

READY TOGETHER FOUNDATION
COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS RESOURCE LIBRARY

RTF-120

Chemical & Hazardous Materials Safety Guide

A Practical Guide to Protecting Your Family Before, During, and After
Chemical or Hazardous Material Emergencies

Building Resilient Communities Together

Hazardous Materials Can Affect Every Community

Chemical and hazardous material incidents can occur because of transportation accidents, industrial facilities, household chemical spills, gas leaks, or other emergencies.

Although these events are less common than storms or fires, knowing how to respond can greatly reduce the risk of injury and protect your family.

Preparedness begins with awareness.

Why Chemical Safety Matters

Preparing for hazardous material emergencies helps your family:

- Recognize potential dangers.
- Respond safely to chemical releases.
- Protect children and vulnerable family members.
- Reduce exposure to harmful substances.
- Recover safely after an incident.

Knowledge is your first line of defense.

Before a Chemical Emergency

Take these important steps:

- ☐ Learn about facilities and transportation routes near your home that may involve hazardous materials.
- ☐ Prepare your family emergency plan.
- ☐ Build and maintain an emergency kit.
- ☐ Keep emergency contact numbers readily available.
- ☐ Learn your community's emergency notification systems.
- ☐ Know the difference between evacuation and shelter-in-place instructions.

Preparation helps reduce confusion during emergencies.

Recognizing a Hazardous Materials Incident

Warning signs may include:

- ☐ Unusual odors.
- ☐ Visible vapor clouds or smoke.
- ☐ Chemical spills.
- ☐ Sudden illness affecting several people.
- ☐ Official emergency alerts.

Never approach or investigate suspicious spills or leaking containers.

If Authorities Advise You to Shelter in Place

If instructed:

- ☐ Go indoors immediately.
- ☐ Close and lock all windows and doors.
- ☐ Turn off heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems if instructed.
- ☐ Move to an interior room.
- ☐ Monitor official emergency updates.
- ☐ Remain indoors until authorities declare it safe.

Follow official instructions carefully.

If Authorities Order an Evacuation

If evacuation is necessary:

- ☐ Leave immediately.
- ☐ Take your emergency kit.
- ☐ Bring medications.
- ☐ Take important documents.
- ☐ Bring pets whenever possible.
- ☐ Follow designated evacuation routes.

Never return until officials announce it is safe.

Household Chemical Safety

Prevent accidents by:

- ☐ Keeping chemicals in their original containers.
- ☐ Reading and following product labels.
- ☐ Storing chemicals away from children and pets.
- ☐ Never mixing household cleaning products unless directed by the manufacturer.
- ☐ Disposing of hazardous waste properly.

Safe storage prevents many accidents.

Gas Leak Safety

If you suspect a gas leak:

- ☐ Leave the building immediately.
- ☐ Avoid using electrical switches or creating sparks.
- ☐ Call emergency services or your utility provider from a safe location.
- ☐ Do not return until it is declared safe.

Never ignore the smell of natural gas.

Protecting Children

Teach children:

- ☐ Never to touch unknown substances.
- ☐ To report unusual odors or spills to an adult.
- ☐ To follow evacuation instructions.
- ☐ To stay away from accident scenes.

Prepared children make safer choices.

Protecting Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities

Ensure they have:

- ☐ Updated medications.
- ☐ Emergency contacts.
- ☐ Transportation assistance if needed.
- ☐ Caregiver support.
- ☐ Communication plans.

Preparation improves safety for everyone.

Caring for Pets

Prepare:

- ☐ Food and water.
- ☐ Medications.
- ☐ Leash or carrier.
- ☐ Identification tags.
- ☐ Veterinary records.

Include pets in all evacuation plans.

After a Hazardous Materials Incident

When authorities say it is safe:

- ☐ Follow cleanup guidance.
- ☐ Avoid contaminated areas.
- ☐ Dispose of contaminated items properly.
- ☐ Continue monitoring official information.
- ☐ Seek medical attention if exposure is suspected.

Recovery begins with caution.

Ready Together Action

Complete these three steps this week:

- ☐ Identify hazardous materials stored in your home.
- ☐ Learn your community's emergency notification system.
- ☐ Review shelter-in-place procedures with your family.

Prepared families know how to respond safely.

Review Your Preparedness

Review your hazardous materials plan:

- ☐ Every six months.
- ☐ After moving.
- ☐ After changes in household members.
- ☐ Whenever emergency guidance changes.

Preparedness is an ongoing commitment.

About Ready Together Foundation

Ready Together Foundation is dedicated to building resilient communities through emergency preparedness, emergency relief and response, youth engagement, and outreach to vulnerable populations.

Our work focuses on:

- Community Emergency Preparedness
- Emergency Relief & Response
- Youth Preparedness & Leadership
- Vulnerable Population Outreach

Together, we are building stronger, safer, and more resilient communities.

Ready Together Foundation

Building Resilient Communities Together

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Preparedness is a journey, not a one-time event. Every small step you take today helps protect the people you care about tomorrow.