

## What does Shelter-in-Place mean?

To Shelter-in-Place means to remain in your home or workplace during an emergency, and protect yourself there.

While Sheltering-in-Place you should listen to your local radio or TV stations for the latest updates. Emergency management officials may use radio broadcasts to give you further instructions. They will also let you know when the emergency has passed. [Such as KYW 1060AM Radio]

Sheltering-in-Place is the first action you should take during most types of emergency.

If an emergency is taking place and you are unsure what to do, first **Shelter-in-Place**. Then listen to the radio for instructions from emergency management officials.

## How will I know if it is time to Shelter-in-Place?

Your local, county or State emergency management officials will notify your neighborhood of the need to Shelter-in-Place or take other Protective Actions.

They will do this via Emergency Alert System messages on **local radio and TV**. They may also alert entire areas via community notification systems such as "**Reverse 911**," which sends messages to home telephones. Officials may even travel with bullhorns in certain areas.

Remember: **Your single greatest information source before, during and after an emergency will be your battery-powered radio.**

Also remember: **If an emergency is taking place and you are unsure what to do**, first Shelter-in-Place. Then listen to the radio for instructions from emergency management officials.

If you are unable to listen to the radio or believe you may miss these messages, make arrangements with someone in your neighborhood. Make sure someone will reach out to you, to keep you informed.

## Prepare at Home

### *Before it is time to Shelter-in-Place:*

- Identify a safe room in your home.
  - It should be an interior room that is without windows and is above ground level.
  - It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone, rather than a cordless or cell phone.
  - A word about **BASEMENTS**:
    - You should **AVOID** the basement if the emergency is **NOT** a tornado! If the emergency is some other type of severe weather event, your basement may become flooded. If the emergency is a chemical release - especially a release of chlorine or other gases that are heavier than air - these chemicals may seep into your basement even if the windows are closed.
    - However, basements are an ideal place to shelter **IF** the emergency is a tornado/hurricane force winds. In that case, the immediate threat is wind that may be strong enough to severely damage rooms that are above ground level.
  - Make sure you can access the items in your **Emergency Kit** and a copy of your **Emergency Action Plan**.
    - Read more about putting together an [emergency kit and an emergency action plan](#).
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### *When it is time to Shelter-in-Place:*

- Close and lock all windows and exterior doors.
  - If you are told there is danger of explosion, close the window shades, blinds or curtains.
  - Turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems
  - Close the fireplace damper.
- In case the power goes out:
  - Turn your refrigerator and freezer to the coldest settings; open them only when absolutely necessary and close quickly.
  - Turn off major appliances to reduce the power surge when electricity is restored.
  - Keep a supply of flashlights and extra batteries handy. Avoid open flames, such as candles and kerosene lamps, as a source of light.
  - Remember to listen to your battery-powered-radio!
- Store drinking water in clean bathtubs, sinks, jugs, bottles and cooking utensils.
  - **TIP:** First sterilize bathtubs and sinks with bleach, then flush with water to remove bleach.
- Keep your pets with you, and be sure to bring additional food and water supplies for them.

- Call the friend or family member you have identified as your family's emergency contact.
  - Keep the phone available in case you need to report a life-threatening condition.
- Keep listening to your radio or television until you are told all is safe or until you are told to **Evacuate** or take other [Protective Actions](#).
  - Depending on the emergency, local officials may call for Evacuation or Health-Related Actions in specific areas at greatest risk in your community.

## Prepare at Work

### *Before it is time to Shelter-in-Place:*

- Identify a safe room in your workplace.
- Select interior room(s) above the ground floor, with the fewest windows or vents. The room(s) should have adequate space for everyone to be able to sit in. Avoid overcrowding by selecting several rooms if necessary.
  - Conference rooms without exterior windows, copy rooms, pantries, utility rooms and large storage closets work well.
  - Avoid selecting a room with mechanical equipment such as ventilation blowers or pipes, because this equipment may not be able to be sealed from the outdoors.
  - It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone in the room(s) you select. Cellular telephone equipment may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency.
  - A word about **BASEMENTS**:
    - You should **AVOID** the basement if the emergency is **NOT** a tornado/hurricane force winds! If the emergency is some other type of severe weather event, your basement may become flooded. If the emergency is a chemical release – especially a release of chlorine or other gases that are heavier than air – these chemicals may seep into your basement even if the windows are closed.
    - However, basements are an ideal place to shelter **IF** the emergency is a tornado. In that case, the immediate threat is wind that may be strong enough to severely damage rooms that are above ground level.
- **Learn the details of your business' Emergency Plan.**
  - Your business may already have a robust plan, including directives to notify employees' family members, details on Evacuation or Sheltering-in-Place, and details on providing up-to-date emergency information.
  - To learn how your business can create a plan, visit our "[Business & Industry](#)" page.

