

# Radiation Emergencies

## Get Inside



A nuclear power plant accident, a nuclear explosion or a dirty bomb are examples of radiation emergencies. If something like this happens, individuals may be asked to get inside a building and take shelter for a period of time instead of leaving. Getting inside of a building and staying there is called “sheltering in place.” The walls of a house can block much of the harmful radiation. Because radioactive materials become weaker over time, staying inside for at least 24 hours can protect individuals until it is safe to leave the area.

If indoors during a radiation emergency, stay inside. If outdoors during a chemical emergency get inside a building right away. Close and lock all windows and doors. Go to the basement or the middle of the building. Radioactive material settles on the outside of buildings; so the best thing to do is stay as far away from the walls and roof of the building as you can. If possible, turn off fans, air conditioners, and forced-air heating units that bring air in from the outside. Close fireplace dampers. If possible, bring pets indoors.



If a person is in a car, bus, or other vehicle during a radiation emergency, get inside a building right away. Cars do not provide good protection from radioactive material. If an individual cannot get inside immediately, cover mouth and nose with a mask, cloth, or towel. This can help reduce the amount of radioactive material.

If loved ones are in schools, daycares, hospitals, nursing homes, or other places during a radiation emergency, stay put! Going outside to get loved ones could increase a person and the family member’s exposure to dangerous levels of radiation.

Children and adults in schools, daycares, hospitals, nursing homes, or other places will be instructed to stay inside until emergency responders know that it is safe to evacuate. These places have emergency plans in place to keep people safe at the facility.

## Stay Inside

Once in a building, there are things that can be done to stay safe inside. Staying inside for at least 24 hours can protect people until it is safe to leave the area. Always listen for additional instructions from emergency officials and radiation experts.

### Self-Decontamination

A person can be contaminated with radioactive material if outside in an area when a radiation emergency happens. Radioactive material can fall from the air like dust or sand and land on objects below, like people, buildings, cars, and roads. Radioactive contamination can spread in the same way that dust or mud can be tracked into the home or spread to another person or object.

If exposed to radiation outdoors, carefully remove the outer layer of clothing before entering the building, if possible. Radioactive material can settle on the clothing and body, like dust or mud. Once

inside, wash the parts of the body that were uncovered while outside. Then put on clean clothing. This will help limit radiation exposure and keep radioactive material from spreading.

### Decontaminating Pets

- Wash pets carefully with shampoo or soap and water and rinse completely.
- Wear waterproof gloves and a dust mask (or other material to cover mouth) if possible.
- Keep cuts and scrapes covered when washing the pet to keep radioactive material out of the wound.
- Wash hands and face after washing pets.



Emergency responders or local officials will notify people if there is a need to decontaminate the home or shelter and they will provide instructions for cleaning.

### Ways to Stay Tuned

- A battery-powered or hand crank emergency radio, preferably a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio is one of the best ways to *stay tuned*.
- Try to use text messages (SMS). Making phone calls could be hard.
- If there is access to a computer, or web-enabled device, use email and social media websites (like CDC Emergency on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)) to get information.
- Make sure your electronic devices are working. If electronic devices with batteries are not working, try taking the batteries out of the device, putting them back in, and restarting the device as normal.



**For more sources of information on this topic visit:**

ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT [www.scchealth.co](http://www.scchealth.co)

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES [www.michigan.gov/mdhhs](http://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs)

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)