

# Shelter In Place

## During A Hazardous Materials Emergency

What is it?

What do I do?

What do I need?

How will I know?

### What is it?

If a toxic gas or airborne biological agent were released in the vicinity of the campus, would you know what to do? Now, more than ever, members of the University community need to be prepared for the possibility of both accidental and intentional hazardous material emergencies. Shelter In Place is a safety procedure designed to help protect you during a serious airborne hazardous material emergency. It means taking shelter inside your home, work place, school, or other building until the danger has passed. The University of Cincinnati is a participant in the Shelter In Place program.

The goal of Shelter In Place is to prevent contaminated outside air from entering a building for the duration of an incident. In many cases, simply limiting the intake of outside air provides sufficient protection. In incidents involving very high levels of contamination, steps must be taken to seal off a safe area. Incidents usually last a few hours, not days or weeks. For this reason, there is little danger you will run out of oxygen during this procedure. The nature of most incidents means that there is insufficient time to evacuate everyone from everywhere there potentially could be contamination. Efforts will normally be made to evacuate persons in the immediate area of the chemical spill, where the risk is highest. Others who are located in surrounding areas will be advised to Shelter In Place.

### What do I do?

If you are instructed to Shelter In Place, please take the following safety actions -

If at home:

- Close and lock all windows and exterior doors.

- Turn off all air conditioners, fans, and heating systems that draw in outside air.
- Close the fireplace damper.
- Get your disaster supply kit and make sure your radio is working.
- Go to a room with the fewest windows and doors on the highest story of your home. DO NOT go to the basement. Many chemicals are heavier than air and can settle into the basement.
- Bring your pet(s) and their food and water with you.
- Use duct tape and plastic sheeting to seal windows, doors, vents, and other openings to your shelter area. Use wet towels if you do not have plastic sheeting.
- Stay inside this room and listen to your radio or television until local authorities tell you the emergency is over OR until you are told to evacuate.
- Use your phone for emergency purposes only.
- When local authorities announce the end of the emergency, ventilate your home by opening doors and windows. Go outside until your home is aired out.

If on campus:

- Go to the designated shelter area for your building. This is normally located on the upper floors, in the center section of the building. If a shelter area is not designated for your building, go to an interior room on an upper floor. Most hazardous chemicals are heavier than air, and will remain close to the ground.
- Close the doors (and windows, if any) to the shelter area.
- If available (this depends upon the department/college), use duct tape and plastic sheeting to seal the windows, doors, vents, and other openings to your shelter area. Wet towels may be used if plastic sheeting is not available. Note that sealing the room is less important than for houses, due to the construction and greater height of our buildings. Facilities Management will shut down outside air intakes to the air handling systems of the buildings. Note that air may continue to be circulated inside the building.
- Stay inside the shelter area until the all-clear announcement is given OR until you are told to evacuate.

## What do I need?

You are encouraged to prepare a disaster supply kit with emergency supplies that will last three days. The kit should be stored in a box or bag in the room in which you plan to Shelter In Place at your home. If living in a Residence Hall, keep your kit in your room.

At a minimum, the kit should contain the following items:

- Battery operated radio and extra batteries (replace batteries annually)
- Water in plastic bottles (at least 6 pints per person)
- Ready to eat food (rotate as needed)
- First aid kit (including any prescription medications)
- Fire extinguisher
- Flashlight and extra batteries (replace batteries annually)

- Thick plastic sheeting (i.e., plastic drop cloths)
- Duct tape
- Scissors or utility knife
- Eating utensils
- Hygiene items (i.e., plastic bucket with tight lid, garbage bags)
- Specialty items such as diapers, books, games, etc.

## **How am I notified?**

You will be notified of a serious hazardous material emergency on campus by the Campus Emergency Warning System or by door-to-door notification. At home you may also receive notification by television or radio, outdoor warning sirens, NOAA weather radio, or public address systems on vehicles.

The Campus Emergency Warning System uses the fire alarm speakers located throughout buildings on the campus to give specific voice instructions in the event of an emergency. In the event that you need to Shelter In Place, announcements will be made directing you to take shelter, and when the emergency is over.

## **Additional Information**

American Red Cross

579-3010

[www.cincinnati-redcross.org](http://www.cincinnati-redcross.org)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)