

Radiation Emergency Activities

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How can I prepare for a radiation emergency?

- Check with your child’s school, the nursing home of a family member, and your employer to see what their plans are for dealing with an emergency.
- Develop your own family emergency plan.
- Learn how to find emergency information and news on your radio. King County’s local Emergency Response Network is located at AM 710.
- At home, put together an emergency kit. The kit should include the following items:
 - ❑ A flashlight with extra batteries
 - ❑ A portable radio with extra batteries
 - ❑ Bottled water
 - ❑ Canned and packaged food
 - ❑ A manual can opener
 - ❑ A first aid kit and essential prescription medications
 - ❑ Personal items such as soap, toothbrush, toilet paper, garbage bags, etc.

What are the most important actions I can take in a radiation emergency?

- Stay informed. Listen to your local emergency information network or news station on your radio (KIRO AM 710 in King County).
- Follow the advice of health workers, police, fire and public leaders.

- Obey general orders involving evacuation or shelter-in-place.
- Stockpiling basic necessities ahead of time.

How can I limit my exposure to radiation?

There are three factors that minimize radiation exposure to your body:

Time, Distance and Shielding.

Distance: The more distance between you and the source of the radiation, the less radiation you will receive. If local officials call for an evacuation, you will go farther away from the radiation.

Shielding: You will receive a smaller dose of radiation if heavy, dense materials are between you and the source. In a radiation emergency, public authorities may tell you to stay indoors. The walls in your home will help protect you from radiation. Basements or underground rooms offer good protection.

Time: The less time you are exposed to radiation, the less radiation you will receive. Most radioactivity loses its strength fairly quickly. After a radiological incident, local authorities will announce when the immediate threat from radiation has passed.

How can I protect myself during a radiation emergency?

In a radiation emergency, local authorities will monitor the level of radiation and decide what actions to take. Tune your radio to the local Emergency Response Network or a news station for information and instructions.

If large amounts of radioactive materials have been released, you may be told to “**shelter in place**,” which means to stay where you are in your home or office. You may also be told to “**evacuate**,” which means to move to another location.

- Take cover as quickly as you can – below ground if possible – and stay there unless instructed to do otherwise.
- If you are caught outside and you cannot go inside immediately, take cover behind anything that might offer protection. Lie flat on the ground and cover your head.
- Remember the three protective factors: *time*, *distance*, and *shielding*.
- Keep a battery-powered radio with you, and listen for official information.

What should I do to “Shelter in Place?”

If local officials advise you to shelter in place:

- Close, lock and seal all doors, windows and vents to the outside.

- Turn off fans, air conditioners and your furnace.
- Close fireplace dampers.
- Bring pets inside.
- Duct tape and plastic sheeting should **not** be used unless windows are broken.
- Move to the basement or an inner room.
- Make every effort to maintain sanitary conditions in your shelter space.
- Keep your radio tuned to the Emergency Response Network or local news station to find out what else you need to do.
- Stay inside until officials say it is safe to leave your building. Sheltering in place is a temporary measure that would probably not last longer than 24 hours.

What should I do if I've been exposed to radiation?

- Remove your clothing as soon as possible and seal it in a plastic bag. Place the bag behind whatever barriers are available, such as in a closet in a remote room in the building. This will eliminate most of the contamination caused by external exposure to radioactive materials. Contaminated clothing may also be tested later to help determine your level of exposure.
- Take a shower or wash off as best as you can using lukewarm water and lots of soap. This will reduce the amount of radioactive contamination on the body. Do not scrub hard, since this could make small tears in the skin where radiation could enter the body.
- If you cannot get to a shower immediately, remove as many outer layers of clothing as is practical, seal them in a plastic bag, and wash off exposed areas of skin the best you can.

What should I do if I'm advised to evacuate the area?

- If you are advised to evacuate, follow the directions that your local authorities provide. Leave the area as efficiently as possible.
- Stay calm.
- Listen to emergency information.
- Before you leave your home:
 - Close and lock windows and doors.
 - Turn off air conditioning, vents, fans and furnace.
 - Close fire place dampers.
- Remember your neighbors who may require special assistance – seniors, people with disabilities, and families with small children.

What should I bring with me in an evacuation?

- Take a disaster supply kit with you. The most important items to bring are **water, food, first aid supplies, emergency supplies, hygiene items, personal items, clothing and bedding**. Gather as many of the following items as you can comfortably carry:
 - Water – at least one gallon of water per person per day
 - Food – canned foods, dry mixes and staples, plus a manual can opener
 - First aid supplies – sterile bandages, essential medications, antiseptic, etc.
 - Emergency supplies – radio, flashlights, duct tape, knife, plastic sheeting, etc.
 - Hygiene items – towels, soap, feminine supplies, toilet paper, etc.
 - Personal items – ID, some cash, credit cards, emergency phone list
 - Clothes and bedding – one change of clothes and a sleeping bag per person
- Use your own transportation or make arrangements to ride with a neighbor. Public transportation should be available for those who need it. Keep car windows and air vents closed and listen to the Emergency Response Network or news radio station.
- Take your pets with you, but understand that shelters may not accept animals. Make alternative arrangements ahead of time for alternative places that could house pets temporarily. If you must leave pets behind, leave them in a safe room in the house with plenty of food of water.

What about children in schools?

Schools have their own emergency plans in place and will be working closely with local authorities to ensure children's safety. Do not call your children's school or attempt to pick them up, since they will be following the same protective actions as other institutions.

For more information, visit these websites:

http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/radiation/emergency_faqs.htm

<http://www.fema.gov/hazards/nuclear/radiolo.shtm>