

CHEMICAL EMERGENCIES

Chemical agents are poisonous vapors, aerosols, liquids, and solids that have toxic effects on people, animals, or plants. While potentially lethal, chemical agents are difficult to deliver in lethal concentrations because they dissipate rapidly outdoors and are difficult to produce.

Before a Chemical Emergency

A chemical attack could come without warning. Signs of a chemical release include people having difficulty breathing, eye irritation, loss of coordination, nausea, or burning in the nose, throat, and lungs. The presence of many dead insects or birds may indicate a chemical agent release.

What you should do to prepare for a chemical threat:

- Build an Emergency Supply Kit (www.ready.gov/build-a-kit) and Include:
 - » Duct Tape
 - » Scissors
 - » Plastic to cover doors, windows, and vents
- Make a Family Emergency Plan (www.ready.gov/make-a-plan)

During a Chemical Emergency

What you should do in a chemical attack:

- Quickly try to define the impacted area or where the chemical is coming from, if possible.
- Take immediate action to get away.
- If the chemical is inside a building where you are, get out of the building without passing through the contaminated area, if possible.
- If you can't get out of the building or find clean air without passing through the affected area, move as far away as possible and shelter-in-place (www.ready.gov/shelter).
- If you are instructed to remain in your home or office building, you should:
 - » Close doors and windows and turn off all ventilation, including furnaces, air conditioners, vents, and fans.
 - » Seek shelter in an internal room with your disaster supplies kit.
 - » Seal the room with duct tape and plastic sheeting.
 - » Listen to the radio or television for instructions from authorities.
- If you are caught in or near a contaminated area outdoors:
 - » Quickly decide what is the fastest way to find clean air.
 - » Move away immediately, in a direction upwind of the source.
 - » Find the closest building to shelter-in-place (www.ready.gov/shelter).

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After a Chemical Emergency

- Do not leave the safety of a shelter to go outdoors to help others until authorities announce it is safe to do so.
- A person affected by a chemical agent requires immediate medical attention from a professional. If medical help is not immediately available, decontaminate yourself and assist in decontaminating others.
- Decontamination guidelines are as follows:
 - » Use extreme caution when helping others who have been exposed to chemical agents.
 - » Remove all clothing and other items in contact with the body.
 - » Cut off clothing normally removed over the head to avoid contact with the eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - » Put contaminated clothing and items into a plastic bag and seal it.
 - » Remove eyeglasses or contact lenses. Put glasses in a pan of household bleach to decontaminate them and then rinse and dry.
 - » Wash hands with soap and water.
 - » Flush eyes with water.
 - » Gently wash face and hair with soap and water before thoroughly rinsing with water.
 - » Proceed to a medical facility for screening and professional treatment.