound:
  - ✓ Leave the building immediately
  - ✓ Do not use light switches, phones, or open flames
  - ✓ Move to a safe location and call SaskEnergy: 1-888-700-0427
- Do not attempt to shut off gas lines unless it can be done safely and without entering a hazardous area.
- Have all gas lines, meters, and appliances inspected by a qualified professional before restoring gas service.
- For propane systems, contact your propane supplier before reconnecting or using any appliances. Tanks, regulators, and lines may need inspection or replacement if exposed to heat or fire.
- Do not resume normal use of gas-fired equipment until it has been confirmed safe.

## 4. Electrical Hazards and Power Restoration

Wildfires and extreme heat can damage electrical systems, creating a risk of shock, fire, or electrocution.

- Do not turn power on until the electrical system has been inspected and cleared by a qualified electrician or SaskPower. Fire, heat, and water exposure can compromise wiring and equipment even if damage is not immediately visible.
- If you smell burning insulation, see damaged wiring, or notice sparking:
  - ✓ Leave the building immediately
  - ✓ Do not attempt to restore power
  - ✓ Call SaskPower:
    - 310-2220 or 1-888-355-5589
- Always stay at least 10 metres away from downed or damaged power lines. Assume all lines are energized and dangerous.
- Do not touch electrical equipment or debris that may be in contact with power lines.
- Once power is safely restored, test all smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms; replace batteries, where needed. Replace any units damaged by heat, smoke, or water.

### Generator Safety

Portable generators can be useful during extended power outages but pose serious safety risks if used incorrectly.

- ✓ Use generators outdoors only (minimum 6 metres from doors and windows).
- ✓ Never use generators indoors or in enclosed spaces due to the risk of carbon monoxide

- Ensure generators are placed on a dry, stable surface.
- Operate generators outdoors only, at least 6 metres away from buildings, windows, doors, and ventilation openings.
- Do not use fuel-burning equipment indoors or in enclosed spaces, including garages, sheds, crawl spaces, or basements, due to the risk of carbon monoxide exposure.
- Carbon monoxide can quickly build up in enclosed areas and cause serious illness or death.
- Carbon monoxide from generators is odourless and deadly; never rely on smell to detect exposure.
- Allow generators to cool completely before refuelling and store fuel safely away from ignition sources.
- Use heavy-duty extension cords rated for outdoor use and inspect them for damage before use.

## 5. Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Systems

Wildfire smoke, ash, and debris can enter HVAC systems and be redistributed throughout a home or building, posing ongoing health and fire risks if systems are used too soon.

- Keep HVAC systems turned OFF until the ductwork, vents, and filters have been inspected and cleaned or replaced as needed. Operating the system too early can spread smoke residue, fine ash (PM2.5), and other contaminants throughout occupied spaces.
- Wildfire smoke and ash can clog ducts, damage filters, and coat internal components, including heat exchangers and fan systems, increasing both fire risk and exposure to harmful particles.
- If the home or building was in or near the fire zone, or experienced heavy smoke infiltration, have a qualified HVAC technician inspect the system before restarting it. Professional cleaning or component replacement may be required.
- Replace all HVAC filters with new, appropriately rated filters before use. Do not attempt to clean and reuse disposable filters. Where compatible with the system, consider installing higher efficiency HVAC filters (minimum MERV 13).
- Avoid running ventilation fans, air conditioners, or heating systems until inspections and cleaning are complete.
- Check chimneys and flues for blockages, soot buildup, cracks, or structural damage before using fireplaces or wood burning appliances. Fire debris or shifting structures may obstruct airflow and create a fire or carbon monoxide hazard.
- Do not use wood stoves or fireplaces until they have been confirmed safe and fully functional.

## 6. Drinking Water Safety: Source, Plumbing, and Distribution Systems

Wildfires, power outages, and firefighting activities can damage drinking water systems and introduce contamination, even without direct flame contact. Damage may occur anywhere along the system (source to tap), including wells, treatment components, service lines, and household plumbing.

Extreme heat, loss of pressure, and the thermal degradation of materials (e.g., PVC, PEX, HDPE, rubber) can release chemical contaminants, such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs), into drinking water. Smoke, ash, runoff, and firefighting agents may also affect water quality. Water that appears clear and odour-free may still be unsafe.

