

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

Shelter in Place



Burlington County Health Department

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Burlington County Health Department
Health Starts Here

What is shelter in place?

Shelter in place is when you “stay put.” During different kinds of emergencies the best way to stay safe is stay put inside a building or vehicle. When you are told to shelter in place you will want to go to your designated safe spot and stay put in that location until officials say it is safe to leave. This should be a planned location with your household and workplace that everyone knows about.

Why would someone need to shelter in place?

Different kinds of emergencies would cause you to shelter in place. It is important to remember that sheltering in place may vary in how and where you shelter based on the emergency itself. These emergencies include:

- Natural disasters (i.e. tornadoes, hurricanes)
- Chemical spill
- Nuclear attack
- Bioterrorism

How should someone prepare to shelter in place?

To effectively shelter, you must first consider the hazard and then choose a place in your home or work building that is safe for that hazard. For example, when planning for a tornado choose a room that is in a basement or an interior room on the lowest level. The room should be away from corners, windows, doors and outside walls. When planning for a nuclear attack choose a room that is above ground, with no windows if possible, and “seal the room” (cover windows and doors with plastic sheeting). You may not be at home or in your office when an emergency occurs, so keeping an emergency supply kit in your car would be beneficial. Regardless your sheltering in place location, it is important to have the following items on hand:

- Canned/non-perishable food and bottled water
 - One gallon of water per person per day
 - A three day supply is recommended
- Flashlight
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio
- Extra batteries
- Duct tape, scissors, plastic sheeting
- First aid kit
- A cell phone charger

How will you know when to shelter in place?

There are several different ways to know when to shelter in place:

- TV/News Channels
- Radio
- Local police
- Local Emergency Management Coordinators
- Social Media

What should people do when sheltering in place is necessary?

When notified, you should act quickly and doing the following steps may be helpful:

- Bring family and pets inside
- Lock doors
- Close windows, air vents and fireplace dampers
- Turn off fans, air conditioning, and forced air heating systems
- Take your emergency supply kit unless you have reason to believe it has been contaminated
- Go into an interior room with few windows, if possible
- Seal all windows, doors and air vents with 2-4 mil. thick plastic sheeting and duct tape
 - Consider measuring and cutting the sheeting in advance to save time.
 - Cut the plastic sheeting several inches wider than the openings and label each sheet
 - Duct tape plastic at corners first and then tape down all edges
 - Be prepared to improvise and use what you have on hand to seal gaps so that you create a barrier between yourself and any contamination
- Local authorities may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do
 - You should watch TV, listen to the radio or check the Internet often for official news and instructions as they become available
- If children are at school, they will be sheltered in that locations
 - You should **not** go to the school until directed to do so by school officials or local government (police, fire, emergency management coordinators)

Where can I get more information about sheltering in place?

- The Burlington County Health Department at (609) 265-5548
- The Centers for Disease Control and Preparedness website at <https://emergency.cdc.gov/shelterinplace.asp>
- The Department of Homeland Security website <https://www.ready.gov/shelter>