



Caroline Calderone Baisley  
Director of Health  
Tel. 203-622-7836

# FACT SHEET

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT :

Joanna Lipson  
Public Health Emergency  
Preparedness Coordinator  
Tel: 203-622-7849

## SHELTERING IN PLACE DURING A RADIATION EMERGENCY

With recent events in Japan and the possibility of terrorists using radiological devices, many people are wondering what they can do to protect themselves. People who live near but not in the immediate area of the attack may be asked to stay home and take shelter rather than try to evacuate. This is “sheltering in place.” Because many radioactive materials rapidly decay and dissipate, staying in your home may protect you from exposure to radiation. The thick walls of your home may block much of the harmful radiation. Taking a few simple precautions can help you reduce your exposure.

### **Preparing a Shelter in Your Home**

- Choose a centrally located room or basement with as few windows as possible.
- Check supplies every 6 months and replace any expired medications, food, batteries or water.
- Make sure that all family members know where the shelter is and be sure not to take any items from that area. Borrowed items from your shelter should be replaced immediately.
- Prepare a place for pets in the shelter. Pets should not go outside during a radiation emergency because they may track radioactive materials from fallout into the shelter.

### **Preparing Emergency Supplies**

Preparation is the key. Store emergency supplies in this area. An emergency could happen at any time, so it is best to stock supplies in advance and have everything that you need stored in the shelter.

Following is a list of things to consider when preparing your emergency kit.

- **Choose food with a long shelf life** – Examples include canned, dried, and packaged foods. Store enough food for each member of the household for at least 3 days. Be sure to include pet food and baby formula if needed.
- **Water** – Water sources may become contaminated. Purchase and store bottled water or simply store water from the tap. Each person will need 1 gallon per day; plan on storing enough water for at least 3 days.
- **Clothing and shoes** – Check clothing every 6 months, make sure they fit and are suitable for seasonal weather. Include the essentials such as underwear, socks, shoes or work boots.
- **Utensils** – Store disposable dishware and utensils because water will be limited. Have paper towels and plastic bags on hand for collected waste.
- **Bedding** – Store sheets, blankets, towels, and cots for use during the time that you cannot leave your shelter.

- **Battery-operated radio and batteries** – Electrical power may not be on for several days. A battery-operated radio will allow you to listen to emergency messages.
- **Medicines** – If possible have 2-3 days' dose of your current prescription medicines in a childproof bottle for your shelter medical kit; label with the name and expiration date of the medicine. Be sure to check medicines in your kit every 6 months to make sure they are not past the expiration date.
- **Toiletries** – Keep a supply of soap, hand sanitizer, toilet paper, deodorant, disinfectants, diapers (3 day supply), etc.
- **Flashlight and batteries** – Electrical power may be out for several days so a flashlight will be needed in your shelter. Avoid using candles unless necessary.
- **A telephone or cell phone** – Although cell phone or ground phone service may be interrupted, there is still a chance that you will be able to use a phone to call outside for information. For local instructions call the Greenwich Emergency Network phone line at 1-866-245-4260.
- **Extra eyeglasses or contact lenses and cleaning supplies.** Be sure to have these items if necessary.
- **Duct tape and heavy plastic sheeting** – You can use these items to seal doors, windows or vents that open into your shelter.
- **First aid kit** – You can purchase a first-aid kit or prepare one yourself. Be sure to include the following items:

Emergency Phone Numbers	Thermometer	Antidiarrhea Medication
Sterile adhesive bandages	Moistened towelettes	Laxatives
Sterile gauze pads in 2 inch and 4 inch sizes	Antiseptic ointment	Antacids for upset stomach
Adhesive tape	Tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant	Syrup of ipecac to cause vomiting if advised by the Poison Control Center
Sterile rolled bandages	Soap or hand sanitizer	Activated charcoal to stop vomiting if advised by the Poison Control Center
Scissors	Latex or vinyl gloves	Potassium iodide (KI), if recommended
Tweezers	Safety pins	
Needle	Aspirin or aspirin free pain reliever	

- **Stock games, books and other entertainment** – Because you may be in your shelter for several days, keep items on hand to occupy your family during that time. Think of activities that family members will enjoy doing while in the shelter – finger painting, coloring, etc.

## Tips Before Entering a Shelter

If you are outside when the alert is given, try to remove clothing and shoes and place them in a plastic bag before entering the house. During severe weather, such as extreme cold, remove at least the outer layer of clothes before entering the home to avoid bringing radioactive material into your shelter. Leave clothing and shoes outside. Shower and wash your body with soap and water. Removing clothing will eliminate 90% of radioactive contamination. By taking this simple step, you will reduce the time that you are exposed and also your risk of injury from the radiation.

Before entering the shelter, turn off fans, air conditioners, and forced-air heating units that bring air in from the outside. Close and lock all windows and doors, and close fireplace dampers.