

How Do I Shelter-in-Place?

at home | in my vehicle | at work | at day-care centers and schools

The appropriate steps depend on the emergency situation. If you hear a warning signal, listen to local radio or television stations for further information. You will be told what to do, including where to find the nearest shelter if you are away from your "shelter-in-place" location.

If you are told to "shelter-in-place," act quickly. Follow the instructions of local authorities. In general:

1. Bring children and pets indoors immediately. If your children are at school, do not try to bring them home unless told to. The school will shelter them.
2. Close and lock all outside doors and windows. Locking may provide a tighter seal.
3. If you are told there is danger of explosion, close the window shades, blinds, or curtains.
4. Turn off the heating, ventilation, or air conditioning system. Turn off all fans, including bathroom fans operated by the light switch.
5. Close the fireplace or woodstove damper. Become familiar with proper operation of flues and dampers ahead of time.
6. Get your **disaster supplies kit**, and make sure the radio is working.
7. Take everyone, including pets, into an **interior room** with no or few windows and shut the door.

The room should have 10 square feet of floor space per person in order to provide sufficient air to prevent carbon dioxide buildup for 5 hours. In this room, you should store scissors, plastic sheeting pre-cut to fit over any windows or vents and rolls of duct tape to secure the plastic. Access to a water supply is desirable, as is a working hard-wired telephone. Don't rely on cell phones because cellular telephone circuits may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency. Also, a power failure will render most cordless phones inoperable.

9. If you have pets, prepare a place for them to relieve themselves where you are taking shelter. Pets should not go outside during a chemical or radiation emergency because it is harmful to them and they may track contaminants into your shelter. **The Humane Society of the United States** suggests that you have plenty of plastic bags and newspapers, as well as containers and cleaning supplies, to help deal with pet waste.
10. If you are instructed to seal the room, use duct tape and plastic sheeting, such as heavy-duty plastic garbage bags, to seal all cracks around the door into the room. Tape plastic over any windows. Tape over any vents and seal electrical outlets and other openings. As much as possible, reduce the flow of air into the room.
11. Call your **emergency contact** and keep the phone handy in case you need to report a life-threatening condition. Otherwise stay off the phone, so that the lines will be available for use by emergency responders.

Make sure all family members know what to do in an emergency whether they are at

home, school, work, or outdoors. This includes knowing the number of an out-of-town friend or relative who has agreed to serve as an emergency contact. It can be easier to reach someone out of town during an emergency than to reach someone locally, including family members. The contact can collect the information on where and how everybody is and help reassure and reunite families.

13. Keep listening to your radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate. Do not evacuate unless instructed to do so.
14. When you are told that the emergency is over, open windows and doors, turn on ventilation systems, and go outside until the building's air has been exchanged with the now clean outdoor air. Follow any special instructions given by emergency authorities to avoid chemical or radiological contaminants outdoors.

For more information, contact any of the following:

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
- **Your local American Red Cross chapter**
- **Your state and local health departments**
- **The Humane Society of the United States**
- **Your local emergency management agency**
- **CDC Public Response Hotline (English 1-888-246-2675, Spanish 1-888-246-2857, TTY 1-866-874-2646)**

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