**Risk is higher when:**

- Fire occurred at or near the structure,
- Plumbing, well components, or service lines were exposed to heat,
- Water pressure was lost during the fire, and
- Water has a burnt plastic, petroleum, chemical, or smoky odour.

**Visit the Drinking Water Advisories and Warnings page for current notices.**

➢ **Water Quality Testing**

- Testing confirms whether the system has recovered and water is safe to use.
- The type and extent of testing required will depend on the water source, system condition, and potential exposure to contamination. Always follow guidance from local authorities or your Public Health Inspector.
- Where more comprehensive testing is needed, public health guidance may include analysis of:
  - ✓ Bacteriological parameters (e.g., total coliform bacteria and *E. coli*)
  - ✓ General chemistry (e.g., pH, conductivity, hardness, major ions such as calcium, sodium, chloride, and sulphate)
  - ✓ Health-related chemical parameters (e.g., metals such as arsenic, lead, copper, and other elements of concern)
  - ✓ Organic contaminants (e.g., volatile organic compounds [VOCs] and dissolved organic carbon)

➢ **Municipal Water Systems**

- Follow all drinking water advisories issued by the Water Security Agency (WSA) or the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA), including:
  - ✓ Precautionary Drinking Water Advisory
  - ✓ Emergency Boil Water Order
  - ✓ Do Not Drink / Do Not Use Advisories

**Important Note:**
Boiling water does **NOT** remove chemical contaminants and can increase their concentration.

- Public Health Inspectors and Environment Officers support public facilities and municipalities in conducting water quality testing and following procedures required to maintain safe drinking water and lift advisories.
- If a Do Not Drink or Do Not Use Advisory is in place, use an alternative safe water source (e.g., bottled water) for drinking, cooking, brushing teeth, making ice, and preparing infant formula until the advisory is lifted.
- For more information on what to do during and following a water advisory see *Water Testing for The Public* at www.saskhealthauthority.ca.

- After advisories are lifted, it is important to flush plumbing to clear stagnant or potentially contaminated water:
  - ✓ Run cold water taps for several minutes; and
  - ✓ Flush hot water tanks and appliances as per manufacturer instructions.
- If water quality concerns (e.g., colour, taste, or odour) persist after flushing, contact your water provider or municipality.

➢ **Private Water Sources**

- Private landowners are responsible for maintaining their water supply, conducting water testing, and establishing treatment.
- Wildfires can damage well infrastructure and allow contaminants to enter groundwater or the distribution system.
- Do not use the water for drinking, cooking, brushing teeth, or food preparation until:
  - ✓ the system has been inspected,
  - ✓ the well/storage tank has been properly disinfected (shock chlorinated) and flushed, and
  - ✓ testing confirms the water is safe.
- Continue using bottled or another safe water source until water quality results confirm potability.
- The WSA *Saskatchewan Guide to Private Well and Water Management* provides information on source water protection, water quality testing, maintenance and treatment of private water sources.
- Water quality testing procedure:
  - ✓ Disinfect (shock chlorinate) and flush the water source (e.g., well or cistern and internal plumbing)
  - ✓ Order water quality testing kit from an accredited laboratory
  - ✓ Collect water samples approximately 5–7 days after disinfecting, or once chlorine has dissipated, to confirm disinfection was effective
  - ✓ Ship samples to the laboratory in a cooler with ice
  - ✓ Use the laboratory results to determine whether additional treatment or corrective actions are required before returning the water source to service
- Bacteriological water testing (total coliforms and *E*. coli) is required to confirm the water is microbiologically safe.
- Additional chemical testing may be recommended based on site-specific risk factors, such as:
  - ✓ heat damage to infrastructure
  - ✓ unusual odours, taste, or appearance
  - ✓ proximity to fuels, chemicals, or burned materials.
- If you require assistance in interpreting your results, contact a SHA office (Contact Your Public Health Inspector), the laboratory, or WSA Client Services (client.service@wsask.ca or 1.866.727.5420).
- It is important to recognize that contaminants may have been present prior to the wildfire. Understanding your water quality is important to ensure proper use and management (e.g., treatment) for the protection of human and animal health.

➢ **Cisterns and Hauled Water Systems**

- Cisterns and storage tanks may become contaminated by smoke, ash, debris, or heat (even if sealed).
- Inspect for:
  - ✓ Soot, ash, or debris

- ✓ Heat damage (warping, softening, brittleness in plastic tanks)
- ✓ Cracked seals, joints, or fittings.

