

# Prepare before an emergency

**S**helter in Place is one of the basic instructions you may receive from public safety officials if there is a chemical emergency in your community.

Sheltering in place gives you and your family immediate protection for a short time in your home.

Officials may advise you to shelter in place in any one of these conditions:

- A nearby chemical leak is expected to last for a short time,
- The chemical has a low health hazard and its release does not warrant an evacuation,
- There's not enough time to evacuate, or
- Chemical fumes could quickly overtake you if you are outside.

A shelter-in-place advisory issued by public safety officials during a chemical emergency is meant to be a short-term event that lasts for a few hours, not days.

Some emergencies caused by the weather or other events could last much longer. For that reason, it is advisable to prepare your emergency kit to last for at least three days.

✔ Study your surroundings for possible threats. For example, do you live near a flood-prone area? Are you near fixed sources of hazardous materials, such as a chemical plant or swimming pool where chlorine is stored? Do you live near a highway or railway where tanker trucks or rail cars carry hazardous materials? Natural events can lead to long power outages, isolation because of snow or flooding, and inability to travel on highways.

✔ Prepare a supplies kit for the type(s) of emergencies that could occur near your home or workplace. The kit should contain supplies to last for at least 72 hours. It should include duct tape for sealing cracks around doors and windows; plastic (preferably, pre-cut to size) to cover windows; a battery-operated AM/FM radio; medicines; flashlight with fresh batteries; bottled water; towels; toys for young children; candles; matches; first-aid kit; medicine and other items essential for your family's survival.

✔ Check the kit every six months to make sure all the supplies are still there and that they are fresh.

✔ Mark your radio and television sets for stations that carry emergency information. Kanawha Valley radio stations that will carry the information first are **WCHS** (580AM),

**WCAW** (680AM), **WKWS** (96.1 FM) and **WVAF** (99.9FM).

The following radio stations repeat the information: **WBES** (94.5FM), **WQBE** (950 AM and 97.5 FM), **WVSR** (102.7FM), **WSCW** (1410 AM) and **WKAZ** (107.3 FM).

All local television stations will broadcast emergency information as will cable systems. Importantly, the information **will not** be broadcast on satellite-based services that do not carry local programming.

✔ Identify warning sirens. If you live near a chemical plant, you could hear a siren warning of a chemical leak. Sirens in the Kanawha Valley are tested at noon the last Wednesday of each month.

✔ For a place to shelter, select a room in your house that has few or no windows. The room should have a telephone, although you should use it only for emergency calls. Using it otherwise may take up a line needed by emergency response officials. Learn CPR and first-aid.

✔ Make sure all family members know what to do in a chemical emergency, whether they are at home, school, work or outdoors. Be sure family members know how to contact one another or where to meet if communications lines are out.

✔ Review your plan periodically and conduct drills.

## During an emergency

You are most likely to hear about a chemical accident through the Kanawha Valley's Emergency Alert System on radio or television or by hearing a warning siren. The announcement will advise whether to shelter in place or to evacuate.

✓ If officials advise you to shelter in place, take your children and pets indoors **immediately** to the room you've chosen as a shelter. While gathering your family, cover your mouth and nose with a damp cloth for minimal breathing protection.

✓ If your children are at school, do not leave your house or work to go get them. You may expose yourself to hazardous chemicals if you go outside. Also, schools have emergency plans of their own.

✓ Shut off heating, cooling and fans that draw in air from the outside.

✓ If you have a fireplace, close the damper. Shut and lock doors and windows. Locking makes a better seal.

✓ Seal cracks around the door and windows with duct tape. Place towels between the bottom of the door and floor.

✓ Turn on a radio or television to a local station for information through the Emergency Alert System.

✓ Stay tuned until the all clear message is broadcast.

✓ Stay off the phone. It should be used for emergency calls only.

✓ Be prepared to evacuate if ordered to do so by public safety officials. Evacuation instructions will be announced over the Emergency Alert System.

## After the emergency

When you hear the all-clear message over the emergency broadcast system, you should:

✓ Open doors and windows.

✓ Turn on your heating/cooling system to ventilate the house.

✓ Go outside.

A model plan businesses can use to create shelter-in-place plans for work sites is available for downloading from the KPEPC's website at [www.kpepc.org](http://www.kpepc.org).

## Shelter in Place



How you can protect yourself and your family in case of a major emergency in your community

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