

Emergency Sheltering

Shelter in Place

Any time you are required to stay indoors because of an emergency situation, you are sheltering. In-place sheltering may be short-term, such as going to a safe room for a short period of time while a tornado warning is in effect. It may also be longer term, such as when you stay in your home for several days without electricity or water services following a severe storm.

Because the appropriate steps to take in preparing for short-term in-place sheltering depend on the particular emergency situation you are facing, sheltering details are provided in the sections of this guide dealing with specific hazards.

Evacuation

If a flood, fire, hazardous materials spill or another emergency poses a threat or potential threat to your safety or that of your property, local authorities may advise you to evacuate.



General sheltering guidelines:

- If at all possible, try to seek shelter with friends or relatives outside of the affected area
- Emergency shelters can be set up in locations such as schools, municipal buildings, community centres. At the time you are advised to evacuate, you will also be advised of the location of the nearest emergency shelter

An evacuation order may come with little warning, so it is important to include plans for evacuation as part of family, business, and neighbourhood preparedness plans. Should an evacuation be necessary, law enforcement officers, fire department personnel or other local officials will notify you directly through the local media and/or public address systems.

When an evacuation order is issued, listen to your radio to make sure the evacuation order applies to you, and to understand if you are to evacuate immediately or if you have time to pack some essentials. Stay tuned to a radio or television for information on evacuation routes, temporary shelters, and procedures.

It is important to stay calm, listen carefully, and follow all instructions.

- Before you leave, turn off power, water, and gas (if instructed to do so by local officials)
- Make arrangements for pets
- Should time allow, leave a note informing others when you left and where you went. If you have a mailbox, leave the note there

If you have time, seal your house so contaminants cannot enter:

- Shut off all vents
- Close fireplace dampers
- You don't need to turn off your refrigerator or freezer, but you should turn off all other appliances and lights as you leave
- Close and lock your windows and doors
- Avoid using the telephone. Use your phone only in life-threatening emergencies. Telephone lines are frequently overwhelmed in disaster situations. They need to be clear for emergency calls to get through
- When you are evacuated, register with the reception centre so that you can be contacted and reunited with your family and loved ones
- Take your Emergency Kit
- Follow the route authorities recommend. Don't take shortcuts on the way to the shelter, they may be blocked or expose you to dangerous hazards
- If you need a ride, ask a neighbour. If no neighbour is available to help you, listen to local radio or television stations for further instructions
- Check on neighbours to make sure they have been notified, and offer help to those with disabilities or other special needs. Elderly people and people with disabilities may require additional assistance, and people who care for them or who have large families may need assistance in emergency situations

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- Take only one vehicle to the evacuation site. Traffic may be very heavy and parking at a shelter may be limited. Reduce further congestion and keep your family together by eliminating additional vehicles
 - Close your car windows and air vents, and turn off the heater or air conditioner

Returning Home

Care should be taken when re-entering your home.

Remain in the shelter until told by local authorities that it is safe to leave.

- Keep tuned to local radio and TV stations for advice and instructions from Emergency Management about medical help, emergency housing, clothing and food assistance, ways to help yourself and your community
- Drive only when necessary and be especially careful. Streets may be filled with debris and downed power lines
- Avoid loose or dangling power wires and report them immediately to the local power company
- Report broken gas, sewer or water mains to the municipality
- Prevent fires! Don't use candles. Municipal water pressure and availability of personnel may be low, which will make fire-fighting even more difficult
- Check refrigerated food for spoilage. Don't risk eating spoiled food
- Stay away from flooded areas. Debris, broken bottles, and boards with nails will be everywhere. Watch your step