

SECTION 4: Deciding to Stay or Go: Evacuations

4.1 Shelter-in-Place

Whether you are at home, work or elsewhere, there may be situations when it's simply best to stay where you are and avoid any uncertainty outside. There are other circumstances when staying put and creating a barrier between yourself and potentially contaminated air outside, a process known as "sealing the room," is a matter of survival. Use available information to assess the situation. If you see large amounts of debris in the air, or if local authorities say the air is badly contaminated, you may want to take this kind of action. The process used to seal the room is considered a temporary protective measure to create a barrier between you and potentially contaminated air outside. It is a type of sheltering-in-place that requires preplanning.

To "Shelter-in-Place and Seal the Room" (see diagram at attachment 2)

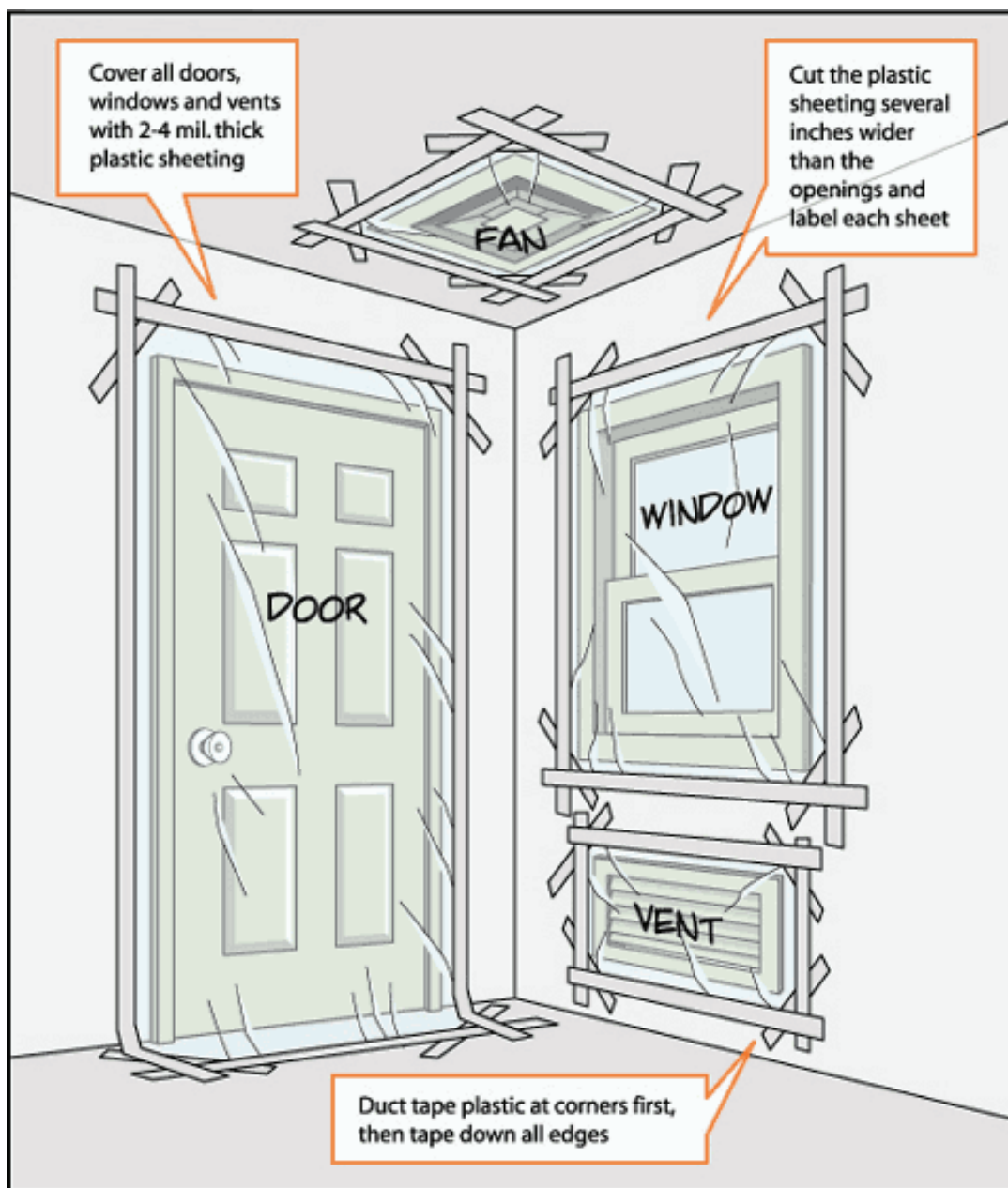
- Bring your family and pets **inside**.
- **Lock** doors, **close** windows, air vents and fireplace dampers.
- **Turn off** fans, air conditioning and forced air heating systems.
- **Have your emergency supply kit** available unless you have reason to believe it has been contaminated.
- **Go into an interior room** with few windows, if possible.
- **Seal** all windows, doors and air vents with plastic sheeting and duct tape. Consider measuring and cutting the sheeting in advance to save time.
- Be prepared to **improvise** and use what you have on hand to **seal gaps** so that you create a barrier between yourself and any contamination.
- Local authorities may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do. However, you should **watch TV, listen to the radio or check the Internet often for official news** and instructions as they become available.

