

How to Shelter-in-Place at a School – Handout

What Shelter-in-Place Means

- One of the instructions you may be given in an emergency where hazardous materials may have been released into the atmosphere is to **shelter-in-place**. This is a precaution aimed to **keep you safe while remaining indoors**.
- 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 school.

Why You Might Need to Shelter-in-Place

- Chemical, biological or radiological contaminants may be released accidentally or intentionally into the environment.

How to Shelter-in-Place at a School

- Bring students, faculty and staff indoors – if there are visitors in the building, provide for their safety by asking them to stay and not leave.
- When authorities provide directions to shelter-in-place, they want everyone to take those steps immediately, where they are, and not drive or walk outdoors.
- If students have cell phones, allow them to use them to call family members, etc. to let them know that they have been asked to remain in school until further notice, and that they are safe.
- Provide directions to close and lock all windows, exterior doors and any other openings to the outside.
- If you are told there is danger of explosion, direct that window shades, blinds or curtains be closed.
- Have employees familiar with your building's mechanical system 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.
- It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone in the rooms you select. Keep in mind that cellular telephone equipment may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency.
- Use duct tape and plastic sheeting (heavier than food wrap) to seal all cracks around doors and any vents into the room.
- Write down the names of everyone in the room, and call your schools' designated emergency contact to report who is in the room with you.
- Listen for an official announcement from school officials via the public address system, and stay where you are until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate.

Online Sources: California Department of Public Health and the American Red Cross