- If contamination is suspected:
  - ✓ completely drain the cistern
  - ✓ clean all interior surfaces
  - ✓ inspect the components for cracks or poor seals and repair them
  - ✓ disinfect the cistern and all connected household plumbing using an appropriate disinfection method (www.saskhealthauthority.ca)
  - ✓ refill with safe (potable) drinking water
  - ✓ Consider using bottled or another safe drinking water source until the system has been properly inspected, disinfected, flushed and tested
- Water quality testing after treatment confirms that the treatment was effective and that the water is safe for human consumption.

## 7. Food Safety

Ensuring food safety following an evacuation is critical to prevent foodborne illness. Disruptions to power, temperature control, and sanitation can make food unsafe even if it appears acceptable or was not directly exposed to fire. The following guidance outlines how to assess and handle food after returning.

➢ **Refrigerated Foods**

- All perishable foods must be kept at 4°C (40°F) or below to remain safe. If refrigeration temperatures exceeded 4°C (40°F) during the evacuation, food safety can no longer be guaranteed.
- If electrical power was out for more than four hours, discard all refrigerated perishable foods, including:
  - ✓ Meat, poultry, and seafood
  - ✓ Milk, cheese, yogurt, and other dairy products
  - ✓ Cut fruits and vegetables
  - ✓ Cooked foods and leftovers
- Foods that are normally stored refrigerated but are shelf-stable (such as unopened condiments, jams, or pickles) may be safe; however, when in doubt, throw it out.

➢ **Frozen Foods**

- Freezers maintain safe temperatures for a limited time without power, depending on how full they are and whether the door remains closed
- A full freezer will generally keep food frozen for about 48 hours and a half-full freezer will keep food frozen for approximately 24 hours
- If food still contains ice crystals or is refrigerator-cold (4°C / 40°F or below), it may be safely refrozen or cooked immediately
- Discard all frozen food that has completely thawed and has been held above safe temperature limits for more than 4 hours.

➢ **Non-Perishables**

- Non-perishable foods (e.g., canned, jarred, bottled, vacuum-sealed, and other packaged foods) may be affected by wildfire-related heat, smoke, soot, ash, chemicals, or physical damage. Upon returning home after an evacuation, all non-perishable foods must be carefully inspected before use.

**Important Note:**
Even small damage may allow contamination by bacteria such as *Clostridium botulinum* and should be discarded.

- Discard non-perishable foods if any of the following conditions are present:
  - ✓ Cans or containers that are:
    - Bulging, swollen, leaking, or foaming
    - Dented along seams, rims, or closures
    - Cracked, rusted, or punctured
  - ✓ Broken or unsealed packaging (including jars with popped lids)
  - ✓ Evidence of exposure to excessive heat or flames that has compromised container integrity (e.g., burned labels)
  - ✓ Food containers contaminated by chemicals where contamination cannot be completely removed through cleaning and sanitizing
  - ✓ Any food with an off smell when opened
- Before opening or storing kept foods:
  - ✓ Remove surface debris: Brush or wipe off loose ash and soot outdoors if possible.
  - ✓ Wash containers: Use warm water and dish detergent and scrub all surfaces, especially seams and lids.
  - ✓ Sanitize: Use a food-safe sanitizer (e.g., ¾ tsp unscented household bleach to 1 litre of water).
  - ✓ Allow containers to air dry.
- If external labels are damaged or removed during cleaning record all available information before discarding the label, including:
  - ✓ Product name and type,
  - ✓ Brand or manufacturer,
  - ✓ Lot code and/or production code (if available), and
  - ✓ Best before or expiry date.
- Do not rely on appearance, smell, or taste to determine whether food is safe. Harmful bacteria may be present even if food looks and smells normal.
- Discard any food with an unusual smell, colour, texture, or visible signs of spoilage, such as mould.
- If there is uncertainty about how long food was without proper temperature control, discard it.

**When In Doubt, Throw It Out!**
The cost of replacing food is minimal compared to the risk of foodborne illness.

## 8. Cleanup and Ash Removal

Cleanup following a wildfire or smoke event must be done carefully to limit exposure to fine particulate matter and contaminated ash. Ash may contain heavy metals and chemicals; avoid skin contact and discard children's toys, pacifiers, and other porous items that cannot be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected if exposed to heavy smoke or ash.

