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Hazardous Materials

Hazardous Materials (Hazmat) are all around us. Products containing hazardous materials are found in both the home and the workplace. In addition, they are shipped daily on our nation's highways, railroads, waterways, and pipelines. Hazardous materials in various forms can cause death, serious injury, long-lasting health effects, and damage to buildings, homes, and other property. When used properly, many of these products are safe but accidents do occur.

WHAT ARE HAZARDOUS MATERIALS?

Hazardous materials are chemical substances that, if released or misused, can pose a threat to the environment or health. These chemicals are used in industry, agriculture, medicine, research, and consumer goods.

Hazardous materials come in the form of explosives, flammable and combustible substances, poisons, and radioactive materials. These substances are most often released as a result of transportation accidents or because of chemical accidents in plants.



WHAT TO DO DURING A HAZMAT ACCIDENT?

- If you see an accident, call 9-1-1 or the local fire department to report the nature and location of the accident as soon as possible.
- Move away from the accident scene and help keep others away.
- Do not walk into or touch any of the spilled substance. Try not to inhale gases, fumes and smoke. If possible, cover mouth with a cloth while leaving the area.
- Stay away from accident victims until the hazardous material has been identified.
- Try to stay upstream, uphill and upwind of the accident.

IF ASKED TO STAY INDOORS ("IN-PLACE SHELTERING")

- Close and lock windows and doors.
- Seal gaps under doorways and windows with wet towels and duct tape.
- 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. Turn off ventilation systems. Close fireplace dampers.
- Close off nonessential rooms such as storage areas, laundry rooms and extra bedrooms.
- Go to an upper level, interior room. Bring your pre-assembled disaster supply kit with you..



IF ASKED TO EVACUATE

- Stay tuned to a radio or television for information on evacuation routes, temporary shelters, and procedures.
- Follow the routes recommended by the authorities--shortcuts may not be safe. Leave at once.
- Take your pre-assembled disaster supply kit, medications and pets with you.
- Learn how to care for your **pets** during a disaster. Many shelters will not take pets.
- Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance--infants, elderly people and people with disabilities.

Source: FEMA

 citizen★corps

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