

## SHELTER IN PLACE (Chemical) FACT SHEET

### What is “sheltering in place”?

Some kinds of chemical accidents or attacks may make going outdoors unsafe. People who live near but not in the immediate area of attack may be asked to stay home and take shelter rather than try to evacuate. This action is called "sheltering in place."

"Shelter in place" means to make a shelter out of the place you are in. You should not try to shelter in a vehicle unless you have no other choice. Vehicles are not airtight enough to give you adequate protection from chemicals.

### How to prepare to shelter in place?

The best room to use for shelter is a room with as few windows and doors as possible. A large room with a water supply is best, such as a master bedroom that is connected to a bathroom. For most chemical events, this room should be as high in the structure as possible to avoid vapors (gases) that sink. *This guideline is different from the sheltering-in-place technique used in tornadoes and other severe weather and for nuclear or radiological events, when the shelter should be low in the home.*

Preparation is the key. Store emergency supplies in this area. Every 6 months, check the supplies in your shelter. Replace any expired medications, food, or batteries. Also, replace the water in your shelter every **6** months to keep it fresh. Make sure that all family members know where the shelter is and what it is for. Caution them not to take any items from that area.

If you have pets, prepare a place for them to relieve themselves in the shelter. Pets may not be able to go outside depending upon the chemical event.

### What emergency supplies will I need?

Stock up on supplies, just as you would in case of severe weather conditions or other emergencies. The following is a list of things to consider when preparing your emergency kit.

- Food with a long shelf life -, such as canned, dried and packaged food products. Store enough food for each member of the household for at least 3 days.
- Water - purchase and store bottled water or simply store water from the tap. Each person in the household will need 1 gallon per day; plan on storing enough water for at least 3 days.
- Flashlight, battery-powered radio, and extra batteries for both
- A change of clothes and shoes– check every **6** months and remove clothes that no longer fit or are unsuitable for seasonal weather.

- Baby items - formula, diapers, medicine, etc, books and other entertainment
- First aid kit
- Plastic, trash bags, duct tape and scissors
- Paper plates, paper towels, and plastic utensils
- Bedding and personal hygiene items
- Extra non-prescription and prescription medicine
- Toiletries
- Pet items - food, water, medicine, carrier, toys, and/or cat litter.
- Games, books, and other entertainment

### **What to do before you enter a shelter?**

Act quickly and follow the instructions of your local emergency coordinators. Every situation can be different, so local emergency coordinators might have special instructions for you to follow. In general, do the following:

- Stay calm
- Bring children and pets indoors quickly
- Close and lock all windows and outside doors
- Turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems
- If you have a fireplace, close the damper
- Gather your emergency supplies and turn on the battery-powered radio or TV
- Go to an interior room, ideally without windows. In case of a chemical threat, a room above ground is preferable because some chemicals are heavier than air and may seep into the basement.
- Seal doors, exhaust fans, vents and windows with plastic sheeting and duct tape
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If you are outside when the alert is given, try to remove your clothes and shoes and place them in a plastic bag before entering the house. If the weather is severe, remove at least the outer layer of clothes and shoes before entering the home to avoid bringing radioactive material into your shelter. Leave the items outside. Wash your entire body with soap and water.

Before entering the shelter, turn off fans, air conditioners or heating units that bring air in from the outside. Close and lock all windows and doors. Close the fireplace dampers. Make sure to seal any doors; windows or vents with plastic and duct tape for a short period of time in case a radiation cloud is passing over (listen to your radio for details). ***Suffocation could occur if you keep the shelter tightly sealed for more than a few hours.***

Keep your radio tuned to an emergency response station at all times for updates.

### **Where can I get more information on other radiation emergency topics?**

[www.bt.cdc.gov](http://www.bt.cdc.gov)

[www.dshs.state.tx.us](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us)

### **Source of Information:**

Centers of Disease Control and Prevention

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