

How To Shelter In Place

"Shelter in Place" is one of the basic instructions you may receive from public safety officials during a chemical emergency in your community. Sheltering in place offers you and your family immediate protection for a short time in your home.

If you are told to shelter in place, take your children and pets indoors **immediately**. While gathering your family, you can provide a minimal amount of breathing protection by covering your mouth and nose with a damp cloth.

The following general information is a guide on how you should act before, during and after an emergency. The situation in your area may involve unique circumstances. Your local emergency planning committee or office of emergency services can provide you with details.

Planning for an Emergency

A chemical emergency may occur anywhere hazardous materials are manufactured, stored or transported. Chemical plants are obvious sources of potential accidents. Less obvious are highways, railways and storage containers at places such as swimming pools (chlorine).

- Study your surroundings for fixed and mobile sources of hazardous materials.
- Learn about any warning sirens where you live and work. Your local emergency planning committee or office of emergency services can give you information about the sirens, such as when they are tested and for how long.
- Prepare a shelter-in-place kit appropriate for the type(s) of emergencies that could occur near you. The kit should contain duct tape for sealing cracks around doors and windows; plastic (preferably, precut to size) to cover windows; a battery-operated AM/FM radio; flashlight with fresh batteries; bottled water; towels; toys for young children; candles' matches; first-aid kit; medicine and other items essential for your family's survival. Check the kit every six months to make sure all the supplies are still there and that they are fresh. The room should have a telephone, although you should use it only for emergency calls. If you use it otherwise, you may be taking up a line needed by emergency response officials.
- Find out which radio, television and cable systems in your area broadcast emergency information.
- Learn CPR and first-aid.
- For a place to shelter, select a room in your house that has few or no windows.
- Make sure all family members know what to do in a chemical emergency, whether they are at home, school, work or outdoors.
- Review your plan periodically and conduct drills.

During an Emergency

You are most likely to hear about a chemical emergency by radio, television or warning sirens. When you learn of the emergency:

- **Immediately** take your family and pets to the room you've chosen as a shelter. If your children are at school, do not leave your house to go get them. Going outside could expose yourself to hazardous chemicals. Also, schools have emergency plans of their own.
- Shut off heating, cooling and fans that draw in air from the outside. If you have a fireplace, close the damper.
- Shut and lock doors and windows. Locking makes a better seal. Seal cracks around the door and windows with duct tape.
- Turn on a radio or television to a local station that broadcasts emergency information. Stay tuned until the "all clear" message is broadcast.
- Stay off the phone. It should be used for emergency calls only.
- Be prepared to evacuate if ordered to do so by public safety officials. Evacuation instructions will be announced over the emergency broadcast system.

After the Emergency

When you hear the "all clear" message over the emergency broadcast system, you should:

- Open doors and windows.
- Turn on your heating/cooling system to ventilate the house.
- Go outside

For More Information

For an instructional video on how to shelter in place at home, contact NICS at (304) 346-6264 or nicsinfo@nicsinfo.org