



Office of Risk Management

Safety Brief



Shelter-In-Place

There are occasions when the immediate evacuation of an area during an emergency is not necessarily the best choice. Sheltering in place is one of several response options available to employees of the District of Columbia in the event a chemical, radiological or biological contaminants are accidentally or intentionally released into the environment. Sheltering in place means persons will remain in a building until emergency management officials issue additional instructions or declare that the emergency condition has ended. Time constraints or evacuation in some instances might actually subject an employee and/or visitor to greater risk. During a release of hazardous materials, the air quality may be threatened and an evacuation may take you through a plume of toxic materials that could lead to serious health problems.

Employees who are asked to Shelter-In-Place should seek immediate shelter in their pre-determined Shelter-In-Place location and remain there until information is received to evacuate. Unless otherwise instructed to evacuate, sheltering in a pre-determined safe location in the workplace is the preferred method of safely waiting out a hazardous incident. In most cases, sheltering in place will hopefully last no more than one to two hours; however, under extreme conditions, the timeframe could be longer and advance preparations can ensure that the event is as comfortable as possible.

The decision to Shelter-In-Place or evacuate will generally be made after close communication between local emergency management, building management and Building Emergency Response Teams (BERT).

If you are asked to evacuate or Shelter-In-Place, your Building Emergency Response Team will remain your primary contact during the event. If Sheltering in place is the option:

- First and foremost, remain calm.
- If you are outside the facility, do not return inside if there is a fire. If the threat is a potential biological or chemical release, go inside immediately to the pre-determined safe location in the workplace. Keep in mind, if the release is directly outside your building and you have been exposed, emergency personnel may not allow you to return to the building since there may be exposure risk to other building occupants could occur.
- Contact a Building Emergency Response Team member if you see an immediately life-threatening situation. If first aid is required, contact the designated first-aid trained personnel in your office.
- Next, close all doors and any operable windows. Depending on the event, it may be prudent to place pre-cut plastic sheeting over windows and tape in place. Doors may also need to be taped around the perimeters.

- Close all outside air vents where such vents are adjustable. Some building ventilation systems shut down automatically in an emergency. Where occupants control these systems, turn off cooling, heating or ventilation. Cover cracks under doors with damp towels.
- Tape over cracks and other openings such as electrical outlets and cable television outlets for extra protection.
- Lastly, listen carefully to BERT team members for updated information. You may also monitor a portable radio for instructions from emergency officials. If electronic communication has been disrupted, Fire Wardens on each floor will have up-to-date information on the emergency condition via their pre-planned communication network.

Regardless of the type of emergency, preparedness is the key to overcoming adversity. Just as the emergency drill is important, so too is being prepared to Shelter-In-Place for an extended period of time. If Shelter-In-Place is safer than evacuation, the following is a list of recommended supplies for Agencies, (**NOTE:** For the average employee, the timeframe for Shelter-In-Place will generally be considered 3 to 72 hours. District emergency crews and critical staff could conceivably be on the job for several days).

BERT EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY LIST (RECOMMENDED)

The Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) is generally comprised of agency representatives who have volunteered or been selected to fill the roles of Floor Wardens, Zone Monitors, Assembly Area Monitors, the Senior Agency contact or Agency Risk Management Representative, and the Building Manager or a representative of facilities management for the building. The BERT members can be found in your agencies Emergency Response Plan.

The following is a minimum list of Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) supplies and the intended use for those items. Each Agency may add to these items as deemed appropriate. These supplies are also in addition to any recommended Agency and individual employee maintained supplies. Those supplies listed under Building Manager should be stored in a carefully chosen location with other building related emergency equipment.

BUILDING MANAGER

- Bull Horn with batteries
- Emergency Evacuation Chair (Storage area could be based on location of physically challenged personnel in the facility.)
- Large First Responder First Aid Kit

FLOOR WARDEN

- Tote Bag/Packs (For storage of assigned equipment and use during an emergency.)
- Bull Horn with batteries (Not every floor warden will need a bull horn. Assignment will be based on location that best fits overall communication needs for each floor.)
- Safety Vests
- Flash Lights with batteries. (Batteries should be kept in plastic bags between use, as leakage could damage equipment.)
- Radio with batteries (Floor warden will turn over radio to assistant floor warden for monitoring outside conditions, unless no assistant floor warden is assigned.)

