

Radiation Emergencies



Even though a nuclear reactor emergency or a nuclear weapon exploding are extremely rare events, you should be prepared if there is a radiation event near you. You can get further guidance at [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov).

Prepare Your Emergency Kit. You should have an easily [portable supply kit](#) ready to go at a moment's notice. Once an alert is issued, it is often too late to start preparing. For a radiation emergency, you should include a spare change of clothes for each family member, a trash bag for contaminated items, sealed food, water, and medications.

Plan Your Evacuation. Take the time to plan and connect with a friend or family member who lives outside your area (and outside the disaster area) who can act as a communication hub for your family.

Download the FEMA App. The [FEMA app](#) provides information on disaster recovery and weather alerts.

Learn Your Emergency Operations Plans. Every school or workplace should have one of these plans. Familiarize yourself with the plans that affect you.

Follow Radiation Protection Principles. These core protection principles are time, distance, and shielding. **Limit the time** you are exposed to radiation. Stay as **far away as possible** from the radiation source. **Shield yourself** from the radiation – stay inside and move to the center of the building or the basement, avoiding windows. You want as many layers as possible between you and the radiation.

Find Shelter. When looking for shelter, large multi-story buildings and basements are best. Underground parking garages and subways also provide a good level of protection. Once inside, seal up the space as much as you can. Turn off fans, air conditioning, and forced air heating that would draw air from the outside. If there is a fireplace, close the dampener. Close all windows and doors.

Get Clean. If you were outside or may have been exposed to radiation, carefully remove your outer layer of clothing. This contains up to 90% of radioactive material, so try to avoid shaking the material loose. Put the clothing in a plastic bag and place it away from people. Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes as much as possible. Then wash up – a shower is best, but if there isn't one available, wash with soap and water to remove any radioactive material from exposed skin. Do the same with pets. Gently brush their coats and wash them with soap and water. Any towels or rags used for washing should be added to the plastic bag of exposed clothing. The CDC provides a helpful infographic on [decontamination](#).

Stay Hydrated and Fed. It is safe to eat food that was inside a building or that was outside but properly sealed. If it was outside, clean the container before opening it. Do not eat anything that was outside and exposed, such as food from a garden.

Take Care of Yourself. Any disaster is a stressful event. Make sure to take care of yourself and others during and after such an occurrence. The CDC offers advice on [dealing with stress](#) in a healthy way.