Learn how and when to turn off utilities.

If there is damage to your home or you are instructed to turn off your utilities:

- Locate the electric, gas and water shut-off valves.
- Keep necessary tools near gas and water shut-off valves.
- Teach family members how to turn off utilities.
- **If you turn the gas off, a professional must turn it back on. Do not attempt to do this yourself.**

Attachment 4: Shelter-in-Place Diagram



4.2 Evacuation



Evacuations during a major disaster are a common event. Evacuations and evacuation procedures vary by location and the size and scope of the disaster. Contact your local emergency management office for specific evacuation plans. The amount of time you will have to evacuate depends on the disaster. Some disasters, such as hurricanes, may allow several days to prepare. Hazardous materials accidents may only allow moments to leave. This means that preparation is essential since there may not be time to collect the basic necessities. Evacuations can last for several days. During this time you may be responsible for part or all of your own food, clothing and other supplies.

4.2.1 Preparing for Evacuation

Advance planning will make evacuation procedures easier. First, you should have your family disaster supply kit and plan ready. Additional steps that can aid preparedness include:

1. Review possible evacuation procedures with your family.
 - Ask a friend or relative outside your area to be the check-in contact so that everyone in the family can call that person to say they are safe.
 - Find out where children will be sent if they are in school when an evacuation is announced.
2. Plan now where you would go if you had to evacuate.
 - Consider the homes of relatives or friends who live nearby, but outside the area of potential disaster.
 - Contact the local emergency management office for community evacuation plans. Review public information to identify reception areas and shelter areas.
3. Keep fuel in your car's gas tank at all times. During emergencies, filling stations may be closed. Never store extra fuel in the garage.
4. If you do not have a car or other vehicle, make transportation arrangements with friends, neighbors or your local emergency management office.
5. Know where and how to shut off electricity, gas and water at main switches and valves. Make sure you have the tools you need to do this (usually pipe and crescent or adjustable wrenches). Check with your local utilities for instructions.

4.2.2 Evacuating

When you are told to evacuate there are four steps you need to take:

1. If there is time, secure your house.
 - Unplug appliances.
 - Turn off the main water valve.
 - Take any actions needed to prevent damage to water pipes by freezing weather.
 - Securely close and lock all doors, windows and garage.
2. Follow your local recommended evacuation routes. Do not take shortcuts, they may be blocked.
3. Listen to the radio for emergency shelter information.
4. Carry your family disaster supply kit.

SECTION 5: Returning Home

If the proper procedures are not taken, returning home can become a dangerous event. To ensure that you keep yourself and your family safe, be sure to take the following steps:

1. Do not return until the local authorities say it is safe.
2. Continue listening to the radio for information and instructions.
3. Use extreme caution when entering or working in buildings -- structures may have been damaged or weakened. Watch for poisonous snakes in flooded structures and debris.
4. Do not take lanterns, torches or any kind of flame into a damaged building. There may be leaking gas or other flammable materials present. Use battery-operated flashlights for light. If you suspect a gas leak, do not use any kind of light or matches to light candles. The light itself could cause an explosion.
5. If you smell leaking gas, turn off the main gas valve at the meter. If you can open windows safely, do so.
 - Do not turn on lights -- they can produce sparks that may ignite the gas.
 - Leave the house immediately and notify the gas company or the fire department.
 - Do not re-enter the house until an authorized person tells you it is safe to do so.
6. Notify the power company or fire department if you see fallen or damaged electrical wires.
7. If any of your appliances are wet, turn off the main electrical power switch in your home before you unplug them. Dry out appliances, wall switches and sockets before you plug them in again. Call utility companies for assistance.
8. Check food and water supplies for contamination and spoilage before using them.
9. Wear sturdy shoes when walking through broken glass or debris, and use heavy gloves when removing debris.
10. After the emergency is over, telephone your family and friends to tell them you are safe.