

# Chemical Incident Preparedness Tips

*Be Informed. Make a Plan. Build a Kit.*

A chemical incident occurs with the accidental or intentional release of hazardous chemicals. Chemicals may be hazardous to humans, pets, livestock, and/or the environment.

Chemical releases can be unintentional, as in the case of an industrial accident, or intentional, as in the case of a terrorist attack.

Many different types and categories of hazardous chemicals could be released during an accidental or intentional chemical release. Different types of chemicals have different physical effects. Some may burn or blister the skin or respiratory tract, some affect blood cells, and some make breathing extremely difficult. These chemical effects range from causing mild discomfort to severe illness and/or death.

Depending on the type of chemical, exposure can happen through inhaling airborne particles, skin contact, or by eating or drinking food or water contaminated with the chemical.

For most of these chemicals, there is no preparation for exposure. The effects of a chemical exposure can cause symptoms quickly. Seek medical attention immediately if exposed.

## Know the risks for your community:

- Do you live near a chemical plant?
- Do you live near a railroad where chemicals are transported?
- Do you live near a highway where chemicals are transported?
- Do you live near a harbor or body of water where chemicals are transported?

## How to respond to a chemical incident:

- Listen to the radio, TV, Internet, or social media for directions from emergency management officials.
- Pay attention to food and/or water consumption warnings issued by local officials.
- If directed to shelter in place, use duct tape to seal windows and turn off air conditioners and house fans.
- Do not open windows or resume air conditioning until emergency management officials indicate the area is clear.
- If told to evacuate, do so immediately.
- If you experience any unusual health issues following a chemical incident, seek medical attention immediately.

