

SHELTER IN DISASTERS

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS TOPIC

Seeking appropriate shelter is critical in times of disaster. Sheltering is appropriate when conditions require you to seek protection in your home, place of employment or other location when disaster strikes.



CHOOSING A LOCATION

There may be situations, depending on your circumstances and the nature of the disaster, when it's best to stay where you are and avoid going outside. The safest place to seek shelter varies by hazard. Find out which disasters are more likely to affect your area and have plans in place for each. Consider the hazard and choose a place in your home or another building that is safe for that hazard.

- For example, from a tornado, a room should be selected that is in a basement or an interior room on the lowest level away from corners, windows, doors and outside walls.
- Flooding – evacuate before the flood arrives. Don't wait until you are caught and cannot evacuate.
- Earthquake – Once the shaking has stopped, go outside. Do not re-enter a building until it has been determined safe for re-entry.

MASS CARE SHELTER

Mass care shelters are not always activated during an emergency. Be prepared to find shelter with family, neighbors, or in a hotel.

- To find open shelters near you, go to:
 - ◊ <http://www.redcross.org/find-help/shelter>
 - ◊ Search for open shelters by texting **SHELTER** and a **Zip Code** to 43362 (4FEMA).
Ex: "Shelter 98765" (standard rates apply).
- Even though mass care shelters often provide water, food, medicine and basic sanitary facilities, you should plan to take your disaster supplies kit with you so you will have the supplies you require.
- Mass care sheltering can involve living with many people in a confined space, which can be difficult and unpleasant. To avoid conflicts in the stressful situation, it is important to cooperate with shelter managers and others assisting them.
- Alcoholic beverages and weapons are forbidden in emergency shelters and smoking is restricted.
- Most mass care shelters will not allow pets. Develop a plan for taking care of your pets.

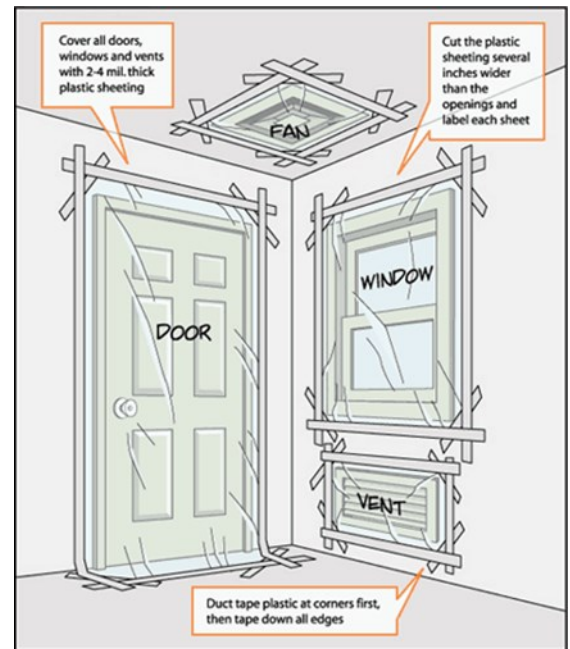
STAYING AT HOME

The length of time you are required to shelter may be short, such as during a tornado warning, or long, such as during a winter storm or a pandemic. It is important that you stay in shelter until local authorities say it is safe to leave. Determine what type of shelter is needed:

- Physical shelter – Interior room, room with no windows, etc..
- Contamination shelter – seal a room due to outside vapors/contamination

Steps for sheltering in place and sealing the room to create a barrier between you and potentially contaminated air outside:

- Bring your family and pets inside.
- Lock doors, close windows, air vents and fireplace dampers.
- Turn off fans, air conditioning and forced air heating systems.
- Take your emergency supply kit unless you have reason to believe it has been contaminated.
- Go into an interior room with few windows, if possible.
- Seal all windows, doors and air vents with 2-4 mil. thick plastic sheeting and duct tape.
- Be prepared to improvise and use what you have on hand to seal gaps so that you create a barrier between yourself and any contamination.
- Local authorities may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do. However, you should watch TV, listen to the radio or check the Internet often for official news and instructions as they become available.



MORE INFORMATION

[Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) - Shelter

[Who.int](https://www.who.int) - Shelter and Emergency Settlements (pdf)

[Redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org) - Find Open Shelters

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