

Shelter In Place at Your Office

**A general guide for preparing
a shelter in place plan in the workplace**



**National Institute for Chemical Studies
2300 MacCorkle Avenue, SE
Charleston, WV 25304
ph (304) 346-6264
fax (304) 346-6349
email: nicsinfo@nicsinfo.org
www.nicsinfo.org**

November 1999

Shelter In Place at your Office

Sheltering in place in your workplace is similar to sheltering in place at home, but there are some significant differences.

The basic steps remain the same:

- 1) Shut and lock all windows and doors
- 2) Turn off all air handling equipment (heating, ventilation, and/or air conditioning)
- 3) Go to a pre-determined sheltering room (or rooms)
- 4) Seal any windows and/or vents with sheets of plastic and duct tape
- 5) Seal the door(s) with duct tape around the top and sides; place a wet towel at the bottom of the door
- 6) Turn on a TV or radio and listen for further instructions.
- 7) When the “all clear” is announced, open windows and doors, turn on ventilation systems and go outside until the building’s air has been exchanged with the now clean outdoor air.

Additional steps that offices need to consider:

1. Employees cannot be forced to shelter in place. Therefore, it is important to develop your shelter in place plan with employees to maximize the cooperation of employees with the shelter plan. Determine if all employees will shelter or if some will leave the building before shelter procedures are put in place.
2. Develop an accountability system. You should know who is in your building and where they are if an emergency develops. Visitors should be made aware of your office’s decision to shelter in place if advised by emergency management officials.
3. Duties should be assigned to specific employees. Those employees should have backups.
4. Drills should be planned and executed on a regular basis. Afterwards, the drill should be critiqued by employees and/or drill monitors from the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). Lessons learned should be incorporated into your Shelter In Place plan.

Before an emergency occurs

Discuss emergency procedures with all employees. Explain sheltering in place to your employees or invite the LEPC or local Fire Chief to explain the emergency warning system and sheltering in place. By having a discussion with all employees about sheltering in place and its use, the team approach can work to implement an effective sheltering plan.

Select a room or rooms to serve as shelter rooms during chemical emergencies. The rooms should be large enough to provide at least 10 square feet per person sheltered. A shelter room should have as few windows, vents and doors as possible. A windowless room is best. The LEPC or Fire Chief can provide assistance in selecting the best room(s) for sheltering.

Break rooms or conference rooms with few or no windows can be used for shelters. Hallways are sometimes used in institutional settings. In a closet or other storage area in the shelter room, supplies for sheltering should be stored. Before a chemical accident occurs, outfit your shelter kit with the following:

- ✓ Plastic sheeting - Pre-cut plastic sheeting to fit over any windows or vents in the sheltering area.
- ✓ Duct tape - Rolls of duct tape to be used to secure the plastic over windows/vents and to seal doors.
- ✓ Battery operated radio with fresh batteries - In the event of a power outage, a battery operated radio is necessary to hear emergency announcements including the “all clear” when the emergency is over.
- ✓ Flashlight and fresh batteries.
- ✓ Enough towels to block the bottoms of each door in the room.
- ✓ Bottled water to wet the towels for sealing door bottoms and for drinking.
- ✓ First aid kit

The shelter room should also have a telephone (either regular or cellular) for emergency use only. Stay off the phone during the shelter in place to keep lines free for emergency responders. If you have an emergency in your shelter room, use the phone to call 911 for help.

Check your shelter kit on a regular basis. Duct tape and first aid supplies can sometimes disappear when all employees know where the shelter kit is stored. Batteries for the radio and flashlight should be kept fresh.

Develop an emergency plan and checklist with your employees. Volunteers or recruits should be assigned specific duties during an emergency. Alternates should be assigned to each duty.

Plan at least two shelter in place drills annually. The first drill can be announced, then later drills should be unannounced. It is useful to invite outside drill monitors to observe your drill and to participate in an after-drill critique. Critiques can provide you with valuable insights to improve protection for you and your employees during chemical emergencies.

A model Shelter In Place for Offices plan is provided. You can modify the plan to suit your particular situation.

SAMPLE PLAN

This is an example of a plan that a business could develop for shelter in place actions. You should develop your own plan with an employee planning team. The following plan can be used to assist in developing your own plan.

Shelter In Place Plan for ABC Company, Inc.

1234 Jones Boulevard

Anywhere, USA

NOTICE!

In the event that a shelter in place is advised for the area including the ABC Company, all persons in the building will be notified that ABC Company is preparing to shelter in place and that all doors will be locked after 3 minutes. All employees and visitors must decide whether to shelter in place at ABC Company until the “all clear” is announced or whether they will leave the premises within 3 minutes. After that time, no one will be allowed to break the seal on the building until the “all clear” is announced.

