

Shelter in Place - Home

Introduction

What does “shelter in place” mean? Shelter in place is a precaution aimed to keep you safe while remaining indoors. (This is not the same thing as going to an evacuation centre in case of a storm.) You may be given an instruction to shelter in place in an emergency where hazardous materials have been released into the atmosphere. Shelter in place means selecting a small, interior room, with no or few windows, and taking refuge there. It does not mean sealing off your entire home or office building. If you are told to shelter in place, follow the guidelines provided by this fact sheet.

Public health significance

Chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants may be released accidentally or intentionally into the environment. Should this occur, information will be provided by local authorities on television and radio stations on how to protect you and your family. Follow instructions of local authorities and know what to do if they advise you to shelter in place.

Action to take

How to Shelter-in-Place at Home

- Close and lock all windows and exterior doors.
- If you are told there is danger of explosion, close the window shades, blinds, or curtains.
- Turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems.
- Close the fireplace damper.
- Get your family disaster supply kit and make sure the radio is working.
- Go to an interior room without windows that's above ground level. In the case of a chemical threat, an above-ground location is preferable because some chemicals are heavier than air, and may seep into basements even if the windows are closed.
- Bring your pets with you, and be sure to bring additional food and water supplies for them.
- It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone in the room you select. Call your emergency contact and have the phone available if you need to report a life threatening condition. Mobile telephone equipment may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency.
- Use duct tape and plastic sheeting (heavier than food wrap) to seal all cracks around the door and any vents into the room.
- Keep listening to your radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate.

Acknowledgement:

Information for this document was sourced from the American Red Cross website – www.redcross.org © Copyright The American National Red Cross. All rights reserved.

Related links:

- Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ) at website:
www.emergency.qld.gov.au/emq/css/beprepared.asp
- Emergency Management Australia Community Awareness Publications at website:
www.ema.gov.au/www/emaweb/emaweb.nsf/Page/Publications