

Headquarters Shelter-in-Place Guide

What is shelter-in-place?

Shelter-in-Place is a protective action taken inside the building to protect you from external hazards, minimize your chance of injury, and/or provide the time to allow preparations for a safe evacuation. We will shelter-in-place when the Incident Commander deems that it is in your best interest to remain in a sheltered environment. We may also shelter-in-place when there is no immediate danger outside, but we are requested by other government entities to participate in a controlled dismissal to allow for an orderly movement out of the District of Columbia.

Options

- Stay in your offices
- Move to an interior space - an office or corridor that is not part of the outside perimeter of the building
- Relocate to another part of the building - either horizontally or vertically

Why do we shelter in place?

1. Most likely scenarios

- Severe weather (tornado, hail, etc.)
- Civil unrest
- Accidental chemical release due to industrial/vehicle accident

- Controlled release of personnel for an orderly evacuation from the District of Columbia
- Upon request from other government agencies to allow for the movement of personnel from other parts of the city who are in danger even though the Headquarters Complex is not affected.

2. Least likely scenario: Biological, chemical, or radiological attack

Duration



Shelter-in-Place at USDA

Headquarters is anticipated to last only a few hours – 3 to 4.

However, while the danger may pass in a few hours, the effect on

the transportation system may prevent you from leaving the immediate area for several hours. Be patient.

While we believe that most situations will be of SHORT DURATION, we also consider it prudent to plan for a longer period of time, and we recommend that you stock your Grab and Go Kit in preparation for the possibility of a stay of up to 12 hours. Planning for a longer duration will provide you with options if you are released from USDA but are not able to get home and have to stay with friends or at a motel.

Actions to take

What action will I be told to take if I am inside the building?

The specific action will be determined by the event. Follow the instructions that will be provided by the PA System, CENS, USDA Channel 6 TV, the wardens, your monitors, and

your supervisory chain. General guidance follows:

For flooding, severe congestion on the streets or Metro, or upon receipt of a request by authorities for USDA to shelter-in-place:

Remain in your offices.

For severe weather and civil unrest that pose a physical threat:

Stay inside and, if directed, move away from windows to the inner corridors. Be sure to close all doors connecting exterior offices to the corridor. For extreme weather, such as a tornado, you may be advised to move to lower levels in the building. Take your Grab and Go Kit.

For an external chemical, biological, or radiological incident:

Stay inside and if next to a window, move to an inner corridor or office. Close your windows and turn off air conditioners and fans, including above door transom fans. Be sure to close all doors connecting exterior offices to the corridor, to reduce the transfer of contaminated air from the outside to the inside.

Move to interior spaces, generally on a floor that is on the second floor or above. Why? Because most chemical agents, particularly those which may be used by terrorists, are heavier than air and tend to hug the ground. We suggest that all occupants explore their intended sheltering area and learn the quickest way up if you are using the stairwells.

Elevator use will be restricted to persons with disabilities and/or health issues. These personnel should move to the second or third floor. We want to restrict the movement of elevators to

any higher level, as they drag air up the shaft whenever they move. Elevators will normally be shut down to prevent any further movement 15 minutes into the event.

You should also be aware that conditions are likely to get uncomfortable, as the maintenance staff will immediately shut down the ventilation system to reduce the chance of contamination entering the building. The close quarters, heat, and stuffiness will add to your discomfort. Please remain calm, and assist those around you in coping with the situation.

For an internal chemical, biological, or radiological incident:

Depending on the location and or severity of the event, you will most likely be told to immediately relocate to another safer portion of the building. Specific instructions on where to go and what areas to avoid will be provided via the communication methods outlined in previous sections. Do not automatically evacuate as you may be placing yourself in the path of the hazard. The developing situation will dictate further actions.

Notifications

How will I be informed that I need to shelter-in-place?

You will be notified immediately through both the Headquarters-wide PA system and CENS with specific instructions on the type of event and where employees should move. We will keep you updated throughout the situation as often as possible.

We will also provide emergency information through USDA Channel 6 TV, the wardens, and security forces. Some persons with disabilities

may also receive information through their Wyndtell pagers.

A word of caution: Some news media serve as excellent sources of information on developing situations but some do not always have accurate data and jump to conclusions. What is being reported as factual for some part of town (a reporter at the Capitol may say the plume of toxic material has cleared and it is safe - it is for him) may not have the data on what is happening at the Headquarters Complex. Likewise, media may report on actions that other agencies are taking that may not be the best action for us, in our location. Acting on external news media may put you at risk - wait for word from USDA officials.

The USDA Incident Commander operates from the USDA Operations Center with its contiguous Operations Watch Area, Security Control Center and ECC. These centers provide real-time, accurate data for decision-making and are linked to the Washington Alert System, the network of Federal Command Centers, and the Metropolitan Council of Government.

