

Preparing to Shelter at School

Issues for All School Employees to Consider

Sheltering in place means:

- Staying inside whatever building I am in at the time of an emergency
- If I'm outside, going into an undamaged building nearby for shelter
- Staying sheltered for a period that may last hours to days

I. The Need to Shelter at School

1. In what kinds of emergencies will the school instruct students and staff to shelter in the building or offer us the option to do so?
 - a. A shooter in the building?
 - b. A toxic explosion (like a dirty bomb) or chemical spill?
 - c. A tornado or snowstorm?
 - d. An electrical blackout?
 - e. Something else?

II. Communication

1. How will I know whether students and staff should stay inside the building or evacuate in an emergency?
2. How will I find out about the emergency if I am not in the building at the time (e.g., if I am on a school bus or athletic field)? What should I do then?
3. If cell or other phones will not work during the emergency, how will I receive information and communicate with others?

III. Basic and Medical Needs

1. Have I stored emergency supplies at the school? Do they need to include:
 - a. A several-day supply of all of my medications and medical supplies?
 - b. Water?
 - c. Non-perishable food?
 - d. Eyeglasses or contact lens supplies?
 - e. Flashlight?
 - f. Other items?
2. Do any of these supplies need to be replaced on a regular basis? How often?

3. How can I assure that my students' basic and medical needs will be met while they are sheltering in the school?
 - a. Do I know where the school's water, food, and other emergency supplies are kept and how they will be distributed to students who are sheltering in "safe rooms" or other areas of the building?
 - b. Have my students' parents provided the school with a several-day supply of their children's medications and written permission to administer these medications in the event of an emergency?
 - c. Do I know where those medications are kept and who is responsible for administering them to students in shelter-in-place emergencies?
4. Have I been trained to keep children calm and help them deal with the stress of shelter-in-place emergencies?

IV. Care for My Dependents

1. Have I arranged alternate providers of care for the children, adults, and animals that depend on me – with multiple back-ups so I can be sure that my own caretaker responsibilities will be fulfilled if I have to shelter at school?
 - a. Have I given my children's school, day care, or youth program a list of all of the people who are authorized to pick them up?
 - b. If neither I nor any of my authorized back-ups can pick up my children or meet them at home during the emergency, what will the school, day care, bus driver, or sitter do to assure my children's supervision and safety?
 - c. Do my children and other dependents know about these alternate care plans?
2. Have I provided the people I employ to care for my children or other dependents with any incentives to continue caring for them in this kind of situation? If so, what will happen to their dependents?

V. Protection from Toxic Substances Outside

1. What actions will be taken to prevent toxic substances from coming into the school during the emergency?
 - a. Do I need to know how to close or seal windows, doors, and vents; disable automatic doors; turn off air conditioners?
 - b. Does it matter if people are allowed to enter or leave the building?
 - c. If I am a school bus driver, do I know what to do?
2. Have I discussed this type of emergency in advance to make sure that everyone in my household will take shelter wherever they happen to be (in other words, not endanger themselves by trying to find each other or by going to a pre-arranged meeting place)?

Appreciation and credit for the issue set concepts go to the Redefining Readiness project (www.redefiningreadiness.net).