

Using Mobile Devices in Emergencies



In an emergency, cell phones and other mobile devices are important tools to help you and your family stay connected and safe. Below are some tips that will help you make use of your family's mobile devices when you need them most.

Be Prepared

- Have a communications plan as part of your family's Emergency Preparedness Kit. It is possible that your whole family won't be together when an emergency occurs.
- Program everyone's mobile devices with contact numbers for family, friends, police, fire, gas and hydro. Include out-of-area/province contacts not likely to be affected by the same emergency situation. Regularly update this information.
- Consider keeping your family's essential health information on your mobile devices (include your pets).
- Keep paper copies of contact numbers/health information (in plastic zippered bags) in your Emergency Preparedness Kit and also in another place in case you aren't at home, or don't have access to your mobile device when an emergency happens (i.e. wallet, purse, children's backpacks).
- In addition to planning in-person meeting places, consider establishing an agreed-upon familiar online 'virtual meeting' place for your family to check in and leave messages such as a social media site or voice mailbox.
- Keep your mobile devices well maintained and fully charged. Have extra wall and car chargers as well as extra batteries in your Emergency Preparedness Kit. Remember, you need *dry* chargers, batteries and devices, so have plastic zippered bags in your kit to keep them protected.
- Identify and get familiar with key websites that will help you in an emergency. While on your mobile device, visit the Manitoba government's mobile website at manitoba.ca.
- Learn more about how to prepare for an emergency. Visit the Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization website at manitoba.ca/emo.

During an Emergency

- If you have an emergency situation and need assistance, call **911** or your municipal emergency contact telephone number.
- If you need to be on the road during an emergency, pull over and use your mobile device to check on road conditions by calling **511** or visiting manitoba511.ca.
- To save battery power, shut down your mobile devices between contacts or disconnect the battery to avoid draining it.

- Other ways to save power include reducing the brightness of your screen, placing your phone in airplane mode, closing apps and avoiding non-essential use such as taking and transmitting videos or photos.
- Increased demands on telecommunications networks during an emergency can overload the network. Keep calls brief and use text messaging, email or social media, which use less network capacity.
- Many cell phones have Global Positioning System (GPS) technology that can help you navigate to safety or help a 911 operator direct emergency responders to your location. Using your GPS will wear down your battery quickly so use it as little as possible.
- Periodically check key websites (such as manitoba.ca) for local emergency updates.
- Follow the Manitoba government's posts on Twitter at twitter.com/MBGov and Facebook at facebook.com/ManitobaGovernment for emergency updates and information.

Please remember that text messaging and talking on hand-held cell phones while driving is against the law in Manitoba. Remember to pull off the road to use your mobile device.