

Shelter In Place

This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

A train derailment in Baltimore, Maryland. A dangerous chemical fire. Public safety at risk.

“There was heavy black smoke issuing from each end of the tunnel. After reviewing the train profile of the products that were involved with the fire and explosion, we made a determination that our best approach on the north side would be a shelter in place.”

Shelter in place means to take immediate shelter where you are. These instructions may be given when local authorities believe chemical or radiological contaminants have been released into the air.

What you are trying to do then is seal yourself from the outside air. Close the windows. Close the door. Turn off the air system. You are trying to keep yourself protected in the building that you are in and protect yourself from the outside elements.

Listen to local radio and television for instructions and act quickly if you are told to shelter in place. Get everyone indoors and go into an interior room with no or few windows and shut the door. Bring your disaster supplies kit: a radio, plastic sheeting, duct tape, and a hard-line phone.

If you are instructed to seal the room, use duct tape and plastic sheeting to seal around the door, vents, and windows. And listen to news events for further instructions. However, during such an emergency, you may not be at home.

Sheltering in place could very well happen where you work or at a school, and the same preparation and planning should be done there just like it's your home.

If you must shelter in a vehicle, pull off to a safe spot, turn off the engine, close the windows and vents, and remain in your car. If you are close to home or a public building, safely drive there to shelter in place.

When you are asked to shelter in place, that's typically only going to be for a period of hours. You would not shelter in place for days, but even though it is hours, it's important to have the items you might need that are critical to you for that period of time.

“If we had to shelter in our home, we feel like we are really prepared. We've got duct tape and plastic in the event that we do need to seal the windows and vents. We've got our water and food and everything that we can put together in about 30 seconds.”

When authorities advise you to stop sheltering, take precautions to be extra safe. Unseal and open doors and windows. Turn on the ventilation system. Go outside. Check for damage and potential hazards. And make sure the drinking water is safe by listening to local authorities.

We know that most people aren't prepared for a disaster. Don't have a plan. Don't have a kit. Don't know what they'd do ahead of time. It's time for us to wake up and understand that if we think about these things ahead of time, it's so much better for our well being should something happen.

To access the most accurate and relevant health information that affects you, your family and your community, please visit www.cdc.gov.