**Important Note:**
Never mix bleach with fire retardant residue, as this may produce hazardous gases.

➢ **Cleanup Precautions**

- Fine particulate matter (PM2.5) may remain indoors for days or weeks after flames are extinguished. These particles are easily inhaled and pose ongoing health risks if disturbed.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including:
  - ✓ An N95 respirator (cloth or surgical masks do not filter fine ash)
  - ✓ Rubber or disposable gloves
  - ✓ Eye protection
  - ✓ Long sleeves and long pants
  - ✓ Sturdy, closed-toe footwear

- Ventilate the home by opening windows and doors only when outdoor air quality is acceptable and smoke or ash is no longer present outside.
- Use wet cleaning methods to prevent ash and dust from becoming airborne. Lightly mist ash with water before removal, then clean surfaces using wet mops, damp cloths, or HEPA-filtered vacuums.
- Do not dry sweep, dust, or use leaf blowers or non-HEPA vacuums. Dispose of used filters and cleaning materials after cleanup.
- Clean from top to bottom (ceilings → walls → surfaces → floors) to prevent re-contamination.
- Clean and disinfect all hard, non-porous surfaces by washing with warm, soapy water followed by a diluted bleach solution.
- Clean the inside of cupboards, closets, and drawers before returning clean items.
- Run the dishwasher and washing machine empty, using bleach, before placing dishes or laundry inside.
- Porous items such as clothing, bedding, carpets, rugs, and upholstered furniture should be laundered, shampooed, or professionally cleaned. Items heavily contaminated with soot or smoke that cannot be safely restored should be discarded.

➢ **Aerial Fire Retardants**

- During wildfire suppression, aircraft may apply aerial fire retardants to slow fire spread and protect structures. These products are commonly red in colour (the dye fades with sunlight) and may be visible on buildings, soil, vegetation, pavement, or outdoor equipment.
- Aerial fire retardants do not pose a significant risk to human health when encountered during cleanup.
- They are not known to be carcinogenic, do not contain heavy metals, and are not listed on the Canadian Toxic Substances List.
- Retardants are not known or suspected of posing a risk to pregnant or breastfeeding individuals.
- Prolonged or repeated contact may cause temporary skin or eye irritation.

**Important Note:**
Older homes, garages, sheds, and other buildings may contain asbestos in insulation, drywall compounds, floor tiles, roofing materials, siding, and other building products. Fire damage and cleanup activities can disturb these materials and release asbestos fibres into the air.

Do not sweep, cut, break, sand, or otherwise disturb suspect materials. Asbestos debris must be disposed of at an authorized landfill. Occupational Health and Safety has information on how to safely handle, transport and dispose of asbestos-containing materials. If your building is unsafe to enter, call Occupational Health and Safety at 1-800567-7233 (1-800-567-SAFE) to discuss safe options for managing asbestos.

➢ **First Aid Following Contact with Contaminated Materials**

- Skin contact: Wash thoroughly with clean water. Seek medical advice if irritation persists.
- Eye contact: Rinse cautiously with potable water for several minutes. Remove contact lenses if present and easy to do. Seek medical advice if irritation persists.
- Ingestion: Do not induce vomiting. Seek medical advice or contact HealthLine at 811.

➢ **Children and Pets**

- As a precaution, prevent pets and children from contacting concentrated residue.
- If a pet is exposed to or ingests fire retardant residue and develops signs of illness, contact a veterinarian.
- Clean sandboxes, outdoor toys, pools, and play areas where hand to mouth contact could occur.

- Replace sandbox materials and discard toys or other items that cannot be thoroughly cleaned if they have been contaminated by ash, soot, debris, or fire retardant.

➢ **Cleaning and Disposal**

- Fire retardants are water-soluble.
- Before drying, they can be rinsed away with water.
- Once dried, light scrubbing or pressure washing may be required. Mild soap or detergent may assist in removal.
- Wear gloves and eye protection during cleaning to avoid irritation.
- Do not wash residue into storm drains, wells, cisterns, or surface water sources. Follow local disposal recommendations where available.

**Important Note:** Sanitizing & Disinfecting are not the same.

- **Cleaning** removes dirt, debris from surfaces.
- **Sanitizing** reduces disease-causing germs to safe levels and is commonly used for food-contact surfaces and food equipment.
- **Disinfecting** destroys or inactivates a broader range of disease-causing germs and is commonly used for surfaces, materials, equipment, and water systems.

