

Shelter-In-Place

What Does “Sheltering-in-Place” Mean?



"Shelter-in-place" means to take immediate shelter where you are—at home, work, school, or in between. It may also mean "seal the room;" in other words, take steps to prevent outside air from coming in. This is because local authorities may instruct you to shelter-in-place if chemical or radiological contaminants are released into the environment. It is important to listen to TV or radio to understand whether the authorities wish you to merely remain indoors or to take additional steps to protect yourself and your family.

How Do I Prepare?

At home

- Choose a room in advance for your emergency shelter. The best room is one with as few windows and doors as possible. A large room, preferably with a water supply, is desirable—something like a master bedroom that is connected to a bathroom. Prepare to move to a lower or higher level depending on the type of threat.
- Contact your children's schools or facilities where you may have family to find out what the plans are for "shelter-in-place."
- Find out when emergency management warning systems will be tested and determine whether you can hear or see sirens and/or warning lights from your home.
- Develop your own family emergency plan and discuss it with every family member to insure that everyone knows what to do. Practice it regularly and have discussion annually.
- Assemble an emergency supply kit that includes emergency water and food supplies.

Special Note for Chemical Events:

The room may need to be as high in the structure as possible to avoid vapors (gases) that sink, which is different from the sheltering-in-place technique used in tornadoes, severe weather and nuclear or radiological events, when the shelter should be low in the home.

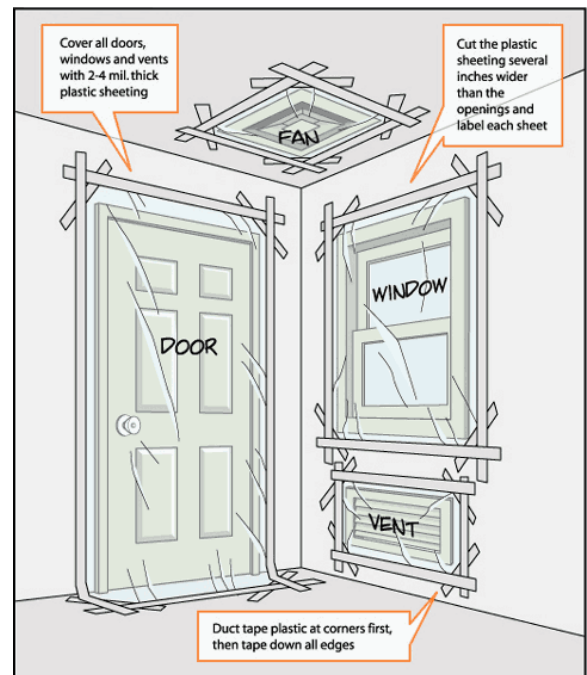
At work

- Help ensure that the emergency plan and checklist involves all employees and all employees are briefed annually. Create specific assignments for key employees and alternates.
- The shelter kit should be checked on a regular basis. Duct tape and first aid supplies can sometimes *disappear* when all employees know where the shelter kit is stored.
- Batteries for the radio and flashlight should be replaced regularly. (It is a good idea to do this when clocks are changed for fall back and spring forward)

What To Do

Act quickly and follow the instructions from emergency management, the health department, law enforcement, or fire departments. Every situation can be different, so local be aware there may be special instructions for you to follow.

- Go inside as quickly as possible and bring any outdoor pets indoors.
- If there is time, shut and lock all outside doors and windows, and storm windows. Locking them may pull the door or window tighter and make a better seal against the chemical. Turn off the air conditioner or heater, and all fans. Close the fireplace damper and any other place that air can come in from outside.
- Go to your shelter-in-place room and shut the door. Turn on the radio to a local AM station. Keep a telephone close at hand, do not call 911 it unless there is a serious emergency.
- Sink and toilet drain traps should have water in them (you can use the sink and toilet as you normally would). If it is necessary to drink water, drink stored water, not water from the tap.
- Tape plastic over any windows in the room. Use duct tape around the windows and doors and make an unbroken seal. Use the tape over any vents into the room and seal any electrical outlets or other openings.
- If you are away from your shelter-in-place location when a **chemical** event occurs, follow the instructions of emergency personnel to find the nearest shelter. If your children are at school, they will be sheltered there. Unless you are instructed to do so, do NOT try to get to the school to bring your children home! Transporting them from the school will put them, and you, at increased risk, as well as disrupting the schools emergency response protocols, putting others at risk.
- Continue to listen to the radio for an announcement indicating that it is safe to leave the shelter.



For more sources of information on this topic visit:

ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT www.scchealth.co

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES www.michigan.gov/mdhhs

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION www.cdc.gov

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY www.epa.gov