

ESP FOCUS

Shelter in Place or Evacuate



Some kinds of accidents or attacks leave behind smoke or fumes that are so dangerous that it is safer to stay inside the building you're in than to go outside. If this happens, local authorities will give you instructions—probably over radio or television—to

“shelter in place.” This means that you will take shelter where you are—your home, your work place, or even your car—until it is safe to breathe the outside air again. This “all-clear” instruction will probably come within a few hours.

Since the reason to shelter in place is the presence of dangerous fumes, the objective is to isolate the air supply inside the building from contamination. The best way to do this is to choose a room with as few windows as possible, preferably with a bathroom attached, to place important items there, and to have a way to seal off the outside air.

When the danger is past, emergency officials will notify you that you can safely come out. They will also give you instructions regarding what to do next, where to get shelter or food, and how to clean up. If families have been separated during the emergency, they can use their predetermined meeting place to reunite, and they should advise their out-of-town emergency contact that they are safe.

Sheltering in place is the opposite of evacuation. Emergency officials will tell you which of these emergency actions will keep you safest. Follow their instructions exactly.

TAKE ACTION

It is not difficult to prepare your home and family for a “Shelter in place” or evacuate instruction. On the reverse side of this sheet, you will find practical, affordable and useful tips you can use to have the right materials on hand and to know exactly what to do. The most important thing is for you to follow instructions of local authorities and to know what to do if they advise you to shelter in place or to evacuate.

LEARN MORE

Knowledge is power. The more you understand about sheltering in place and evacuation orders, the more safely you can respond in an emergency situation.

CHECK THESE WEBSITES

www.espfocus.org (Emergency Survival Program)

www.redcross.org (American Red Cross)

www.cert-la.com/education/SpecialConsiderations.htm
(Community Emergency Response Team)



SEPTEMBER

www.espfocus.org

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO NOW SHELTER IN PLACE

Prepare your sheltering room:

- Select a room, ideally one high in the building, with access to water, a toilet, a television and radio, a conventional (not cordless) telephone, and as few windows as possible.
- Identify and list all the openings in your house where outside air can get in. Keep this list in a place that everybody in the family can find.
- Gather emergency supplies:
 - First aid kit
 - Food and bottled water
 - A flashlight, battery-powered radio, and extra batteries for both
 - Duct tape and scissors
 - Plastic sheeting and towels
 - Emergency contact and telephone numbers

When shelter in place is ordered:

- Go inside as quickly as possible.
- If there is time, shut and lock all outside doors and windows.
- Turn off the air conditioner or heater.
- Close the fireplace damper, dryer vents, or other locations on your list.
- If officials warn of possible explosion, close the window shades or curtains.

Go inside your sheltering room:

- Take your pets in with you.
- Seal windows and openings with tape and plastic.
- Cover your face and mouth with a wet cloth.
- Listen and watch for instructions from local officials.
- Use the phone only for emergencies.

When the danger is over, follow the instructions of emergency authorities to ventilate your house, building or vehicle. Follow directions concerning the safety of food and water. If it is necessary to evacuate the area, see the following guidelines.

EVACUATION

Before the emergency:

- Identify possible places to reunite with family members after the event. When you choose one, write this into your family emergency plan, and make sure everyone knows where the meeting place is.
- Assemble food, water, medicines and other supplies to last at least three days, and put them in an emergency kit or backpack that is easy to transport.
- Identify facilities that care for pets during disasters, since pets may not be allowed in emergency shelters.
- Make plans for children and others with special needs. Check with schools, work place, and other places where family members often gather to learn their evacuation plans.

During the emergency:

- Listen to the radio or watch TV for information from local officials. Follow their instructions. Remain calm. Use the phone only to report life threatening emergencies.
- Retrieve emergency supplies and evacuation kits if possible.
- Secure the building if possible. Turn off utilities only if instructed to do so by local officials.
- Leave a note indicating your destination, if possible.
- Report to the evacuation site, using recommended routes given by local officials. Don't use shortcuts, as they may be dangerous.
- Listen for further instructions from local officials.



This focus sheet is produced as part of the Emergency Survival Program (ESP). ESP is an awareness campaign designed to increase home, neighborhood, business and school emergency preparedness. ESP was developed by the County of Los Angeles. The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) and representatives from Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Mono, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, and Ventura counties, Southern California Edison, the Southern California Earthquake Center and the American Red Cross assist in the development of campaign materials and coordination of the campaign.