

SHELTERING IN PLACE

During Major
Chemical Emergencies



WHAT IS A CHEMICAL EMERGENCY? _____

A chemical emergency occurs when harmful chemicals that are dangerous to life, health and/or property are released into the environment. Chemical releases are typically accidental, but could be intentional such as a terrorist attack.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU OBSERVE A MAJOR CHEMICAL RELEASE? _____

- Call 911 immediately
- Move away from the incident site
- Do not touch chemicals or breathe in fumes, gases, and/or smoke
- Remain uphill, upstream, and upwind from incident site
- Remain alert for additional information or procedures from local authorities

HOW DO I PROTECT MYSELF AND FAMILY DURING A MAJOR CHEMICAL RELEASE? _____

You may need to do one of the following:

- Evacuate the area – only grab necessities such as medicine, first aid kit, money, driver's license, and cell phone. Take your emergency supply kit if times allows.
- Shelter-in-Place (SIP) – take shelter where you are, remaining inside your home, workplace, or nearby building.



WHEN SHOULD I SHELTER IN PLACE (SIP)?

In addition to a major chemical emergency, SIP is appropriate when conditions outside are unsafe and protection is available inside. Examples include:

- Public Health Emergency
- Air is unsafe due to radiation incident
- Not enough time to evacuate

HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN THERE IS A CHEMICAL EMERGENCY OR TO SIP?



Emergency officials, local radio, television stations, and/or the OakAlert emergency notification system.

HOW DO I PREPARE TO EVACUATE?

- Pick a place for your family to meet outside of your neighborhood
- Communicate that plan with all family members
- Conduct an evacuation drill with those living in the residence twice a year

HOW DO I PREPARE TO SIP?

- Pre-select an interior room(s) that is above ground with the least number of doors, windows or vents. This room preferably with a water source (e.g. master bedroom with attached bathroom).
- Prepare an emergency supplies kit and check it every 6 months
- Conduct a SIP drill with those living in the residence twice a year

EMERGENCY KIT

Collect the necessary items for your emergency kit and store in the pre-selected room you plan to shelter in. For recommended emergency kit items, please reference the Oakland County Emergency Kit & Plan Guide Visual Checklist. A digital version can be downloaded and printed at OakGov.com/emergency-management.

DURING A MAJOR CHEMICAL EMERGENCY/SIP:

- Call 9-1-1 ONLY if you have an emergency.
- Follow the instructions given by officials.
- Focus on sealing one pre-selected room. Do not attempt to seal the whole house/office building. There will not be enough time.
- Do not leave your shelter until given the “all clear” by authorities.
- Do not risk your life for your pets. If you cannot get them into the shelter, go into the shelter without them.



WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN AT SCHOOL?

- Schools have SIP plans to protect staff and students. The school will be secured, and no one will be allowed to enter or leave the building until local officials give clearance.
- Do not attempt to remove your child from school. The SIP approach is safer than evacuating students into potentially contaminated outdoor environments.

WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN A WARNING IS ISSUED?

IN A HOME:

- Get family and pets inside immediately
- Lock all doors and windows
- Turn off furnace, air conditioner, exhaust fans, and vents
- Close fireplace dampers
- Go to your pre-selected room(s)
- Quickly retrieve your emergency kit once inside the shelter-in-place room(s)
- Place wet towels at base of door(s)
- Seal any doors, windows, vents, electrical and phone outlets with pre-cut plastic sheeting and tape
- Monitor media for updates (e.g. radio, TV, etc.)
- Remain in pre-designated room until an “All Clear” message is issued by emergency authorities

IN A BUILDING:

- Follow the building’s procedures for SIP

IF YOU ARE OUTSIDE:

- Seek shelter in a building
- Shelter in your car if there are no nearby buildings

IF YOU ARE IN A CAR:

- Seek nearby shelter in a building if possible
- Close all windows and vents, and turn off heat/air conditioning in your car if a building is unavailable
- Listen to the radio for updates



WHAT DO I DO AFTER A MAJOR CHEMICAL EMERGENCY?

The following actions should be taken after given the “all clear” by authorities:

- Follow decontamination procedures recommended by local authorities
- Follow local instructions for safety of food and water
- Open all vents and windows and/or turn on heat/air conditioning to provide ventilation
- Place all contaminated clothes into a plastic bag and dispose appropriately
- Report any lingering smells or hazards to your local authorities

The preparedness information in this brochure is a precaution aimed to keep you safe while remaining indoors. This is NOT the same thing as going to a shelter during a storm. Following these steps could help save lives when a chemical release threatens your area. A printable Family Emergency Plan is available at oakgov.com/homelandsecurity.



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