

Shelter in Place

What to do
if a dangerous chemical is ever
accidentally spilled or released
in your neighborhood.



Local Emergency Planning Committee
of Whatcom County

Shelter in Place

This brochure is all about going inside. It's what you need to do if a dangerous chemical is ever accidentally spilled or released in your neighborhood. In fact, this brochure is about a very important subject known as **Shelter In Place**. Learn how you can be aware and prepare. It's what you need to do for such an emergency.

The world we live in today is an industrial one. We make, move and use products created from chemicals that can be hazardous to humans. As a result, there is a remote possibility that a hazardous chemical could be spilled during a train derailment, a freeway accident or a manufacturing accident. A hazardous chemical could be a solid, a liquid or a gas. That means that you might not be able to see or smell anything. Still, it can be quite dangerous.



How do you tell if there is a hazardous chemical emergency? Most often, you will be notified by the local authorities. You should take action if you notice any of the following:

- ✓ **An unusual smell or sound, such as an explosion**
- ✓ **Visible smoke, fire or a vapor cloud**
- ✓ **Skin or eye irritation**
- ✓ **Breathing difficulty**

How to Shelter in Place

If a hazardous chemical emergency occurs in your neighborhood, the most important thing to remember is to take action quickly. During a hazardous chemical emergency you should go inside and stay put. This procedure is called Shelter in Place. You can use your entire house or only a few rooms. Make sure you choose an area that has a telephone, water, a toilet and someplace you can seal off easily. A bedroom is an excellent choice.

Be Aware and Prepare

Create an emergency plan just like you do in the event of a fire, earthquake or any other kind of emergency. Include in the plan the steps you will take to protect yourself and your family.

Make a checklist of what needs to be done. Next, assign tasks. Each person in the family should have a job for which they are capable and responsible.

Add to the emergency kit you may already have for earthquakes. Inside keep an updated emergency phone list that includes the phone numbers for a doctor, the closest emergency room, fire and police. Also note the local TV channels and radio stations with frequent news broadcasts.

Make sure your emergency kit includes the following:

- two rolls of duct tape
- scissors
- towels
- drinking water
- toilet supplies and any necessary medications
- a portable, battery operated radio
- a flashlight
- extra batteries and, once again,
- your checklist.

Store your emergency kit in a place you can get to quickly and easily. Then rehearse by having emergency drills.



Learn How to Take Action for Your Family

So far you've received information to help you prepare for a hazardous chemical emergency. Now let's turn our attention to what to do in the remote chance such an emergency happens in your neighborhood.

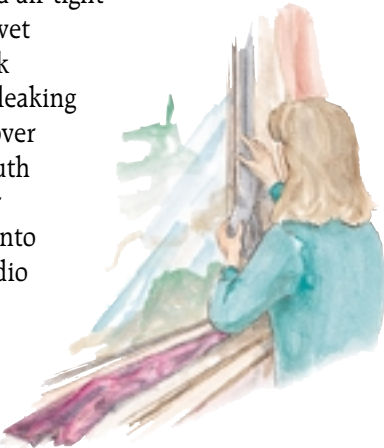
First, take action. Immediately go inside. Then shut off heaters and air conditioners. After all, you do not want the outside air to be pulled into your house. Additionally, make sure all fireplace dampers are closed. Go to the area you've chosen as your Shelter in Place. Close all doors, windows, vents and any other openings to the outside. Insure that all the openings are sealed air tight

with duct tape or wet towels. If you think chemicals are still leaking into your home, cover your nose and mouth with a wet cloth or towel. Next, tune into your local news radio or local TV station to learn more about the emergency. Do not leave unless you are asked to do so.

During any emergency it is important to stay off the phone. Do not tie up regular or cellular phone lines needed by the fire, police or sheriff department.

Only call 911 if there is an injury or other immediate emergency. Do not call 911 for information on the status of the emergency.

The best thing you can do is stay put and listen to the radio and TV as the spill or release is monitored by local officials.



If an evacuation is necessary, in most cases your local fire department or law enforcement agency will contact you with complete instructions on what to do. When the emergency is over, the fire department will issue an all clear. At that time you can open windows and doors to let in fresh air and move your family outside.

What to Do if You are Not at Home

If you are not at home and a hazardous chemical emergency should occur, follow the same steps that are appropriate to take Shelter in Place. Follow them at your office, a shopping mall or at a school.

Even if you are in your car, just make sure you have all outside vents, windows and doors closed when you Shelter in Place in your vehicle. Never attempt to drive through a gas cloud. Turn on your radio to listen to further instructions.

If you are outside when you detect an emergency, cover your nose and mouth with a handkerchief or cloth. Remember that the chemical is moving with the wind. Don't walk into it or with it. You should move crosswind with the wind at your side. Find shelter as soon as possible. Go inside. Stay inside. And follow the Shelter in Place procedure.

Whether it's a fire, an earthquake or a hazardous chemical emergency, we all hope these disasters do not happen. Unfortunately, they sometimes do. What is important is that we all be aware and prepare.

For more information on hazardous chemical emergencies, contact your Whatcom County Division of Emergency Management at:

(360) 676-6681

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Once again, those steps for Shelter in Place are:

- Go inside
- Turn off heaters and air conditioners and close fireplace dampers
- Close and seal all doors and windows
- Cover your nose and mouth with a wet cloth if necessary
- Listen to your radio or TV
- Wait for the all clear signal before you move outside