



SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

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Sheltering-in-Place

The Southwest Florida Local Emergency Planning Committee welcomes you to Shelter-in-Place. This section was developed to educate the public on steps to take in the event of the need to find immediate shelter. [Sheltering in Place: PowerPoint Presentation](#).

Before an incident:

Chemicals are part of our daily lives, and they are all around us. They are used in businesses, manufacturing, healthcare, and in homes. Normally, these chemicals are used appropriately and do not create a hazard. But occasionally when an accident occurs, these chemicals can become a health and safety concern.

Everyone needs to learn to detect the presence of hazardous materials. However, many hazardous materials do not have a taste or odor associated with them. Some materials can cause physical reactions such as watering of the eyes or nausea. You should develop a plan and procedures in the event of the need to find “shelter-in-place.”

If a hazardous materials spill or chemical agent attacks were to occur, local authorities would instruct the public to do one of two things:

- Evacuate immediately (leave the area of actual or potential hazards) --OR--
- Shelter-in-Place (seek immediate shelter)

What is “shelter-in-place”?

The term “shelter-in-place” means to take cover in a building rather than evacuate during a chemical or hazardous materials release. Though the natural inclination is to flee a vapor cloud during a chemical incident, it actually may be more dangerous to evacuate because of the direction of the wind or the speed of the chemical or chemical agents that are being dispersed.

When to “shelter-in-place”?

When there is an emergency involving a chemical or hazardous materials release (where sheltering in place is warranted), local authorities will likely issue an emergency alert system notification either by telephone, television, radio, or by canvassing neighborhoods.



John Gibbons with “the dollhouse,” a resource used in community presentations to illustrate the concepts involved in sheltering in place.

Who would issue the “shelter-in-place” initiative?

The order to “shelter- in-place” would likely come from any of the following:

- Local Public Officials (Mayor, County Commissioners, City/County Managers)
- County Emergency Management Personnel
- Law Enforcement Personnel
- Firefighters

Where to “shelter-in-place”?

Sheltering-in-place should be conducted in an enclosed structure such as a building (home, store, school, office, or church), or in a vehicle. The idea is to find shelter rather than remain outside.

How to shelter-in-place:

When the notification comes from authorities to begin sheltering-in-place, the following steps should be taken to ensure safety and save lives:

- Quickly move everyone present indoors, and do not use elevators.
- Close and lock all windows and doors.
- Close off nonessential rooms such as storage areas or a laundry room.
- Turn off all ventilation systems (heating, air conditioning, dampers, fans, etc.).
- Seal all doors, windows, ceiling vents, and other sources of outside air.
- If possible, move to an interior room or an interior bathroom.
- Place a wet towel at the base of the door to cover the opening. Secure the towel with tape.
- Listen to the television or radio for further information or instructions.
- Stay off the telephone unless there is an emergency.
- If you think dangerous fumes have entered the building, place a wet cloth over your nose and mouth.

If caught in a vehicle during a chemical emergency:

- Close all windows, vents, air conditioning, and ventilation systems.
- If possible, drive away from any visible gas or clouds of smoke.
- Turn on the radio for further instructions and updates.

If caught at the scene of an accident:

- If you see an accident, call 911.
- Move away from the accident scene and help keep others away.
- Stay away from accident victims until the toxic substances have been identified.
- Try to stay upstream, uphill or upwind of the accident.

Sheltering- in- Place Supplies

- Battery-powered radio, flashlight, extra batteries
- Cellular phone (if no phone is in the room)
- Bottled water and snack food.
- Bath towels
- Duct tape