



**Health Protection Agency**

Chemical Hazards and Poisons Division (London)  
London  
WC1V 7PP  
24 Tel: 0870 606 4444

**Sheltering or evacuation checklist**

**Contents of Sheltering or evacuation checklist:**

1. Questions to facilitate the evacuation/sheltering decision
2. Sheltering in a chemical incident – Action to protect the health of the public:
3. Specific instances where Evacuation may be appropriate
4. Considerations on whether to evacuate or not
5. Draft Information Leaflet important information for people being evacuated
6. Criteria for those evacuated returning home

**1. Questions to facilitate the evacuation/sheltering decision**

- Is the substance harmful to the public?
  - highly toxic/toxic/irritant/non-irritant
  - short-term/long-term effects
  - explosive/non explosive
- Will the public be exposed?
  - substance contained or potential for release
  - capable of dispersal via wind, rain, etc & are public in path of projected route
  - distance, plume height, meteorological conditions, weather conditions
- Will dilution factors minimise risk?
- When will the public be exposed (time of day)?
  - already exposed, imminently or not for a few hours
- How long could the exposure last?
  - few minutes, hours, days, months or years

**Assessment  
(key below)**


<b>Key:</b>	√= Yes	X = No	? = Information awaited	NA= Not applicable
-------------	--------	--------	-------------------------	--------------------



## Health Protection Agency

Chemical Hazards and Poisons Division (London)

London

WC1V 7PP

24 Hr On Call: 0870 606 4444

### 2. Sheltering – Action to protect the health of the public:

**Assessment  
(Key-Page 1)**

Sheltering is usually safest option Even in a poorly sealed house, infiltration may be reduced by a factor of 10. By sealing windows and doors with wet towels and newspapers, this factor increases by 30 to 50 fold.

#### GO IN, STAY IN, TUNE IN

- close windows and doors
- minimise drafts by sealing windows and doors with paper/tape or damp towels or newspaper
- turn off central heating
- turn off mechanical ventilation including air conditioning
- go to an upper floor, if possible to an interior room where ventilation is less
- avoid bathrooms and kitchens as they tend to have higher ventilation rates
- keep children and pets indoors
- breathe through a wet cloth over the face if the atmosphere inside room becomes uncomfortable
- have access to a radio and tune in to the local radio station for advice and information
- try not to use the telephone or mobile unless absolutely vital (to prevent jamming lines)
- Ensure effective communication systems with the public, especially to ensure sheltering is in place as quickly as necessary
- Ensure effective forms of communication with other emergency services
- Provide a help-line number, consider using NHS Direct
- Provide medical assistance post sheltering, especially to those incapacitated
- Provide post sheltering advice on airing houses


### 3. Specific instances where Evacuation may be appropriate

**Assessment  
(Key-Page 1)**

- **Before an incident (precautionary)**
  - risk of imminent explosion (e.g. defusing a bomb/making safe an explosive hazard)
  - small leak likely to escalate rapidly
  - release/threatened release of chemical terrorist or radioactive materials
- **During an incident**
  - spread of fire to members of the public
  - continuing release of hazard over a prolonged period of time
- **After an incident**
  - gross environmental contamination




**Health Protection Agency**

Chemical Hazards and Poisons Division (London)  
 London  
 WC1V 7PP  
 24 Hr On Call: 0870 606 4444

**4. Considerations on whether to evacuate or not**

- Is there sufficient time to evacuate?
- How long will decision process take?
  - the emergency services' response time
  - public health response time
- Method being chosen to co-ordinate and inform the public?
  - door-to-door
  - via loudhailers
  - radio/TV networks
  - language barriers, the need for translators
- The time of day (it is more difficult to warn people effectively at 4 a.m. that at 8 p.m.)
- Time to prepare the public
  - to collect clothes, medication, baby supplies, pets, cheque books, credit cards etc and to secure their homes
- Time required for the public to move
- The population profile:
  - number of elderly, handicapped and immobile
  - are any residential homes/nursing homes in the affected area?
  - any people on dialysis machines, or others at special risk?
- The extent of the road network
  - transport availability – private and public
  - blockage of roads – e.g. flooding or snow
  - hazardous travel conditions – e.g. fog, snow, sleet, ice etc.
- Consideration of the effects on the evacuees of:
  - outside temperature
  - psychological trauma/medical risk
  - cost
- How large a zone is to be evacuated?
- Possible health risk to the police cordon?

**Assessment  
(Key-Page 1)**




## Health Protection Agency

Chemical Hazards and Poisons Division (London)

London

WC1V 7PP

24 Hr On Call: 0870 606 4444

### 5. Draft Information Leaflet for those people being evacuated.

#### Draft Information Leaflet

#### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE BEING EVACUATED**

#### **YOU ARE BEING EVACUATED TO AN EMERGENCY REST CENTRE ESTABLISHED BY THE LOCAL COUNCIL**

The basic facilities **you can expect** at the emergency rest centre are:

- Safe shelter
- Refreshments
- Accommodation for domestic pets
- Reliable information about the incidents and when it is safe to return home
- First aid

Please **consider bringing with you** the following

- **All regular medication, if any**
- Spectacles, hearing aid, walking frame or stick, if any
- Address book and your mobile telephone, etc, if any
- Things for daily living such as tooth brush, towel, change of underwear
- Things you may need for your baby such as warm clothing and milk powder
- Your family and pets, if any
- Your cheque books, credit cards and/or money

Before you leave your home **remember** to

- Close all your windows and doors
- Turn heating to minimum for winter, off for summer
- Turn off any mechanical ventilation
- Secure your home

Thank you for your co-operation



## Health Protection Agency

Chemical Hazards and Poisons Division (London)

London

WC1V 7PP

24 Hr On Call: 0870 606 4444

### 6. Criteria for those evacuated returning home

- Incident is under control and not expected to escalate
- The residential premises are considered safe
- Environmental sampling and analyses to provide risk assessment information in residential premises has been completed and discussed with medical toxicologist, where necessary
- Leaflet has been provided to explain the situation and actions that should be taken on returning to the premises, such as opening windows and doors to ventilate the premises for appropriate period of time
- Advice about whom to contact if any ill health effects develop, such as NHS Direct, General Practitioner, local accident and emergency department etc.

Assessment (Key-Page 1)