

Preparing To Shelter In Place Issues For Households To Consider



PREPARING TO SHELTER IN PLACE

ISSUES FOR HOUSEHOLDS TO CONSIDER

Sheltering in place means staying inside whatever building you happen to be in at the time of an emergency or, if you are outside, going into an undamaged building nearby and staying there for a period that may last hours to several days. Officials are likely to instruct people to shelter in place if an explosion or chemical spill releases toxic dust, fumes, radiation, or chemicals outside. Community residents may want to protect themselves this way if an emergency like an electrical blackout or snowstorm makes it very difficult or unsafe for them to go anywhere else. Depending on when the emergency occurs, some people are likely to be in a place other than their home – for example, at work, school, or shopping – apart from other household members.

When almost 2,000 diverse community residents in the *Redefining Readiness* demonstration sites considered what they would face in a shelter-in-place emergency, they identified many issues that are critical to their protection. If the members of *your* household want to be prepared to protect yourselves in this kind of emergency, get together with other household members to consider the questions below. These questions are designed to stimulate thinking about important issues, some of which you may not have considered before. There are many right answers, but don't expect to have answers right away. Instead, as you consider the questions together, decide which issues are relevant to your particular household and how the members of your household can best address them.

If you are employed or have young children in your household, take a look at *Issues for Work Places to Consider* and *Issues for Schools and Early Childhood/Youth Programs to Consider* too, and get involved in discussions in those places.

For more information about the problems people face trying to shelter in place, examples of specific actions that can be taken to resolve those problems, and an inclusive process for using this issue set, please visit www.redefiningreadiness.net.

I. OUR HOUSEHOLD'S NEED TO SHELTER IN PLACE

- (1) **What kinds of emergencies could occur in *our community* that would make us need to protect ourselves by sheltering in place?**
- (2) **Considering the places we go on a regular basis, where might each of us need to shelter in this kind of emergency?**
- (3) **Are any of us responsible for protecting other people in our work place in a shelter-in-place emergency?**
 - If so, do we know what is expected of us?
 - Have we received any training to meet these responsibilities?

II. COMMUNICATION

- (1) **If we are at home, how will we know about the emergency and communicate with others?**
 - What media and communication devices do we have at home?
 - Do we have back-ups if some forms of communication are not operational during the emergency?
 - Are we part of a “calling tree,” such as a group of trusted neighbors or friends who call or e-mail each other during an emergency?
- (2) **How will we receive information and communicate with others if we are *not* at home at the time of the emergency?**
 - What communication devices do we carry with us or have at work?
 - How will we communicate with household members who do not carry such devices?
- (3) **If the members of our household can't communicate with each other during the emergency, is there another way we can find out how all of us are?**
 - Do we have a list of other people that each of us should call or e-mail?
 - Does the community have a hot-line or website we can contact to report our condition and check on the condition of other household members during the emergency?

III. PROTECTION FROM TOXIC SUBSTANCES OUTSIDE

- (1) Have we discussed this type of emergency in advance to make sure that everyone in our household will take shelter wherever they happen to be (in other words, not endanger themselves by trying to find each other or by going to a pre-arranged meeting place)?**
- (2) If we are at home during the emergency, what will we do to protect ourselves from toxic substances outside?**
 - Does everyone in our household know how to close or seal windows, doors, and vents; and to turn off air conditioners?
 - Which room in the house will give us the best protection from toxic substances outside?
 - If we stay in this room, will we have access to communications, toilet and washing facilities, and critical basic and medical supplies?
- (3) How will we be protected from toxic substances outside if we are some place else at the time of the emergency, such as at work, school, day care, shopping, or in a restaurant?**
- (4) Where will we go to protect ourselves if we are outside at the time of the emergency?**

IV. BASIC AND MEDICAL NEEDS

- (1) If we are home during the emergency, will we have enough supplies there to meet our basic and medical needs for several days?**
 - Do these supplies need to include medications and medical supplies; bottled water and non-perishable food; hygiene, cleaning, and plumbing products; flashlights, candles, and matches; communications?
 - Do we need any other supplies?
- (2) If we are some place else during the emergency (for example, at work, school, day care, shopping), do we know what that place will do to meet our basic and medical needs during a shelter-in-place emergency?**

(3) Have we stored emergency supplies in the other places we tend to be on a regular basis (such as at work, school, day care, or in the car)?

