

# Shelter in place – Hazardous air

## Overview

To shelter in place is to protect yourself by finding the safest area near you and putting as much distance and as many barriers between you and the threat as possible.

A shelter-in-place advisory is a public safety and risk reduction measure. Authorities will advise you to shelter in place if it is determined that an outside hazard is a threat to life safety and an evacuation would pose greater risk.

## Reasons to shelter in place

Sometimes, contaminants are accidentally released into the air. This can occur during industrial or vehicle accidents or train derailments. If inhaled, these contaminants can pose a significant threat to your health.

Contaminates are different from common air pollutants such as emissions. However, pollutants should also be considered harmful as they can cause similar effects, with a varying degree of severity, to your health.

To learn more about your risk to air pollutants in your region visit <http://www.airquality.alberta.ca/> and download the [AQHI Canada App](#) to stay informed.

**If advised to shelter in place, bring everyone indoors. Grab your emergency supplies, secure your shelter, and listen for direction from authorities.**

## Before an emergency

Being prepared before an emergency, disaster, or disruption can help to reduce its impact and support the recovery of you and your loved ones.

- Know your risk to the hazards in your community so you can plan for them. When looking to develop or buy property, assess your risk and avoid high-risk areas.
- Get informed and stay informed by downloading or signing up for local and provincial emergency alert services. Identify trusted sources of information you can rely on such as your community's website.
- Start the conversation with those around you. Talking about how you would shelter in place can help increase awareness and motivate preparedness actions.
- Build an emergency kit and gather supplies to last a minimum of 72 hours so you can be self-reliant until help

arrives. Consider any unique needs to your household such as medications.

- Talk to your insurance provider to make sure your policies fully protect you, your property, and belongings. Don't forget to take pictures in the case of a claim.
- Create community connections to build resilience. When people work together it can reduce stress and help everyone navigate disruption more easily.
- Create an emergency plan including how you will communicate and connect with loved ones if separated. A plan can help reduce stress during a difficult situation.

Build emotional preparedness by taking care of your mental health. Coping and wellness actions can help you think clearer, make informed decisions and recognize when it is time to ask for help.

To get started, visit [211 Alberta](#) to find out what community information, resources and supports are available near you.

## During an emergency

Taking shelter will depend on the kind of hazard you are facing and where you are located when it becomes a threat. This fact sheet can help you plan for different situations. For example, you may be travelling or stuck in traffic, at home with friends and family or at the office away from loved ones. Each situation will require a different approach.

### Home

- Bring everyone indoors, including pets (if it is safe)
- Close and lock all exterior doors and windows.
- If possible, stop your home from exchanging inside air with outside air. For example, turn off fans, furnaces, air conditioners and air exchange units.
- Do not operate clothes dryers or use fireplaces, and close all vents and dampers
- Turn off the main electrical power breaker and pilot lights on stoves and furnaces.
- If possible, take shelter in a windowless room in the middle of your home, above ground and with no exterior doors.
- Gather your emergency supplies in your shelter. Include supplies like water, duct tape, plastic sheeting, flashlight, non-perishable snacks, medications, a battery or crank powered radio and masks (N95 or P100 are recommended).

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- Close all doors in your home to create additional barriers between you and the threat.
- Seal all cracks around the doors and vents in your shelter by using duct tape and plastic sheeting, or use wet fabrics like towels or clothing.

Some chemicals are heavier than air and may seep into basement rooms. It is critical to stay informed and follow all instructions from authorities to ensure you take the right actions for the threat.

**Locking exterior doors can help to create a better seal further protecting you from hazardous air.**

### Vehicle

- Close all windows and vents.
- Shut off the heater or air conditioner.
- If you cannot safely drive away from the area, pull over to the safest location as soon as possible.
- Turn off the engine and turn on the hazard lights. Some types of hazardous air can ignite causing fire or explosion.
- Avoid parking under overpasses or low-lying areas. If the hazardous air contains gasses heavier than air, you put yourself at risk.
- If possible, seal all windows and vents with duct tape or use wet fabrics like blankets and clothing.

**Prevent hazardous air from coming in by sealing cracks around doors, window and vents. Use plastic sheeting and duct tape or wet fabrics to create a seal.**

### At work

If advised to shelter in place while at work, it is important you refer to your workplace emergency response plan as well as your personal emergency plan. If you don't know your employers response plan, ask them about it.

### Outdoors (without shelter)

- If you cannot get indoors, immediately move away from the area.
- If you know which way the wind is blowing, move at a 90-degree angle away from the direction the wind is blowing.
- Use clothing to create a face mask to filter the air.
- If possible, wear sunglasses to help protect your eyes, and do not rub or touch your eyes.

### Farm animals and livestock

- Never leave any animal tied up or constrained if you are leaving the area without them.

- Keep animals inside if at risk from extreme cold, hail and lightning.
- Leave a minimum of 72 hours of feed and water that does not need power to function (for example, electric waterers).
- If possible, confine animals to multiple shelters. Creating space for them will help to keep them safe. If their space is too small, it can lead to aggressive behaviour or spread disease.

### Pets

- Bring your pets indoors. Do not chase pets as it puts yourself and others at risk.
- Grab your pet's emergency kit if you have one or keep important supplies close to their shelter.
- If possible, bring them into your shelter but avoid letting them roam freely.
- If confining them in a different shelter, remove threats such as chemicals and plants that could be harmful.

**Take a few minutes to evaluate your workplace, classroom and other places you visit often to identify spaces that could become a shelter if needed.**

### After an emergency

- After you leave your shelter, make sure to not return to it until the air has had a chance to exchange with clean outdoor air.
- Once it is safe to return indoors, open all windows and doors to get cross ventilation.
- Turn on all ventilation systems and open vents. Turn on the main electrical power breaker and contact your natural gas provider to find out how to safely turn your gas back on and relight gas appliances following a break in service.

### For more information

Check out:

- [Build an emergency kit](#)
- [Hazard preparedness](#)
- [Disaster financial assistance and recovery support](#)
- [Insurance Bureau of Canada](#)

You can find information about preparedness at [alberta.ca/BePrepared](http://alberta.ca/BePrepared).

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