## 9. Other Important Considerations:

➢ **Documentation and Insurance**

- Proper documentation is crucial for insurance claims, recovery planning, and potential inspections.
- Take photographs and videos of all damage, including both interior and exterior areas, before cleanup begins whenever possible.
- Keep a brief written record describing the event and the damage observed.
- Save all receipts related to repairs, cleanup supplies, temporary accommodation, and other wildfire related expenses.
- Maintain a record of cleanup activities, including what actions were taken and who completed them.
- Contact your insurance provider as soon as possible to report damage and receive guidance on claims and coverage.

➢ **Mental Health and Well-Being**

- Returning home after a wildfire can be emotionally challenging. Individuals and families may experience feelings of grief, anxiety, anger, or being overwhelmed.
- These reactions are normal following a traumatic event.
- Be patient with yourself and others and allow time for recovery.
- Seek additional support or professional help if emotional distress becomes difficult to manage.

### SK Mental Health Supports Free 24/7

**HealthLine**: 811
**Suicide Crisis HelpLine**: 988
**Kids Help Phone**: 1-800-6686868 or text CONNECT to 686868
**Government of Saskatchewan**: Mental Health Services Webpage

## 10. Back To Business: Reopening Guidance:

When it is safe to return following a wildfire, many of the same health and safety principles used for residential cleanup also apply to businesses and public facilities. Before reopening, operators should contact their local public health inspection office and obtain approval confirming compliance with public health requirements.

- Do not reopen the facility until evacuation orders have been lifted and the facility has been assessed and approved by the appropriate authorities, including local public health.
- Fire, smoke, ash, water damage, and power outages can all compromise sanitation, food safety, air quality, and building systems.
- Conduct a thorough inspection of the facility, including:
  - ✓ Structural integrity
  - ✓ Electrical, gas, and water systems
  - ✓ Ventilation and HVAC systems
  - ✓ Presence of ash, soot, smoke residue, or water damage
- Clean and disinfect all affected areas before resuming operations. Food-contact surfaces and other items that may be mouthed (e.g., toys) that have been disinfected must be rinsed with potable water before use.

➢ **Food Facilities**

- Do not serve food until water, power, plumbing (water and sewage systems) are fully and safely restored.
- Clean and disinfect all food-contact surfaces, equipment, utensils, shelving, and food storage areas. Food-contact surfaces that have been disinfected must be rinsed with potable water before use.
- Clean, flush, disinfect, and, where required, rinse with potable water all equipment before use, including:
  - ✓ ice machines
  - ✓ beverage machines and lines
  - ✓ dishwashers
  - ✓ coffee and hot water equipment
- Once wildfire cleanup and disinfection have been completed, resume routine cleaning and sanitizing procedures.
- Ventilation hood systems and filters must be cleaned if exposed to smoke or ash.

➢ **Child Care Facilities and Schools**

- Ensure the facility is fully cleaned and disinfected prior to reopening.
- Food-contact surfaces and items that may be mouthed must be rinsed with potable water after disinfection and before use. Once wildfire cleanup and disinfection have been completed, routine cleaning and sanitizing practices for these items may resume.
- Dispose of toys, learning materials, and furnishings that cannot be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- Verify water quality and indoor air quality before reopening.
- If the facility has been closed, a licensing checklist must be completed by the Ministry of Education prior to reopening to confirm all requirements continue to be met; a new licence will then be issued.
- Contact Child Care Operations, Ministry of Education, for guidance on reopening requirements at childcare@gov.sk.ca or 1-855-824-9419.

- **Public Swimming Pool Facilities**
  - Pools and hot tubs must not reopen until water quality, treatment systems, and facility infrastructure are confirmed safe.
  - Inspect and assess:
    - ✓ Pool basins and decks
    - ✓ Filtration, disinfection, and circulation systems
    - ✓ Chemical storage areas
  - Clean and disinfect areas affected as required.
  - If contamination is suspected, draining, cleaning, disinfecting, and refilling the pool(s) may be necessary. Contact the local Public Health Inspector Office to determine inspection and reopening requirements prior to public use.
- **Other Public Facilities (Gyms, Personal Services, Community Spaces)**
  - Ensure shared equipment, surfaces, and washrooms are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
  - Confirm that all building systems (e.g., plumbing, electrical, HVAC) are functioning safely before reopening
  - Address ventilation concerns, as smoke and fine ash particles can linger indoors.
  - Replace HVAC filters and have systems inspected where heavy smoke exposure occurred.
  - Ensure a safe drinking water supply is available, handwashing stations are operational, and cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting supplies are stocked.