- Do our personal emergency kits need to include a several-day supply of all of the medications and medical supplies we need (including nicotine gum if we smoke)?
- Do our personal emergency kits need to contain food for special dietary needs (including instant tea or coffee if we need caffeine), personal hygiene products, eyeglasses or contact lens supplies, extra clothes, a sewing kit, towels, a blanket and pillow, and books or other entertainment?
- Do the emergency kits for our children also need to include a comfort toy or blanket, something to keep them occupied, and things they need to go to sleep?
- Do we need to include anything else in our personal emergency kits?

(4) If we have children at school, day care, or another youth program, have we provided that organization with:

- A record of each child's medical problems, allergies, and medications?
- Written permission to administer medications to each of our children in the event of an emergency?

(5) To meet our medical needs if we are not at home, work, school, or day care during the emergency, do all of us need to keep a three-day supply of our medications and medical supplies with us at all times?

V. CARE FOR DEPENDENTS

(1) Have we arranged alternate providers of care for the children, adults, and animals who depend on us – with multiple back-ups so we can be sure that our own caretaker responsibilities will be fulfilled if we have to shelter in place during this kind of emergency?

- Have we given our children's school, day care, or youth program a list of all of the people who are authorized to pick them up?
- Does our neighborhood have a "safe house" where children who are home alone can go during an emergency?
- Has our neighborhood organized a buddy system or teams to check on dependents who may be home alone during an emergency?
- Do our children and other dependents know about these alternate care plans?

(2) Have we talked to our children’s school, day care, youth program, or sitter about how our children will be cared for if we need to shelter in place during the emergency?

- If someone we authorize picks up our children, will the school or program keep a record of who picked them up, when they were picked up, and where they were taken?
- If neither we nor any of our authorized back-ups can pick up our children or meet them at home during the emergency, what will the school, day care, bus driver, or sitter do to assure our children’s supervision and safety?
- Have we provided the people we employ to care for our children or other dependents with any incentives to continue caring for them in this kind of situation? If so, what will happen to *their* dependents?

(3) Do our children and other dependents know what to do if they are home alone during the emergency?

- Do they know how to use the phone and whom to call for assistance?
- If they are disabled, do they have a personal alarm system to call for help?
- Until help arrives, do they know the safest place in the house to go? Does that room have all of the supplies they will need? Are they able to use those supplies?

VI. EMOTIONAL DISTRESS AND VIOLENCE

(1) Have we taken steps in advance to reduce the emotional stress we could experience in a shelter-in-place emergency?

- Has everyone in our household had an opportunity to think about this kind of emergency in advance?
- Have we figured out ways to communicate with each other or find out about each other during the emergency?
- Have we included comfort and entertainment items in our personal emergency kits?
- Have we made arrangements for all of our dependents to be cared for during the emergency?
- Are we confident that our household members’ work places, schools, day care centers, and after-school programs have prepared to minimize

conditions that can make people unruly and violent when they are sheltering in place (such as insufficient food, water, medications, and hygiene facilities; overcrowding; extreme temperatures; access to weapons and alcohol; and locked doors)?

- Have we talked with our employers to be sure that we won't lose our job or income and that our critical job responsibilities will be fulfilled if we can't get to work because we are sheltering somewhere else during the emergency?
 - Have we installed alarm systems in our homes and businesses or organized a neighborhood watch to protect our property if we need to shelter somewhere else?
 - Would it be helpful to learn relaxation techniques or self-defense?
- (2) **Have we thought about what we could do to help ourselves and other people in the building stay calm during a shelter-in-place emergency** (such as keeping each other occupied and entertained, organizing a buddy system so people in the building can support each other and watch over each other while they sleep, and helping people keep their minds off their fears by finding useful tasks for them to do)?

VII. EMERGENCY PLANNING PROCESS

- (1) **Who has been involved in developing our household's plans to respond to a shelter-in-place emergency?**
- What role has each member of our household played?
 - What aspects of the plan is each household member aware of and how have they been informed?
 - How have we practiced our plans and determined how effective they are?
 - How often do we review our plans and modify them, if necessary?
- (2) **What role have we played in developing shelter-in-place plans at our household members' work places, schools, day care centers, and after-school programs?**
- How much do we know about these plans?
 - Do we have any concerns or questions about these plans?
- (3) **What kinds of supports or incentives would help our household prepare for sheltering in place?**

Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies in Health

The New York Academy of Medicine
1216 Fifth Avenue, Room 452
New York, NY 10029-5293
212.822.7250



www.cacsh.org



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