

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

Sheltering in Place



Burlington County Health Department

Raphael Meadow Health Center
15 Pioneer Boulevard
P.O. Box 6000
Westampton, N.J. 08060
Phone: 609-265-5548 Fax: 609-265-3152



Public Health
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Burlington County Health Department
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What is sheltering in place?

“Sheltering in place” is when people make a shelter out of the place they are in. It is a way for people to make the building as safe as possible to protect themselves until help arrives. This location could be their home, office, school, or wherever they are when an emergency happens and the official announcement is made.

Why would someone need to shelter in place?

Some kinds of accidents or attacks may make going outdoors dangerous. Leaving the area might take too long or put people in harm’s way. In such a case it may be safer for people to stay indoors than to go outside. Some examples of situation when sheltering in place may be necessary are during hurricanes or other natural disasters, after a nuclear attack, or bioterrorism attack.

How should someone prepare to shelter in place?

People should choose a room in their homes and offices to shelter. The best room is one with as few windows as possible. Access to a water supply desirable. It is important to have the following items on have for sheltering in place:

- First aid kit
- Food and bottles water. One gallon of water per person per day. A three day supply is recommended
- Flashlight, batter-powered or hand crank radio, and extra batteries
- Duct tape and scissors
- Towels and plastic sheeting
- A cell phone charger

People may not be home or in their office when an event happens. Keeping a supply in your car can be helpful in these situations.

How will people know if they need to shelter in place?

People will hear from the local police, emergency coordinators, or government on radio and television if they need to shelter in place. A radio is the best way to stay informed before, during, and after an emergency. In the event of a power outage, a television or the internet will not work, but a hand crank or battery operated radio will. If people are away from their shelter-in-place location when a chemical event occurs, they should follow the instructions of emergency coordinators to find the nearest shelter. If children are at school, they will be sheltered there. Unless instructed to do so, parents should not try to get to the school to bring their children home.

What should people do when sheltering in place is necessary?

People should act quickly and follow the instructions of their local emergency management coordinators. Every situation can be different, so emergency coordinators may have special instructions to follow. In general, do the following:

- Go inside as quickly as possible.
- Shut and lock all outside doors and windows. If the emergency is chemical or nuclear, make sure there is time to do this without being exposed.
- Go to your designated shelter-in-place room and shut the door.
- If the event is chemical or radiological, tape plastic over any windows in the room. Duct tape all door and windows to make an airtight seal.
- Turn on the radio and listen for updates. Keep a telephone close at hand, but don't use it unless there is a serious emergency.

Where can I get more information about sheltering in place?

- The Burlington County Health Department
- The Centers for Disease Control and Preparedness website at www.cdc.gov/preparedness/shelter
- The Department of Homeland Security website www.ready.gov