Shelter In Place Procedures

Communications:

<u>Procedure</u>	<u>Responsible Party</u>	<u>NeededSupplies/ Equipment/Rules</u>
Listen for announcement on radio/weather radio/TV	receptionist	weather radio
Announce to employees and visitors that a shelter in place has been advised and that the sheltering plan should be implemented immediately	receptionist	intercom system
Locate cellular phone (take to the break room)	receptionist	cell phones in sales office, executive suite
Take employee and visitor sign-in sheets to the shelter area (break room)	receptionist	All employees and visitors must sign in and out of the building at the reception desk

Procedure

Responsible Party

**NeededSupplies/
Equipment/Rules**

Control of air movement:

When intercom announces shelter in place, immediately turn off all air handling equipment

Maintenance Dept.
1) Chief of Maintenance
2) Maintenance Supervisor

Locate main cutoff switch for heating, cooling and ventilation systems. Label with shelter in place shut off

Make sure all windows are closed and locked

Each office inhabitant must assure that his/her windows are closed and locked. Floor monitor/ alternate checks offices, windows (in offices and in common areas) and closes office doors as he/she moves to shelter room. Make sure all fire doors are closed.

When 3 minutes have elapsed, place sign on outside and lock all outside doors

Janitor 1 - front door (alternate, Janitor 2)
Engineering Dept. chief - back door (alternate, Senior Engineer 1)

Signs should indicate that a shelter in place is in effect and that doors will not be opened until the All Clear is sounded.

Shelter Room Procedures:

Ascertain presence or whereabouts of all persons on employee/visitor sign-in sheets

Receptionist

Sign-in sheets

Seal windows and vents with plastic

Engineer 1, 2, and 3 (alternates, Sales manager, Accountant and Stock manager)

Shelter kit

Seal door with duct tape and moistened towels

Accounts payable clerk (alternate, Accounts receivable clerk)

Shelter kit

Monitor radio broadcast for emergency messages

President (alternate, Vice President)

Shelter kit

Procedure

Responsible Party

**NeededSupplies/
Equipment/Rules**

All Clear Procedure:

“All Clear” message is received from emergency officials over television or radio

President (alternate, Vice President)

Radio from shelter kit

Employees will leave the shelter room and immediately go outside the building to pre-arranged meeting area

Individual employees

Open all windows and doors (then leave bldg.)

Floor Monitors, Engineering Department Chief, other assigned employees

Turn on ventilation systems (then leave bldg.)

Janitor 1 or 2

Account for all employees and visitors

Receptionist

Employee and visitor sign-in sheets

Return to building when it has been thoroughly ventilated

To be determined by building engineers in advance of emergency

SHELTER IN PLACE CHECKLIST
for communication employee (receptionist)

_____ Responsible Employee Checklist current as of:

_____ Alternate Employee _____ (date)

When a shelter in place advisory is issued, the responsible employee (e. g., receptionist) shall:

- Announce “All employees and visitors – A shelter in place advisory has been issued. All employees and visitors should leave your current area and proceed to the first floor break room. Employees should make sure office windows and doors are closed before leaving.”
- Locate a cellular phone (from executive suite or sales office) and employee/visitor sign-in sheets and take them to the shelter in place room (break room).
- Determine from sign-in sheets whether all employees and visitors are accounted for. All employees and visitors should be in the shelter in place room within 3 minutes. If all signed in persons are not in the shelter room within 3 minutes, notify the President.
- When the “All Clear” is issued, take the sign-in sheets and leave the shelter room. Proceed to the pre-arranged meeting area outside the building.
- Account for employees and visitors using sign-in sheets. Report any discrepancies to the President.
- When the building has been ventilated, return to the building and replace the cellular phone and sign-in sheets.

SHELTER IN-PLACE CHECKLIST
for maintenance employees

_____ Responsible Employee Checklist current as of:

_____ Alternate Employee _____ (date)

When a shelter in place advisory is issued, the responsible employee (e.g., Chief of Maintenance) shall:

- Immediately proceed to the mechanicals room and turn off all air handling equipment (HVAC).
- Proceed to the break room for the remainder of the shelter in place. You should be in the break room within 3 minutes of the announcement.
- At the “All Clear,” leave the break room and proceed to the mechanicals room. Turn all ventilation equipment on.
- Leave the building and go to the pre-arranged meeting area outside. Check in with the receptionist.

