

Hazardous Materials

Allen County Public Health Preparations

If released improperly, hazardous materials can bring about significant damage and casualties. That is why the U.S. government is working to improve overall preparation for this unlikely event. One aspect of preparation is to learn what to do before, during, and after a hazardous materials incident in order to mitigate harm and damage.

If a public health emergency happens in our community, Allen County Public Health will be the local agency responsible for preparing and guiding medical response and public information efforts. During such an emergency, a critical role of the Public Health Department will be to work with other local first responders, such as fire and police. The Public Health Department will also coordinate response activities with state and federal agencies.

Allen County Public Health is providing this information to help you understand what response you may be asked to take in the event of a hazardous material incident

What are hazardous materials?

Hazardous materials come in a variety of forms; they range from everyday chemicals used to clean houses and purify water to chemicals used in crop production and crude oil processing. What makes these materials hazardous are when they are improperly handled and/ or released.

How should I prepare for a hazardous material incident?

Build an [Emergency Supply Kit](#), which includes items like non-perishable food, water, a battery-powered or hand-crank radio, extra flashlights and batteries. You should add plastic sheeting, duct tape and scissors to the kit in order be better prepared for a hazardous materials incident. You may want to prepare a portable

kit and keep it in your car in case you are told to evacuate.

Make a [Family Emergency Plan](#). Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to know how you will contact one another, how you will get back together and what you will do in case of an emergency.

What should I do in the event of a hazardous materials incident?

Listen to local radio or television stations for detailed information and instructions. Follow the instructions carefully. You should stay away from the area to minimize the risk of contamination. Remember that some toxic chemicals are odorless.

IF YOU ARE:	THEN:
Asked to evacuate	<p>Do so immediately.</p> <p>Stay tuned to a radio or television for information on evacuation routes, temporary shelters, and procedures.</p> <p>Follow the routes recommended by the authorities--shortcuts may not be safe. Leave at once.</p> <p>If you have time, minimize contamination in the house by closing all windows, shutting all vents, and turning off attic fans.</p> <p>Take pre-assembled disaster supplies.</p> <p>Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance--infants, elderly people and people with access and functional needs.</p>

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FACT SHEET

Caught Outside	<p>Stay upstream, uphill, and upwind! In general, try to go at least one-half mile (usually 8-10 city blocks) from the danger area. Move away from the accident scene and help keep others away.</p> <p>Do not walk into or touch any spilled liquids, airborne mists, or condensed solid chemical deposits. Try not to inhale gases, fumes and smoke. If possible, cover mouth with a cloth while leaving the area.</p> <p>Stay away from accident victims until the hazardous material has been identified.</p>
In a motor vehicle	<p>Stop and seek shelter in a permanent building. If you must remain in your car, keep car windows and vents closed and shut off the air conditioner and heater.</p>
Requested to stay indoors	<p>Bring pets inside.</p> <p>Close and lock all exterior doors and windows. Close vents, fireplace dampers, and as many interior doors as possible.</p> <p>Turn off air conditioners and ventilation systems. In large buildings, set ventilation systems to 100 percent recirculation so that no outside air is drawn into the building. If this is not possible, ventilation systems should be turned off.</p>

	<p>Go into the pre-selected shelter room. This room should be above ground and have the fewest openings to the outside.</p> <p>Seal gaps under doorways and windows with wet towels or plastic sheeting and duct tape.</p> <p>Seal gaps around window and air conditioning units, bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans, and stove and dryer vents with duct tape and plastic sheeting, wax paper or aluminum wrap.</p> <p>Use material to fill cracks and holes in the room, such as those around pipes.</p> <p>If gas or vapors could have entered the building, take shallow breaths through a cloth or a towel. Avoid eating or drinking any food or water that may be contaminated.</p>
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What should I do after a hazardous materials incident?

Go to a designated public shelter if you have been told to evacuate or you feel it is unsafe to remain in your home. Text SHELTER + your ZIP code to 43362 (4FEMA) to find the nearest shelter in your area (example: *shelter 12345*).

Act quickly if you have come in to contact with or have been exposed to hazardous chemicals.

Follow decontamination instructions from local authorities. You may be advised to take a

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thorough shower or you may be advised to stay away from water and follow another procedure.

Seek medical treatment for unusual symptoms as soon as possible.

Place exposed clothing and shoes in tightly sealed containers. Do not allow them to contact other materials. Call local authorities to find out about proper disposal.

Advise everyone who comes in to contact with you that you may have been exposed to a toxic substance.

Tune into your local radio or television stations for the latest emergency information.

Help a neighbor who may require special assistance - infants, elderly people and people with access and functional needs. People who care for them or who have large families may need additional assistance in emergency situations.

Return home only when authorities say it is safe. Open windows and vents and turn on fans to provide ventilation.

Find out from local authorities how to clean up your land and property.

Report any lingering vapors or other hazards to your local emergency services office.

If you have any questions about hazardous materials incidents please contact Allen County Public Health at 419-228-4457. Health Department staff members are available to answer your questions Monday to Friday from 8:00a.m. to 4:30 p.m. You can also visit www.allencountyhealthdepartment.org. For information about putting together an Emergency Preparation Plan, visit the FEMA site at www.ready.gov. Also, see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Web site at www.bt.cdc.gov for additional information.