



CHEMICAL EMERGENCIES

Chemicals affect our lives daily. They are in and around our homes to provide a better life for us all. However, exposure to certain harmful chemicals can be extremely dangerous. You can be exposed through accidents involving home chemicals as well as through large-scale chemical emergencies in your area.

All personnel should maintain a basic level of preparedness for all potential hazards.

You are encouraged to get an emergency supply kit, make a family emergency plan, and be informed about what might happen.

Home Chemical Emergencies

- Do not mix household chemicals together. Some combinations, like ammonia and bleach, can produce a toxic gas.
- Carefully read and follow directions.
- Store household chemicals in clearly marked, tightly closed containers.
- Make sure chemicals are stored out of the reach of children and away from food.
- Never work with chemicals near lit cigarettes or open flames (candle, pilot light, fireplace, wood-burning stove, etc.).
- If you spill a chemical, clean it up immediately with rags. Place the rags outside to allow the chemical to evaporate. Dispose of the rags after wrapping them in newspaper.

Major Chemical Emergencies

- A major chemical emergency is an accident in which large amounts of hazardous chemicals are released into the surrounding environment.
- Accidents may happen anywhere, including chemical and manufacturing plants, highways, railroad tracks, and underground.
- In addition, chemical emergencies may result from deliberate attacks targeting such facilities.
- Chemical emergencies may include a fire or explosion.
- You may not smell or see any evidence of a chemical emergency, even though there may be a high level of danger.

What to Do If There Is a Chemical Emergency

- You will be notified if authorities learn of a chemical emergency.
- Listen for instructions and follow them carefully.
- Do not use your telephone unless absolutely necessary.
- Do not go outside.
- If you are told to evacuate:
 - Take only essential items and your emergency supply kit.
 - If you have time, shut vents, turn off appliances and lights, and close and lock all doors and windows.
 - Follow the evacuation procedure.
 - Once inside your car, close windows and air vents and turn off the heat or air conditioner.

What to Do If There Is a Chemical Emergency (continued)

- If you are NOT told to evacuate:
 - Close windows and doors.
 - Close fireplace dampers.
 - Turn off fans and air conditioning or heat.
 - Tape around doors, windows, and vents.
 - You can use plastic bags to cover windows, outlets, and heat registers.
 - Wedge wet towels in door thresholds.
 - Take your family to an aboveground room with few windows and doors if possible.
 - Do NOT go to the basement.
 - Keep your kit and a radio with you to listen for updates.

What to Do If You Are Exposed to Chemicals

- If you have a chemical burn:
 - Remove any clothing or jewelry that came in contact with the chemical.
 - Flush the burn with cold water.
 - If your eyes are burned, remove any contacts before flushing with water.
 - Loosely cover burn with a dry sterile or clean cloth or dressing.
 - Seek medical attention immediately.
- If you or your family have been exposed to any chemicals through household accidents or during a major chemical emergency, look for these symptoms:
 - Labored breathing
 - Headaches and/or blurred vision
 - Irritated eyes, skin and/or throat
 - Changes in skin color
 - Dizziness
 - Stomach cramps and/or diarrhea
 - Strange behavior including uncoordination or clumsiness

Where to Find Additional Information

- Center for Disease Control (CDC)
 - Chemical Emergencies Overview—
www.bt.cdc.gov/chemical/pdf/chemical-emergencies-overview.pdf
 - Chemical Agents—Facts about Evacuation—
www.bt.cdc.gov/planning/evacuationfacts.pdf
 - Chemical Agents—Facts about Sheltering in Place—
www.bt.cdc.gov/planning/shelteringfacts.pdf
 - Personal Cleaning and Disposal of Contaminated Clothing—
www.bt.cdc.gov/planning/personalcleaningfacts.pdf

Semper Paratus

Be “Always Ready.” Get an emergency supply kit good for at least three days, make an emergency plan with your family, and be informed about what might happen.