

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 the school or day-care center to learn their plans for dealing with a hazardous materials emergency. Their "shelter-in-place" plans should include the following:

1. Close the school. Activate the school's emergency plan. Follow reverse evacuation procedures to bring students, faculty and staff indoors.
2. If visitors are in the building, provide for their safety by asking them to stay.
3. Ideally, have access to the school-wide public address system in the room where the top school official takes shelter.
4. Have at least one telephone line under the school's listed telephone number in one of the shelter rooms available for a designated person to answer the calls of concerned parents. If time permits, it is not possible for a person to monitor the telephone and the school has voicemail or an automated attendant, change the recording to indicate that the school is closed and that students and staff are remaining in the building until authorities say it is safe to leave.
5. Have all children, staff and visitors take shelter in **pre-selected rooms** that have phone access and stored disaster supplies kits and, preferably, access to a bathroom. Shut the doors.

Classrooms may be used if there are no windows or the windows are sealed and cannot be opened. Large storage closets, utility rooms, or meeting rooms could be used. A gymnasium without exterior windows would also work well. Access to bathrooms is a plus.

7. Have all shelter rooms closed. Lock all windows, exterior doors and any other openings to the outside.
8. If told there is danger of explosion, make sure window shades, blinds or curtains are closed.
9. Turn off heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems. Systems that automatically provide for exchange of inside air with outside air must be turned off, sealed or disabled.
10. If instructed by officials, use duct tape and plastic sheeting to seal all cracks around the door(s), windows and vents into the room. As much as possible, reduce the flow of air into the room.
11. If children have cell 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. This may reduce the potential number of incoming calls.
12. One teacher or staff member in each room should write down the names of everyone in the room and call the **school's designated emergency contact** to report who is in that

room.

Schools 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.

14. Everyone should stay in the room until school officials, via the public address system, announce that all is safe or say everyone must evacuate.
15. Once the word has been given that all is safe, everyone should go outside when the building's ventilation systems are turned back on. Follow any special instructions given by emergency authorities to avoid chemical and 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)**

This page was last updated on August 2, 2006.