SHELTER IN PLACE CHECKLIST
for front door monitor (janitorial staff)

_____ Responsible Employee

Checklist current as of:

_____ Alternate Employee

_____ (date)

When a shelter in place advisory is issued, the responsible employee (e. g., janitor) shall:

- Collect the “Shelter In Place in Effect – NO ENTRY” sign and go to the front door of the office building.
- After 3 minutes have passed, place the sign on the outside of the door, lock it and proceed to the break room.
- Remain in the break room until the “All Clear” is announced.
- Unlock front door, take sign down, prop the door open, and go to the pre-arranged meeting area outside. Check in with the receptionist.
- Return to your station when the building has been completely ventilated and the President has instructed employees to return to work. Upon returning to the building, close the front door and put the NO ENTRY sign back in its storage place.

SHELTER IN PLACE CHECKLIST

for back door monitor (engineering staff)

_____ Responsible Employee

Checklist current as of:

_____ Alternate Employee

_____ (date)

When a shelter in place advisory is issued, the responsible employee (e. g., engineering staff) shall:

- Collect the “Shelter In Place in Effect – NO ENTRY” sign and go to the back door of the office building.
- After 3 minutes have passed, place the sign on the outside of the door, lock it and proceed to the break room.
- Remain in the break room until the “All Clear” is announced.
- Unlock back door, take sign down, prop the door open, and go to the pre-arranged meeting area outside. Check in with the receptionist.
- After building is completely ventilated and upon instruction from the President, return to your office. Upon returning to the building, put the NO ENTRY sign back in its storage place and close the back door.

SHELTER IN PLACE CHECKLIST
for all employees

_____ Responsible Employee

Checklist current as of:

_____ Alternate Employee

_____ (date)

When a shelter in place advisory is issued, each employee shall:

- Upon hearing the shelter in place announcement, make sure all office windows are closed and locked. Close your office door when you leave. Immediately go to the break room and escort any visitors to that room.
- Remain in the break room until the “All Clear” is announced. Immediately go outside to the pre-arranged meeting area and check in with the receptionist. Make sure any visitors are escorted to the meeting area as well.
- After the building is thoroughly ventilated and upon instruction from the President, return to your office.

SHELTER IN PLACE CHECKLIST
for floor monitors

_____ Responsible Employee

Checklist current as of:

_____ Alternate Employee

_____ (date)

When a shelter in place advisory is issued, the responsible employee shall:

- Make sure all employees and visitors on the floor have proceeded to the first floor break room.
- Check all offices and common areas to make sure windows are closed and locked. Close any open office doors. Make sure any fire doors are closed.
- Go to the break room for the duration of the shelter in place.
- When the “All Clear” is announced, return to your floor, open any operable windows and office doors, prop open fire doors.
- Go outside to the pre-arranged meeting area and check in with the receptionist.
- When the building is thoroughly ventilated and you are instructed to return to the building by the President, close fire doors and windows in the common areas.

SHELTER IN PLACE CHECKLIST
for window sealing crew

_____ Responsible Employee

Checklist current as of:

_____ Alternate Employee

_____ (date)

When a shelter in place advisory is issued, the responsible employee (e.g., window sealing crew) shall:

- Close and lock office window and close door on the way to the break room.
- Remove plastic sheets and duct tape from shelter kit.
- Place plastic over window and seal edges with long strips of duct tape. Be sure tape securely overlaps all edges of the plastic.
- Place plastic over all vents and seal with long strips of duct tape. Be sure tape securely overlaps all edges of the plastic.
- When the “All Clear” is announced, immediately remove the plastic from the windows and vents. Open the windows, if operable.
- Go outside to the pre-arranged meeting area and check in with the receptionist.
- When the building is thoroughly ventilated and you are instructed to return by the President, return to the break room, fold the plastic sheets and return the plastic and duct tape rolls to the shelter kit.

SHELTER IN PLACE CHECKLIST
for door sealing crew

_____ Responsible Employee

Checklist current as of:

_____ Alternate Employee

_____ (date)

When a shelter in place advisory is issued, the responsible employee (e.g., door sealing crew) shall:

- Close and lock office window and close door on the way to the break room.
- Remove duct tape, towel and bottled water from shelter kit.
- Check with receptionist to assure that all employees have entered the break room (approximately 3 minutes after the announcement). Lock door to break room and seal edges with long strips of duct tape. Be sure tape securely overlaps all edges of the door.
- Wet the towel with bottled water and place it at the bottom of the door.
- When the “All Clear” is announced, immediately remove the tape and towel from the door.
- Go outside to the pre-arranged meeting area and check in with the receptionist.
- When the building is thoroughly ventilated and you are instructed to return by the President, return to the break room, hang the towel for drying and return the duct tape rolls to the shelter kit. Also make sure that the battery-operated radio has been returned to the shelter kit.
- Be sure to return the dry towel to the shelter kit later in the day.