Leased Locations

The general guidance provided for the Headquarters Complex applies as well to USDA personnel in leased facilities. When informed of an event, move to those locations that offer a higher degree of safety within your facility. Coordinate with the other tenants.

Currently, our primary system to keep you apprised of any threat will be CENS. If you are having difficulties with CENS at your location please check with your IT system administrator. We are also currently working on a number of initiatives, which will shortly be in place, to provide your facility with redundant notification of any emergency. These initiatives include

extending the USDA Channel 6 TV to your common areas and providing key staff within your facility with a direct radio link to the Incident Command structure. We also have notification lists of key personnel in each facility that we can contact directly by phone in the event of an emergency.

What Else?

What action will I be told to take if I am outside the building?

Immediately upon notification to shelter in place, Security will direct personnel outside the building to come inside. You will not be denied entry. Once all personnel in the immediate area are inside the building, security may post signs in the doors to direct late arrivals to another building or specific entrance where personnel may be sequestered to enable responders to attend to any signs of possible contamination.

Where will visitors go?

Upon notification to shelter-in-place, all employees should assess their immediate area, identify any visitors, and provide them assistance. Visitors include anyone not regularly assigned to USDA Headquarters including: other agency employees, dependents, contractors, and other visitors, etc. Once identified you need to direct the visitor(s) to the appropriate Shelter-in-Place location- take them with you. If the visitor(s) insist on leaving the building, escort them to the nearest Security Officer and allow Security to help them.

What about the Child Development Center?

The children in the Child Development Center (CDC) in the Yates building will be relocated to the second floor conference room. Please allow the system to work in caring for the children.

Parents are advised to not go to the CDC and pick up their children, since it will slow the relocation process. Further, moving through a potentially hazardous area may result in your picking up contamination and placing your child and others at risk.

If I am told to Shelter-in-Place, do I have to stay?

No. Shelter-in-place is a voluntary action, unless mandated by law enforcement or public health officials. Personnel who ask to leave the building before it has been determined safe to do so will be directed to the Security Office where they will be informed of any civil restrictions. If no restrictions are in place, personnel asking to leave will be escorted by Security to the authorized exit point. Remember that leaving may be put you at risk. The anticipated traffic jams and Metro congestion may prevent you from exiting the area expeditiously and could place you in a contaminated zone.

Could legal authorities exercise a mandate to Shelter-in-Place?

Yes. Federal Protective Service and law enforcement agencies can "detain" occupants within a police perimeter, and local health departments can quarantine and isolate occupants.

If we have to Shelter-in-Place what will USDA Headquarters provide?

USDA Headquarters will provide for your immediate shelter and security in a Shelter-in-Place event, but will not provide emergency food and water for all employees. The Office of Operations has a limited supply of life-support consumables to provide for visitors, persons in medical distress, occupants trapped in elevators,

and personnel who cannot return to their offices if an emergency is declared. The prime responsibility for providing for your personal needs rests with you.

You will be responsible for providing your own "Grab and Go Kit " with food, water, and prescription medications should you be directed to Shelter-in-Place. For more information on the Grab and Go Kit, please visit:

<http://www.usda.gov/da/beprepared/Grabandgo kit.htm>

What can I do to ensure that I am prepared?

While we cannot foresee every possible emergency, you can be prepared to meet most. We recommend that you and your family develop an emergency plan so you can be confident they are safe in the event of an emergency. If your family is safe, then you will feel more comfortable while sheltering-in-place and during your return home. For specific information on how to develop a family emergency plan and what emergency action plans your local authorities have in place, refer to our website:

<http://www.usda.gov/da/beprepared>

Shelter-in-Place Locker Locations in HQ Complex

The lockers are located at:

South Building

- Sub-basement -- 2 lockers. One in the hallway by S228 and one in the 3rd Wing stairwell Tail-House
- 2nd Floor - 4 lockers. One each at elevator lobby's in the 3rd and 6th Wing Tail-House, and 3rd and 5th Wing Head-House.
- 5th Floor-- 4 lockers. One each at elevator

Lobby's in the 3rd and 5th Wing Tail-House and 3rd and 5th Wing Head-House.

Yates Building

- Basement - 1 locker
- 3rd Floor - 1 locker
- 5th Floor-- 1 locker

Whitten Building

- Basement-3 lockers. One each in A Section and W and E Wings
- 2 floor - 1 locker in A Section
- 3 floor-2 lockers. One each near the archways in E and W Wings

Each locker contains:

- 1 Medical kit--assembled by our USDA medical staff
- 8 Battery powered combination flashlight/radio with hand cranked generator
- 10 Cases bottled water
- 20 cases energy bars
- 10 Folding floor mats
- 20 Fleece blankets
- 20 packets anti-bacterial moist wipes.