

Shelter-in-Place

In an emergency where hazardous materials may have been released into the atmosphere you may be asked to shelter-in-place. This precaution is aimed to keep you safe while remaining indoors. To shelter-in-place means selecting a small, interior room, with no or few windows, and taking refuge there. It does not mean sealing off your entire home or office building.

There are a number of reasons you may be asked to shelter-in-place, such as chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants have been released (accidentally or intentionally) into the environment. If this occurs, information will be provided by local authorities on how to protect you and your family. Information will be shared across a variety of platforms including television, radio, the Internet and mobile applications (such as the [Alberta Emergency Alert](#) app).

Local officials are the best source of information for your particular situation. Remember that instructions to shelter-in-place are usually provided for durations of a few hours, not days or weeks. There is little danger that the room in which you are taking shelter will run out of oxygen and you will suffocate.

How to Shelter-in-Place at Home

- Close and lock all windows and exterior doors.
- If you are told there is danger of explosion, close the window shades, blinds, or curtains.
- Turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems. Close the fireplace damper.
- Get your family [emergency kit](#) and make sure the radio is working.
- Cell phones may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency. It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone in the room you select. If you do not have a hard wired telephone, bring your cell phone and charger to ensure you have a method to communicate. Call your emergency contact and have the phone available if you need to report a life-threatening condition.
- Go to an interior room without windows that is above-ground level. In the case of a chemical threat, an above-ground location is preferable because some chemicals are heavier than air and may seep into basements even if the windows are closed.
- Bring your pets with you, and be sure to bring additional food and water supplies for them.

- Use duct tape and plastic sheeting (heavier than food wrap) to seal all cracks around the door and any vents into the room. A wet towel can also be used to create a seal along doors and windows.
- Keep listening to your radio or television and monitor the [Alberta Emergency Alert](#) app until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in your community.

How to Shelter-in-Place at Work

- Close the business.
- Bring everyone into the interior room(s). Shut and lock the door(s).
- If there are customers, clients or visitors in the building, provide for their safety by asking them to stay, not leave. When authorities provide directions to shelter-in-place, they want everyone to take those steps now, where they are and not drive or walk outdoors.
- Unless there is an imminent threat, ask employees, customers, clients and visitors to call their emergency contact to let them know where they are and that they are safe.
- Turn on call-forwarding or alternative telephone answering systems or services. If the business has voicemail or an automated attendant, change the recording to indicate that the business is closed and that staff and visitors are remaining in the building until authorities advise it is safe to leave.
- Close and lock all windows, exterior doors and any other openings to the outside.
- If you are told there is danger of an explosion, close the window shades, blinds or curtains.
- Ensure employees are familiar with your building's mechanical systems and how to turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems.
- Some systems automatically provide for exchange of inside air with outside air; these systems, in particular, need to be turned off, sealed or disabled.
- Gather essential disaster supplies, such as non-perishable food, bottled water, battery-powered radios, first-aid supplies, flashlights, batteries, duct tape, plastic sheeting, and plastic garbage bags.
- Select interior room(s) above the ground floor, with the fewest windows or vents. The room(s) should have adequate space for everyone to be able to sit in. Avoid overcrowding by selecting several rooms if necessary. Large storage closets, utility rooms, pantries, copy and conference rooms without exterior windows will work well. Avoid selecting a room with mechanical equipment like ventilation blowers or pipes, because it may be difficult to seal this equipment from the outdoors.

- Cell phones may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency. It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone in the room you select. If you do not have a hard wired telephone, bring your cell phone and charger to ensure you have a method to communicate. Call your emergency contact and have the phone available if you need to report a life-threatening condition.
- Use duct tape and plastic sheeting (heavier than food wrap) to seal all cracks around the door(s) and any vents into the room. A wet towel can also be used to create a seal along doors and windows.
- Write down the names of everyone in the room, and call your business's designated emergency contact to report who is in the room with you, and their affiliation with your business (e.g. employee, visitor, client or customer).
- Keep listening to the radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in your community.

How to Shelter-in-Place if You Are Driving in Your Vehicle

- If you are very close to home, your office or a public building, go there immediately and go inside. Follow the shelter-in-place recommendations for the place you pick as described above.
- If you are unable to get to a building quickly and safely, pull over to the side of the road. Stop your vehicle in the safest place possible. If it is sunny outside, stop under a bridge or in a shady spot to avoid being overheated (so long as you are not blocking traffic).
- Turn off the engine. Close windows and vents.
- If possible, seal the heating/air conditioning vents (use duct tape if available).
- Listen to the radio regularly for updated advice and instructions.
- Stay where you are until you are told it is safe to get back on the road. Be aware that some roads may be closed or traffic may be detoured. Local officials on the scene are the best source of information for your particular situation.

For more information on hazards in Alberta, contact your municipality or community's Director of Emergency Management or the Alberta Emergency Management Agency at 780-422-9000 (Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton). You can also visit www.aema.alberta.ca.