ZONE MONITORS

- Tote Bag/Packs (For storage of assigned equipment and use during an emergency.)
- Clipboards (Current attendance lists and lists of physically challenged personnel should be maintained in the packs.)
- Flashlight with batteries (Batteries should be kept in plastic bags between use, as leakage could damage equipment.)

AGENCY EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY LIST (RECOMMENDED)

- First Aid Kit (See list of recommended supplies for First Aid Kits included with this information.)
- Water and food staples for agencies with emergency crews who are required to remain on site for more than one day. (**NOTE:** Water and food supplies have “shelf life” dates. Inspect dates and replace as needed.)
- Flashlight (Place batteries in small plastic bag, as they could leak and damage your flashlight over time.)
- Duct tape (Can be used to seal gaps where smoke may enter, for securing splints and other purposes.)
- Plastic sheeting (For sealing purposes, sheltering, etc.)
- Small transistor radio with batteries.
- Bath towels or other materials to stuff in openings under doors (dampen before use)

EMPLOYEE EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY LIST (RECOMMENDED)

- Small, sturdy pack or nylon bag (Store supplies in pack or bag.)
- Comfortable walking shoes (Loss of electrical power, transportation and blocked roads due to power outage or terrorism, etc. could result in a long walk home.)
- Water (One gallon – small easy to carry bottles may be preferred. Note expiration date on bottles. Drink and replace before expiration date is reached.)

- Snack (Breakfast bars, canned, easy-to-open and eat foods or other items with extensive shelf life.)
- Flashlight (Place batteries in small plastic bag, as they could leak and damage your flashlight over time.)
- Whistle
- Poncho
- N95 dust mask
- Small transistor radio.
- Book, deck of cards or other time fillers.
- Blanket (Inexpensive emergency space blankets are available from most camping supply stores.)
- Sanitary wipes or anti-bacterial hand sanitizer, sanitary napkins, etc.
- Medications

FIRST AID SUPPLIES
(RECOMMENDED)

- In 1998 the Medical Services and First Aid regulation, 29 CFR 1910-151 was revised and states, "in the absence of an infirmary, clinic, or hospital in near proximity to the workplace which is used for the treatment of all injured employees, a person or persons shall be adequately trained to render first aid. What must be remembered, however, is that during a major event where "multiple" disasters have occurred, it may take a considerable length of time for emergency medical personnel to arrive. Best practices would indicate that having personnel trained in first aid is the wise thing to do regardless of the proximity of a hospital or clinic.

| Basic Fill Contents for Type I, II and III Kits | |
|---|-------------------------|
| Item & Minimum Size or Volume | Minimum Quantity |
| Absorbent Compress, 32 sq. inch (No side smaller than 4 inch) | 1 |
| Adhesive bandages, 1 x 3 inch | 16 |
| Adhesive tape, 5 yd. | 1 |
| Antiseptic, .5g application | 10 |
| Burn Treatment, .5g application | 6 |
| Medical exam gloves (latex free) | 2 pair |
| Sterile pad, 3 x 3 inc. | 4 |
| Triangular bandage, 40 x 40 x 56 inch | 1 |
| Eye Pads | 2 |
| Scissors | 1 |

It is important to note when the fire alarm is activated, the structure must be evacuated following your Emergency Response Plan guidelines. There should be no delay in evacuation. Sheltering in place will take place only after a public safety official deems it necessary.

Agencies should include this information in their Emergency Response Plan and provide training to their staff.

Additional information can be found at the OSHA Shelter-in-Place website
<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/shelterinplace.html>

For additional information, please feel free to contact Victor Ferreira, Occupational Safety and Health Manager, Office of Risk Management at victor.ferreira@dc.gov