# Shelter in Place Meeting Kit

## WHAT’S AT STAKE

Emergency authorities may notify the public of an emergency action called a “shelter in place” when it is safer for people to stay in their homes, workplaces, or alternate locations rather than evacuate or move freely outside. A shelter in place may be enacted during chemical, biological, or radiological releases, or during wildfires, tornadoes, outbreaks of violence, including active shooter situations.

## WHAT’S THE DANGER

**WHY SHELTER-IN-PLACE PROCEDURES**

Chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants may be released accidentally or intentionally into the environment. Should this occur, information will be provided by local authorities on television and radio stations on how to protect you and your family. Because information will most likely be provided on television and radio, it is important to keep a TV or radio on, even during the workday. The important thing is for you to follow instructions of local authorities and know what to do if they advise you to shelter-in-place.

The relevance and importance of shelter in place procedures have been magnified by recent active shootings in Buffalo N.Y, Colorado, and Uvalde primary school in Texas.

Little children to pensioners resorted to hiding under desks, tables to save their lives. T.V accounts of shelter-in place became live in U.S. television and media.

## COMO PROTEGERSE

**SHELTER IN PLACE PROTECTION IN THE WORKPLACE – PREPARATION**

Preparation is the best way to make sure that you are able to quickly and effectively respond to an emergency. In the instance of sheltering in place, failure to have a plan in place or failure to train employees on how to respond during a shelter-in-place situation can result in confusion, chaos and even danger.

**Get Inside, Stay Inside**

If local officials tell you to “stay put,” act quickly. Listen carefully to local radio or television stations for instructions, because the exact directions will depend on the emergency situation.

**SHELTER-IN-PLACE PROCEDURES IN THE WORKPLACE**

Familiarize yourself with the community warning systems used by local emergency authorities by contacting your local Office of Emergency Services. Communication methods for emergency announcements and instructions may include:

- Close the business.
- If there are customers, clients, or visitors in the building, provide for their safety by asking them to stay – not leave. When authorities provide directions to shelter-in-place, they want everyone to take those steps immediately. Do not drive or walk outdoors.
- Unless there is an imminent threat, ask employees, customers, clients, and visitors to call their emergency contact to let them know where they are and that they are safe.
- Turn on call-forwarding or alternative telephone answering systems or services. If the business has voice mail or an automated attendant, change the recording to indicate that the business is closed, and that staff and visitors are remaining in the building until authorities advise it is safe to leave.
- Quickly lock exterior doors and close windows, air vents, and fireplace dampers. Have employees familiar with your building’s mechanical systems turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems, and clothes dryers. Some systems

automatically provide for exchange of inside air with outside air. These systems, in particular, need to be turned off, sealed, or disabled.

- If you are told there is danger of explosion, close the window shades, blinds, or curtains.
- Select interior room(s) above the ground floor, with the fewest windows or vents. The room(s) should have adequate space for everyone to be able to sit. Avoid overcrowding by selecting several rooms if necessary. Large storage closets, utility rooms, pantries, copy and conference rooms without exterior windows will work well. Avoid selecting a room with mechanical equipment like ventilation blowers or pipes, because this equipment may not be able to be sealed from the outdoors.
- It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone in the room(s) you select. Call emergency contacts and have the phone available if you need to report a life-threatening condition. Cellular telephone equipment may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency.
- Take your emergency supplies and go into the room you have designated. Seal all windows, doors, and vents with plastic sheeting and duct tape or anything else you have on hand.
- Consider precutting plastic sheeting (heavier than food wrap) to seal windows, doors, and air vents. Each piece should be several inches larger than the space you want to cover so that it lies flat against the wall. Label each piece with the location of where it fits.
- Write down the names of everyone in the room and call your business' designated emergency contact to report who is in the room with you, and their affiliation with your business (employee, visitor, client, customer).
- Listen to the radio, watch television, or use the Internet for further instructions until you are told all is safe or to evacuate. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in your community.
- Train all employees on how to respond to each type of emergency situation. By having all employees familiar with where to go during a tornado warning or how to turn off the

HVAC system during the event of an emergency, the whole sheltering in place process will be much easier if all employees are on the same page on what to do.

- Make sure that your business is stocked with all essential emergency supplies and all employees are familiar with where it is located. Water, non-perishable food items, personal hygiene items, batteries, flashlights, a charged cell phone and a battery powered radio should be staples in your emergency kit.
- If there are visitors, clients, or customers in your business at the time of the shelter-in-place notification, make sure that they stay in the building as well and are given clear directions on how to shelter-in-place.
- If your building is not a safe spot to shelter-in-place (such as a trailer or mobile unit), have a plan on a where to go (a nearby building) and communicate that plan to your employees so everyone is on the same page during an emergency.
- Perform annual drills for various emergency situations to ensure that all employees have the opportunity to practice how they should shelter-in-place.
- Have an emergency notification system to ensure that you are able to quickly alert all employees that there is immediate need for protection, and they should stop what they are doing and shelter-in-place.

# FINAL WORD

The purpose of sheltering in place is to keep people safe while indoors during an emergency event. However, the phrase may be confusing to someone who is not well-versed in disaster preparedness, interpreting the instruction as staying where you currently are.