

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.

Check with your workplace to learn their plans for dealing with a hazardous materials emergency. Their "shelter-in-place" plans should include the following:

1. Employers should close the office, making any customers, clients or visitors in the building aware that they need to stay until the emergency is over. Close and lock all windows, exterior doors and any other openings to the outside.
2. A knowledgeable person should use the building's mechanical systems to turn off all heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems. The systems that automatically provide for exchange of inside air with outside air, in particular, need to be turned off, sealed or disabled.
3. Unless there is an imminent threat, employers should ask employees, customers, clients and visitors to call their emergency contacts to let them know where they are and that they are safe.
4. If time permits and it is not possible for a person to monitor the telephone, turn on call-forwarding or alternative telephone answering systems or services. If the business has voicemail or an automated attendant, it should be switched to a recording that indicates that the business is closed and that staff and visitors are remaining in the building until authorities advise it is safe to leave.
5. If you are told there is danger of explosion, close any window shades, blinds or curtains near your workspace.
6. Take your workplace **disaster supplies kits** and go to your pre-determined **sheltering room(s)** and, when everyone is in, shut and lock the doors. There should be radios or TVs in the room(s).

Avoid overcrowding by pre-selecting several interior rooms with the fewest number of windows or vents. The appropriate location depends entirely on the emergency situation. If a chemical has been released, you should take shelter in a room above ground level, because some chemicals are heavier than air and may seep below ground. On the other hand, if there are radioactive particles in the air, you should choose a centrally located room or basement. Knowing what to do under specific circumstances is an important part of being prepared. The rooms should have adequate space for everyone to be able to sit, including an estimated number of visitors. Large storage closets, utility rooms, pantries, break rooms and copy and conference rooms without exterior windows would work well. Access to bathrooms is a plus. It is ideal to have hard-wired telephones in the rooms you select; use cordless phones (but not cell phones—the system may be overloaded in an emergency), if necessary. The rooms should be equipped with a disaster supplies kit.

8. Turn on the radios or TVs. If instructed to do so by officials, use duct tape and plastic sheeting, such as heavy-duty plastic garbage bags, to seal all cracks around the door(s) and any vents into the room. Seal any windows and/or vents with sheets of plastic and duct tape. As much as possible, reduce the flow of air into the room.
9. One person per room should write down the names of everyone in the room. Call your **business-designated emergency contact** to report who is in the room with you and their affiliation with your business (employee, visitor, client, customer).

Businesses should assign one or two people to collect information on who is in the building when an emergency happens so that first responders can know everyone is accounted for, if necessary.

11. Keep listening to the radio or watching TV for updates until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate.
12. When you are told that all is safe, open windows and doors, turn on heating, ventilating and air conditioning 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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