



# CHEMICAL EMERGENCIES

Chemicals affect our lives daily. They are in and around our homes to provide a better life for us all. However, exposure to certain harmful chemicals can be extremely dangerous. You can be exposed through accidents involving home chemicals as well as through large-scale chemical emergencies in your area.



## **Home Chemical Emergencies**

- Do not mix any household chemicals together. Some combinations, like ammonia and bleach, can produce a toxic gas.
- Carefully read and follow directions.
- Store household chemicals in clearly marked, tightly closed containers.
- Make sure the chemicals are stored out of the reach of children and away from food.
- Never work with chemicals near lit cigarettes or open flames (candle, pilot light, fireplace, wood-burning stove, etc.).
- If you spill a chemical, clean it up immediately with rags. Place the rags outside to allow the chemical to evaporate. Dispose of the rags after wrapping them in newspaper.

## **Major Chemical Emergencies**

- A major chemical emergency is an accident in which large amounts of hazardous chemicals are released into the surrounding environment.
- Accidents may happen anywhere, including chemical and manufacturing plants, highways, railroad tracks and underground.
- In addition, chemical emergencies may result from deliberate attacks targeting such facilities.
- Chemical emergencies may include a fire or explosion.
- You may not smell or see any evidence of a chemical emergency, even though there may be a high level of danger.

## **What to Do If There Is a Chemical Emergency**

- You will be notified if authorities learn of a chemical emergency.
- Listen for instructions and follow them carefully.
- Do not use your telephone unless absolutely necessary.
- Do not go outside.
- If you are told to evacuate:
  - Take only essential items and your emergency supply kit.
  - If you have time, shut vents, turn off appliances and lights and close and lock all doors and windows.
  - Follow the evacuation procedure.
  - Once inside your car, close windows and air vents and turn off the heat or air conditioner.



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## ***What to Do If There Is a Chemical Emergency (Continued)***

- If you are NOT told to evacuate:
  - Close windows and doors.
  - Close fireplace dampers.
  - Turn off fans and air conditioning or heat.
  - Tape around doors, windows and vents.
  - You can use plastic bags to cover windows, outlets and heat registers.
  - Wedge wet towels in door thresholds.
  - Take your family to an aboveground room with few windows and doors if possible.
  - Do NOT go to the basement.
  - Keep your kit and a radio with you to listen for updates.
- Once you are in a safe place, report to your command if you are military or civilian personnel or a member of the selective reserves.

## ***What to Do If You Are Exposed to Chemicals***

- If you have a chemical burn:
  - Remove any clothing or jewelry that came in contact with the chemical.
  - Flush the burn with cold water.
  - If your eyes are burned, remove any contacts before flushing with water.
  - Loosely cover burn with a dry sterile or clean cloth or dressing.
  - Seek medical attention immediately.
- If you or your family have been exposed to any chemicals through household accidents or during a major chemical emergency, look for these symptoms:
  - Labored breathing
  - Headaches and/or blurred vision
  - Irritated eyes, skin and/or throat
  - Changes in skin color
  - Dizziness
  - Stomach cramps and/or diarrhea
  - Strange behavior including poor coordination or clumsiness

## ***Where to Find Additional Information***

- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)—
  - <https://www.ready.gov/chemical-threats>
  - [https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/prep\\_chemical\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/prep_chemical_fact_sheet.pdf)
  - <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npg/default.html>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)—  
<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/chemical/>
- American Red Cross—<http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/chemical-emergency>
- Ready Army—[www.ready.army.mil](http://www.ready.army.mil)

**It's up to you. Prepare strong. Get an emergency supply kit with enough supplies for at least three days, make an emergency plan with your family and be informed about what might happen.**