**For additional information contact your local Public Health Inspection Office:**
https://www.saskhealthauthority.ca/your-health/conditions-illnesses-services-wellness/contact-your-public-health-inspector

## Appendix A: Returning Home Checklist (Post-Wildfire)

**Before You Go**
- ☐ Evacuation order officially lifted
- ☐ Plan daytime return; notify someone of your plans
- ☐ Bring re-entry kit (PPE, water, flashlight, first aid, phone)

**Initial Safety Check**
- ☐ Inspect exterior for structural damage (roof, walls, foundation)
- ☐ Watch for falling trees/debris
- ☐ Do not enter if unsafe and contact a qualified professional

**Utilities & Systems**
- ☐ Check for gas smell/hissing and leave immediately if detected
- ☐ Do not turn power on until inspected
- ☐ Stay clear of downed power lines
- ☐ Keep HVAC off until cleaned/checked

**Drinking Water Safety**
- ☐ Follow all drinking water advisories (boil water, do-not-use, etc.)
- ☐ Use bottled or another safe water source for drinking, cooking, brushing teeth, and food preparation unless advised that boiling water is sufficient
- ☐ Do not use water until system is checked and potable
- ☐ After wildfires: inspect, repair, disinfect, and flush system
- ☐ Test water through an accredited lab before using

**Food Safety**
- ☐ Discard perishable food if power was out and refrigerator temperatures rose above 4 °C
- ☐ Discard all frozen food that has completely thawed and has been above 4 °C for more than 4 hours
- ☐ Inspect non-perishable foods; discard any items that are damaged, swollen, leaking, or contaminated
- ☐ Clean and sanitize intact metal cans before use

**Cleanup & Health Protection**
- ☐ Wear PPE (N95, gloves, eye protection)
- ☐ Use wet cleaning methods, avoid dry sweeping
- ☐ Clean and disinfect all surfaces
- ☐ Dispose of heavily contaminated porous items

**Other Steps**
- ☐ Document damage (photos, notes, receipts)
- ☐ Contact insurance provider
- ☐ Seek medical attention for injuries if needed
- ☐ Monitor mental well-being and seek support(s) if needed

## Appendix B: Back to Business Checklist (Post-Wildfire)

**Authorization & Inspection**

☐ Evacuation order lifted
☐ Approval from Public Health Inspector obtained

**Facility Safety Review**

☐ Structural integrity verified
☐ Electrical, gas, and water systems inspected by a qualified professional
☐ No ash, soot, smoke, or water damage remaining

**Cleaning & Sanitization**

☐ All surfaces, equipment, and utensils cleaned and disinfected (food-contact surfaces and items that may be mouthed rinsed with potable water after disinfection)
☐ Contaminated items that cannot be cleaned and disinfected are discarded
☐ Ventilation systems and filters cleaned/replaced

**Utilities & Operations**

☐ Safe water supply confirmed
☐ Power safely restored
☐ Plumbing, water and sewage systems assessed and functional
☐ Ventilation (HVAC) system inspected and operational

**Food Establishments (if applicable)**

☐ Do not serve food until water and power are safe
☐ Food-contact surfaces, equipment (including beverage and ice machines), and utensils cleaned, disinfected, and rinsed with potable water before use
☐ Discard perishable food if power was out and refrigerator temperatures rose above 4 °C
☐ Discard all frozen food that has completely thawed and has been above 4°C for more than 4 hours
☐ Inspect non-perishable foods. Discard any items that are damaged, swollen, leaking or contaminated. Clean and sanitize intact containers before use

**Other Public Facilities**

☐ Facility has confirmed compliance with applicable provincial licensing requirements prior to reopening
☐ Childcare and school facilities have contacted the Ministry of Education for guidance on reopening
☐ Any required inspections, approvals, or documentation for reopening have been completed by the appropriate agency (e.g., Water Security Agency and public health)

**Final Readiness**

☐ Supplies restocked
☐ Staff informed of safety procedures
☐ Documentation retained for inspections & insurance