

Shelter in Place - School

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 instructions provided in 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 School

- Close the school. Activate the school's emergency plan. Follow reverse evacuation procedures to bring students and staff indoors.
- If there are visitors in the building, provide for their safety by asking them to stay not leave. When authorities provide directions to shelter-in-place, they want everyone to take those steps now, where they are, and not drive or walk outdoors.
- Provide for answering telephone inquiries from concerned parents by having at least one telephone with the school's listed telephone number available in the room selected to provide shelter for the school secretary, or person designated to answer these calls. This room should also be sealed. There should be a way to communicate among all rooms where people are sheltering in place in the school.
- Ideally, provide for a way to make announcements over the school wide public address system from the room where the top school official takes shelter.
- If children have mobile phones, allow them to use them to call a parent or guardian to let them know that they have been asked to remain in school until further notice, and that they are safe.
- If the school has voice mail or an automated attendant, change the recording to indicate that the school is closed, students and staff are remaining in the building until authorities advise that it is safe to leave.

Acknowledgement:

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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