

INHALATION HAZARDS

A neighborhood can experience spills or fires. They may happen when there is an accident at an industrial plant, or truck or train carrying chemicals has an accident, or a fire starts in a building or wildland area.

You can be exposed if you are near the area of the spill, in the path of the smoke or chemical cloud, or downstream from a spill into a nearby river.

How will I know if there has been a spill or fire? – Before you hear it from public officials, TV or radio, you may notice:

- A thick cloud (of any color) coming from the spill area. It may look like low-lying fog.
- A strange odor.
- Coughing, stinging eyes, or skin rash.
- Smoke in the air.

If you experience these problems, it does not necessarily mean a spill has occurred—but if you notice one of them, go inside, close door and windows, then turn on your radio or TV for information.

How can I find out more about the spill or fire? – Turn on the radio or TV to a news station. Do not call 911.

How will these chemicals or smoke affect my health? – The effects depend on the kind of chemical or burning material involved, your age and general state of health, and how much of the chemical you breathe in or how much of it touches your

skin. Here are some examples of health problems that you may notice immediately after a significant exposure:

- **SOLVENTS** or **FUELS** (such as acetone, toluene) can create fire or explosion hazards. They may cause dizziness, headache, and nausea.
- **ACIDS AND TOXIC GASES** (such as sulfuric acid, chlorine) can irritate eyes, nose, throat, lungs, and/or skin. They can cause shortness of breath, coughing, nausea, and headache. People with lung disease could have increased effects.
- **PESTICIDES** (such as parathion) can cause many of the symptoms listed for solvents or acids and toxic gases, starting as late as 12 hours after the spill.
- **SMOKE** can cause shortness of breath, coughing, nausea, and headaches. People with respiratory illness may have a severe reaction.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q – Are some people more sensitive to chemicals and smoke?

A –Young children, the elderly, and people in poor health may develop the worst problems.

Q - Can I get cancer from a spill?

A – Just one accident rarely causes cancer. Typically, it takes many years of repeated exposure to chemicals to cause cancer.

Q – Can chemicals affect my unborn baby?

A - Some chemicals may affect your pregnancy. If you are pregnant, call your doctor for advice.

Q – Will a spill make me sick later?

A – Usually not, but if you have been heavily exposed and you have a breathing problem (such as asthma), some chemicals can cause your condition to get temporarily worse.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF AND MY FAMILY?

Make an Emergency Kit:

- Towels or rags to stop air from coming in during a spill.
- Large rolls of heavy-duty plastic or aluminum wrap or heavy duty trash bags.
- Strong, wide masking tape and duct tape.
- A battery operated radio, a flashlight, and extra batteries.
- A list of emergency phone numbers (including your doctor, the Poison Control Center, and hospital emergency room).
- A list of local radio and TV stations with frequent newscasts.
- This brochure.

Notice all the places where chemicals or smoke can leak in from outside:

- Windows and doors
- Window fans and air conditioners
- Vents (bathroom, kitchen, dryer)
- Fireplaces

Repair broken windows and make sure your door is airtight when closed. (If you rent, ask your landlord to repair broken windows.)

Plan with your family: - Make a family emergency plan. Learn which industrial plants are located in your area, and where wildfires are likely to occur. Call the San Jose Fire Department at 408-277-4656 for information on risks in your neighborhood.

WHAT SHOULD I DO DURING A CHEMICAL SPILL OR FIRE?

If you are indoors, stay indoors! The safest place is inside. Depending on the event you may need to:

- Keep pets indoors.
- Turn your radio or TV to a station with frequent local newscasts. If the broadcast tells you to stay in place, *do not go outside*.
- Close windows, doors, fireplace damper, and dryer door. Fill bathtub to get safe water. Turn off and do not use central furnace, dryer, air conditioner, window fan, and vents—they bring outside air into the building. *Do not* shut off gas or electricity unless there has been damage to the lines.
- Stuff wet rags or towels under doorways and windows; wet rags make a tighter seal. Cover window fans and air conditioners with wet towels or blankets. Use heavy tape and plastic or aluminum wrap to seal windows, doors, and vents. Then stay away from windows. Tape light switches attached to exhaust fans in the “off” position.
- *If you think chemicals are getting inside*, hold a wet cloth over your nose and mouth and breathe through it.
- If your skin is irritated, wash or shower and change clothing as soon as possible.
- If a radio or TV announcement tells you to evacuate, listen carefully to instructions. Pack medicines, eyeglasses, dentures, baby supplies, money, and some clothes. It is advised to leave your pets at home with food and water. Lock windows and doors when you leave.

If you are outdoors:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a handkerchief or clothing and quickly get inside the nearest buildings, *unless* you hear instructions to evacuate.

If you are driving

- Roll up your windows, close vents, and turn off air-conditioning. Tune your radio to a local news station. If you can, avoid driving through the danger area. Keep driving unless police officers tell you to stop.

WHAT SHOULD I DO AFTER THE INHALATION HAZARD IS OVER?

Officials will use radio and TV to let you know when the danger is past and it is safe to go outside.

- Open doors and windows to let inside air out. Contact your local officials to find out if any special clean-up is needed inside your house.
- Listen to radio or TV for instruction about dealing with the specific chemical that was spilled, and to learn if your water is safe.
- If you are pregnant, call your doctor or the Poison Control Center (800-876-4766).

- If you have small children, wash toys that were outside during the spill. If you have pets or family members with respiratory problems, when the water is safe, hose off outdoor areas where they sit or children play. Water the yard deeply to wash away the chemicals.
- Wash off all furniture and vehicles that were outside during the spill. Launder (or safely dispose of) towels or rags used around doors or windows. Hose down trees in yard, then water lawns and gardens. Thoroughly wash produce grown in local gardens before eating them unless officials advise you to discard them.
- If you have been evacuated, you will be notified when it is safe to return home.
- If you still feel sick or have health-related questions, call your doctor or the Poison Control Center at 800-876-4766.



DO I NEED TO CALL A DOCTOR?

Request medical attention for:

- Wheezing or shortness of breath lasting more than 15 minutes.
- Chest pain, especially with shortness of breath, dizziness, or sweating, or when the pain affects someone who is elderly or has a chronic ailment.
- Asthma attack not relieved by usual medicine.
- Severe nausea and vomiting.

Milder problems (headache, mild nausea, or irritation of eyes, nose, throat, or skin) may get better on their own. If discomfort lasts more than a day, call your doctor, a local clinic, or the Poison Control Center at 800-876-4766.

Local Contacts:

San Jose residents:

Call (408) 277-4595 for questions about Sheltering in Place

Call (408) 277-4598 for information on **Community Emergency Response Training.**

Non San Jose residents:

Contact your local Office of Emergency Services

SHELTER IN PLACE

PROTECT YOUR HEALTH FROM INHALATION HAZARDS: CHEMICAL SPILL VAPOR OR SMOKE FROM WILDLAND FIRES



Preparing for a chemical spill or smoky fire is as important as preparing for an earthquake. It can save your health and even your life.

*The City of San José
Office of Emergency Services
wants you to be safe*

