Community Hazardous Material Incidents

When a train derails, a truck wrecks or a plant has an emergency where chemicals are either released or have the potential to be released, community leaders will make a decision whether to instruct the public to shelter-in-place or evacuate. UofL Alert and the media will broadcast emergency instructions as soon as possible.

One of the instructions you may be given in an emergency where hazardous materials may have been released into the atmosphere is to shelter-in-place. This is a precaution aimed to keep you safe while remaining indoors. Shelter-in-place means selecting a small, interior room with no windows, and taking refuge there. It does not mean sealing off your entire home or office building.

Why You Might Need to Shelter-in-Place

Chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants may be released accidentally or intentionally into the environment.

1. If there are students, or visitors in the building, provide for their safety by asking them to stay – not leave.
2. Close and lock all windows, exterior doors, and any other openings to the outside.
3. Select interior room(s) above the ground floor, with the fewest windows or vents. The room(s) should have adequate space for everyone to be able to sit down. Avoid overcrowding by selecting several rooms if necessary. Large storage closets, utility rooms, pantries, copy and conference rooms without exterior windows will work well. Avoid selecting a room with mechanical equipment like ventilation blowers or pipes, because this equipment may not be sealed from the outdoors. This room should already be identified in your building’s Emergency Action Plan.
4. It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone in the room(s) you select. Call emergency contacts and have the phone available if you need to report a life-threatening condition. Cellular telephone equipment may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency.
5. If you have voice mail or an automated attendant, change the recording to indicate that the staff, students and visitors are remaining in the building until authorities advise it is safe to leave.
6. Keep listening to the radio or television until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in the community.

Evacuation

In the event that sheltering-in-place is not an option, local community leaders may issue an order to evacuate the area. This will also be communicated via UofL Alert and on radio, television, weather radio and the University’s computer systems.
Emergency information will be provided by the University and the media instructing you which way to evacuate. Even if you live in the opposite direction of the evacuation, follow the instructions provided. They are directing you away from the hazard. If you do not follow their directions you may put yourself at grave risk of becoming exposed to the chemical, becoming sick and possibly dying.