

**A general guide for preparing a shelter in place
(SIP) plan
for use at sites where RACES personnel may be
deployed.**

SHELTER IN PLACE (SIP)

Shelter in place is a protective action designed to use an indoor facility and its indoor atmosphere to shield people from a hazardous outdoor environment. This is a short term measure, measured in hours and not days, which will protect the occupant until the hazard passes. If an accident, such as a chemical spill, or an attack creates a dangerous contaminated environment outdoors, everyone would be brought inside and the doors and windows closed. The heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems (HVAC) should be shut down to create a neutral air pressure environment, which will help prevent the contaminated air from entering the facility.

WHO MUST HAVE A SHELTER IN PLACE PLAN?

All state and local government work sites are required to have a shelter in place plan. The plan is generally included as an annex to the Emergency Response Plan. If RACES personnel are to be deployed in a private facility which does not have a SIP Plan, develop your plan now within the context of general preparedness planning which should be coordinated with the served organization. Be Ready. Be Safe.

WHY SHELTER IN PLACE?

Sheltering in place is a rapid and effective means of protecting the building occupants from an external threat. To evacuate the facility could expose employees to a greater danger in the external environment.

DOES SHELTER IN PLACE WORK?

Of the 35 major chemical accidents in the US over the last 20 years, there has not been a single fatality among individuals who have sheltered in place. (National Institute for Chemical Studies, June 01)

HOW WILL WE KNOW WHEN TO SHELTER IN PLACE?

The notification to shelter in place may come from officials, the media, or alert staff members.

- Notification from public safety officials.
- TV, E-mail or radio announcements of an incident in your immediate area.
- Staff that notice unusual activity outside, such as vapor clouds, birds dropping from the sky, small animals sick or dying, an explosion with little or no damage, an unusual and strong odor that is making people ill, people entering the facility from the outside gasping for breath or passing out.

A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN IS ESSENTIAL

A communications plan has three elements: identifying who needs to be notified that a shelter in place is activated (staff and visitors), ensuring that appropriate communications equipment is readily accessible and making sure that appropriate staff are trained to use the equipment. Your plan should include multiple means for communicating a shelter in place activation to staff and visitors at your worksite, for example:

- Public address system
- Bull horn
- 2 way radios, amateur, FRS, public safety, etc.
- telephones

VISITORS/EMPLOYEES

Many work sites serve the public and must plan for sheltering both employees and visitors at your work site. This includes planning for outdoor events where an indoor facility is available. When a shelter in place is initiated, inform the employees and visitors that due to an external hazard, there is a need to shelter in place inside. Recommend and encourage everyone to go to the designated shelter for their safety. Inform them that once the shelter is sealed, they cannot enter or leave until public safety officials ensure that it is safe to do so. Inform everyone that the shelter will close/seal in X number of minutes (3-5 minutes is recommended). Encourage all employees/visitors/public to join you for their safety. Remember that public safety officials will arrive on the scene shortly and take control of the external situation. Although we cannot force anyone to shelter in place, we must provide them with the option.

CREATING A SHELTER IN PLACE AT YOUR WORK SITE

- Choose an interior room or space, preferably one with no windows and large enough to accommodate staff and members of the public. You may have to choose more than one location if one location does not provide adequate space.
- Identify more than one Emergency Response coordinator (ERC)/designated representative to receive training from the property manager, served agency safety coordinator or local fire department on how to properly shut down the facility's HVAC/air systems to create neutral pressure for your shelter and to help keep the outdoor air from entering the facility. Agencies located in leased space should contact their building owner/managing agent to make similar arrangements. Emergency lighting, fire alarm systems, and phones should still operate (the served agency will determine when they train employees to shut down air systems). Under NO circumstances should RACES personnel attempt to restart utilities.
- Pre-position supplies in the designated shelter in place location (see suggested list of supplies/equipment). Agencies are responsible for providing their own supplies.
- Once the shelter is identified, all employees must be made aware of its location. If your work site serves the public, consider posting conspicuous signage indicating the location of your shelter. Make practicing shelter in place a part of your emergency response plan as you do semi-annual emergency evacuations. Don't forget to include arrangements for staff and visitors who may require assistance getting into the shelter.

HOW TO SHELTER IN PLACE

When notified that a shelter in place plan should be activated:

- Call 911 to alert public safety officials to the emergency and that you are initiating a shelter in place.
- Notify employees and visitors to go to the designated shelter area. Employees should assist visitors in locating the shelter area.
- Shut down the facility's HVAC/air systems as instructed by public safety personnel, facility security or the building owner/manager.
- Close all windows and doors.
- Post the shelter in place sign on the outside of the shelter door to notify public safety officials that you are sheltering inside.

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- Close (and lock if door locks) the door to the shelter and do not open it until told to do so by public safety officials. From the inside of the room, use duct tape to seal the door, door threshold, and air vents. Place pre-cut plastic 4 mil sheeting over door and thresholds and over air vents, sealing around edges with duct tape.
 - Turn on the radio to receive news of the outside threat situation and local emergency management updates.
 - If anyone was exposed to the external threat (such as people who entered the facility gasping for breath), separate them from others, have them remove their clothing and decontaminate using soap and water, if available. Clothing must be removed if the contaminant is on their clothes. Contaminated clothing should be sealed in a plastic bag and given to the first responders for disposal after the incident is over. If anyone assists and has touched the clothing or exposed person, they should also wash thoroughly with soap and water.
 - Follow the directions given by public safety officials that will arrive on the scene to assess the situation. Ensure all shelter occupants are aware that public safety officials may require time to assess the situation and may not be able to assist/inform the occupants for an extended period of time. Occupants should be assured that they are safest in the shelter and asked to be patient.
 - To ensure that the HVAC systems are not damaged, do NOT attempt to turn the HVAC/air systems back on after the emergency is over. Call the building owner/manager to ensure a safe return of service to your facility.

RECOMMENDED SUPPLIES FOR A SHELTER IN PLACE

The following is a recommended list of supplies each Agency should pre-position in your designated shelter. This list is not intended to preclude Agencies from adding additional supplies as required. Each Agency is responsible for stockpiling their work sites.

- Emergency contact phone numbers.
- First Aid Kit.
- Duct tape.
- Towels and blankets.
- Large plastic trash bag to put any contaminated clothing into.
- Radio with batteries, preferably a NOAA weather radio.
- Flashlight with batteries.

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- Toilet paper and a receptacle for bathroom functions if a bathroom is not part of your shelter.
 - Cell phone to notify 911 and notify family members.
 - Soap and water (bottled if water source is not inside the shelter) in case decontamination is required.
 - Consider having a change of clothing for contaminated persons to change into, such as sweat clothes, hospital scrubs, or overalls.
 - Sign to post outside of the shelter. The sign should draw attention, such as having large red borders. Example wording: SHELTER IN PLACE EMERGENCY. DO NOT OPEN DOORS UNTIL AUTHORIZED BY PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICIALS.

STAFF SUPPLIES

All staff should be encouraged to have an individual care package stored at their work stations to bring into the shelter. Recommended items for the care package include:

- Bottled water for personal use.
- Non-perishable food or snacks.
- Medications for a 24 hour period.
- A change of clothing to change into if exposed and the shelter is not providing it.

PLAN REVIEW BY PUBLIC SAFETY:

This SOP is only a guide in the development of an SIP plan for served agency or private organization sites, in the absence of an existing plan. All SIP plans should be reviewed by the local fire official or emergency management office.