

Learn How to Shelter in Place



**American
Red Cross**

"Shelter-in-place" means to take immediate shelter where you are—at home, work, school, or in between. It may also mean "seal the room;" in other words, take steps to prevent outside air from coming in. This is because local authorities may instruct you to "shelter-in-place" if chemical or radiological contaminants are released into the environment. It is important to listen to TV or radio to understand whether the authorities wish you to merely remain indoors or to take additional steps to protect yourself and your family.

How do I prepare?

At home



- Choose a room in advance for your shelter. The best room is one with as few windows and doors as possible. A large room, preferably with a water supply, is desirable—something like a master bedroom that is connected to a bathroom.

Contact your workplaces, your children's schools, nursing homes where you may have family and your local town or city officials to find out what their plans are for "shelter-in-place."

- Find out when warning systems will be tested. When tested in your area, determine whether you can hear or see sirens and/or warning lights from your home.
- Develop your own family emergency plan so that every family member knows what to do. Practice it regularly.
- Assemble a [disaster supplies kit](#) that includes emergency water and food supplies.

At work

- Help ensure that the emergency plan and checklist involves all employees. Volunteers or recruits should be assigned specific duties during an emergency. Alternates should be assigned to each duty.
- The shelter kit should be checked on a regular basis. Duct tape and first aid supplies can sometimes disappear when all employees know where the shelter kit is stored. Batteries for the radio and flashlight should be replaced regularly.

In general

- Learn CPR, first aid and the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED). (Contact your local [American Red Cross chapter](#) for more information.)

How will I know when I need to "shelter-in-place"?

Fire or police department warning procedures could include:

- "All-Call" telephoning - an automated system for sending recorded messages, sometimes called "reverse 9-1-1".
- Emergency Alert System (EAS) broadcasts on the radio or television.
- Outdoor warning sirens or horns.
- News media sources - radio, television and cable.
- NOAA Weather Radio alerts.
- Residential route alerting - messages announced to neighborhoods from vehicles equipped with public address systems.

Facilities that handle potentially dangerous materials, like nuclear power plants, are required to install sirens and other warning systems (flash warning lights) to cover a 10-mile area around the plant.

For more information, contact any of the following:

For checklists to help prepare to shelter-in-place in your home, at work, in your car, or at school or day-care, read [How Do I Shelter-in-Place?](#)

- [Your local American Red Cross chapter](#)
- [Your state and local health departments](#)
- [Your local emergency management agency](#)
- CDC Public Response Hotline
English 1-888-246-2675
Spanish 1-888-246-2857
TTY 1-866-874-2646)

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