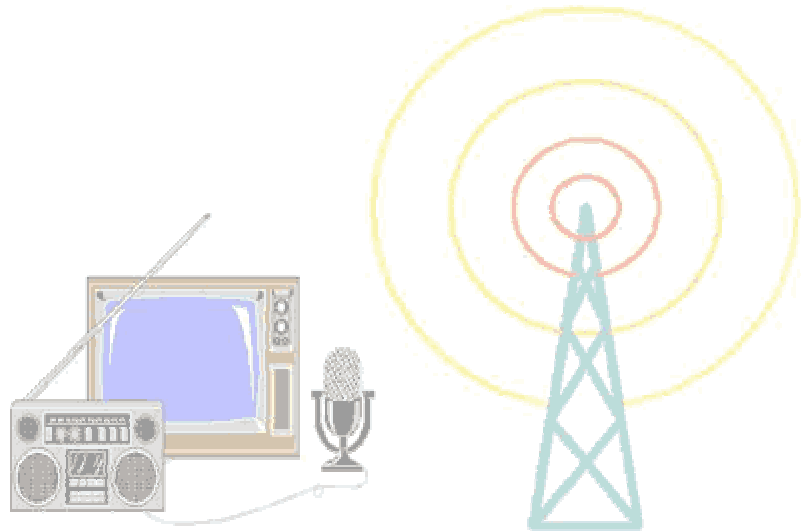


Protecting Yourself in a Chemical Emergency

Although major accidents involving hazardous chemicals occur infrequently, they do happen. They can happen almost any place... at home and in the community. The effects of a chemical release into the community can be devastating and sudden. Knowing what to expect and the steps to take in an emergency is the key to avoiding potentially serious injury.

Warning

In Dane County, you will be warned of a chemical emergency through the same warning system used to provide you with information about severe weather. This may be through:



- Commercial television and radio
- Emergency Alert System
- Outdoor warning sirens

Under special circumstances, emergency personnel may also provide door-to-door warning in your neighborhood.

[For more information on the Dane County emergency warning system](#)

[Click Here.](#)

Notification

If you are notified of an emergency - remain calm. Immediately turn on a radio or television for information or further instructions. You will be told:

- What has happened

- The type of health hazard
- The area affected
- Protective actions you should take

Do not use your telephone to call 9-1-1, unless you have a personal emergency. Unnecessary calls may tie up phone lines and prevent essential calls from getting through.

Do not evacuate unless you are told to do so. Attempting to leave the area could put you at higher risk of exposure to the released chemical. You may also interfere with emergency operations at the scene of the incident.

Shelter-in-Place

When warned of a chemical emergency, one of the instructions that you may be given is to Shelter-in-Place. This is a precaution intended to keep you and your family safe while remaining in your home. In many situations, it is better to remain indoors than to risk exposure by attempting to evacuate. Your home, workplace, or school will provide a good barrier against airborne chemical contaminants if the building ventilation is properly shut-down. Shelter-in-Place is a short-term precaution and will generally last no more than a couple of hours. If advised to Shelter-in-Place, you should:

- Stay calm.
- Get all family members and pets indoors and stay indoors.
- Shut and lock all windows and doors (windows and doors often seal better when locked).
- Shut off all ventilation systems, including window fans, vents, exhaust fans, fireplace dampers, furnaces, and air conditioners.
- Go to an above ground room with the fewest windows and doors. Once inside, seal cracks around windows and doors with wet towels, duct tape, or plastic sheeting. **Do not** go to the basement unless instructed to do so. The vapors of most hazardous chemicals are heavier than air and tend to seek low-lying areas.
- Turn on your radio or television for additional information or instructions.

Evacuation

In some situations, you may be advised to evacuate. Emergency response personnel may consider ordering evacuation measures when:

- There is a strong potential for toxic discharge, the discharge has not yet taken place, and there appears to be time available to relocate people.
- The discharge has taken place, but people are a sufficient distance downwind to permit for evacuation.
- People not in the direct path of a cloud are threatened by shift in the wind direction.
- The safety hazards of evacuation are outweighed by the benefits of the action.
- Sheltering-in-Place might not fully protect people from serious consequences.

If evacuation is necessary, you will be directed to a shelter area that is out of danger. You will also be given a safe route to the shelter area. If instructed to evacuate, you should:

- Stay calm.
- Listen to instructions and follow them carefully.
- Bring with you personal items such as: identification, money/credit cards, wallet/purse, medications, eye glasses, hearing aids, tooth brushes, and a change of clothes for yourself and each member of your family. Also bring items for your baby such as diapers, formula, and baby food.
- Make arrangements for your pets. Pets are not typically allowed at shelter sites.
- **Do not** take shortcuts out of the area. A shortcut may put you in the path of danger. For your safety, follow the exact route you are given.

More Information

You have the right to know about the chemicals in your community. You have the right to make your own informed decisions as to whether these chemicals are a threat to your health or environment. The more each of us learns about, understands, and participates in managing chemical hazards, the safer our communities will be for everyone. If you would like more about any of these programs or would like to learn more about the possible chemical risks to you or your community, please contact Dane County Emergency Management at 608-266-4330 or e-mail bursack@co.dane.wi.us.