### *When it is time to Shelter-in-Place:*

- **Close** the business.
- Bring everyone into the room(s) you have chosen. Shut and lock the doors.
- If there are customers, clients or visitors in the building, provide for their safety. Ask them to stay, not leave!
  - When authorities provide directions to shelter-in-place, they want everyone to take those steps **NOW**, where they are, and **NOT** drive or walk outdoors.
- Unless there is an imminent threat, ask employees, customers, clients and visitors to call their **emergency contact** to let them know where they are and that they are safe.
- Turn on call-forwarding or alternative telephone answering systems or services.
  - If the business has voicemail or an automated attendant, change the recording to indicate that the business is closed, and that staff and visitors are remaining in the building until authorities advise it is safe to leave.
- If you are told there is danger of explosion, close the window shades, blinds or curtains.
- Have employees familiar with your building's mechanical system turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems.
  - Some systems automatically provide for exchange of inside air with outside air – and these systems, in particular, need to be turned off, sealed or disabled.
- Gather essential disaster supplies, such as nonperishable food, bottled water, battery-powered radios, first aid supplies, flashlights, batteries, duct tape, plastic sheeting and plastic garbage bags.
- If the event is a chemical, biological or radiological release, use duct tape and plastic sheeting (heavier than food wrap) to seal all cracks around the door and any vents into the room.
- 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).
- Keep listening to the radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to Evacuate or take Health-Related Actions. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in your community.

# Prepare at School

## *Before it is time to Shelter-in-Place:*

- Identify a safe room in your school.
  - Select interior room(s), above the ground floor if possible, with the fewest windows or vents. The room(s) should have adequate space for everyone to be able to sit in. Avoid overcrowding by selecting several rooms if necessary.
    - Classrooms may be used if there are no windows or the windows are sealed and cannot be opened.
    - Gymnasiums without exterior windows, meeting rooms without exterior windows, utility rooms or large storage closets also work well.
    - It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone in the room(s) you select. Cellular telephone equipment may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency.
  - A word about **BASEMENTS**:
    - You should **AVOID** the basement if the emergency is **NOT** a tornado/hurricane force winds! If the emergency is some other type of severe weather event, your basement may become flooded. If the emergency is a chemical release – especially a release of chlorine or other gases that are heavier than air – these chemicals may seep into your basement even if the windows are closed.
    - However, basements are an ideal place to shelter **IF** the emergency is a tornado. In that case, the immediate threat is wind that may be strong enough to severely damage rooms that are above ground level
  - **Learn the details of your school's Emergency Plan.**
    - Your school should already have a robust plan, including directives to notify students' families, and details on Evacuation or Sheltering-in-Place.
    - To learn how your school can enhance its plan, visit our "**Schools & Day Care**" page.
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## *When it is time to Shelter-in-Place:*

- Close the school. Activate the school's Emergency Plan. Follow reverse evacuation procedures to bring students, faculty and staff indoors.
- If there are visitors in the building, provide for their safety. Ask them to stay – not leave!
- When authorities provide directions to shelter-in-place, they want everyone to take those steps **NOW**, where they are, and **NOT** drive or walk outdoors.
- Provide for answering telephone inquiries from concerned parents.
- Have at least one telephone with the school's listed telephone number available in a selected room, with a person designated to answer calls.
- There should be a way to communicate among all rooms where people are sheltering in place at the school.
- Ideally, provide a way to make announcements over the school-wide public address system from the room where the top school official takes shelter.
- If children have cell phones, allow them to use the phones to call a parent or guardian to let them know they are safe, and that they have been asked to remain at the school until further notice.
- If the school has voicemail or an automated attendant, change the recording to indicate the school is closed, and students and staff are remaining in the building until authorities advise it is safe to leave.
- Provide directions to close and lock all windows, exterior doors and any other openings to the outside.
- If you are told there is danger of explosion, direct that window shades, blinds or curtains be closed.
- Have employees familiar with your building's mechanical system turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems.
- Some systems automatically provide for exchange of inside air with outside air – and these systems, in particular, need to be turned off, sealed or disabled.

- Gather essential disaster supplies, such as nonperishable food, bottled water, battery-powered radios, first aid supplies, flashlights, batteries, duct tape, plastic sheeting and plastic garbage bags.
- Bring everyone into the room(s). Shut and lock the doors.
- Write down the names of everyone in the room, and call your schools' designated emergency contact to report who is in the room with you.
- Listen for an official announcement from school officials via the public address system, and stay where you are until you are told all is safe or you are told to Evacuate or take Health-Related Actions.
- When possible, keep listening to the radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to Evacuate or take Health-Related Actions. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in your community.