

What to do during a Radiation Incident

Be Informed. Make a Plan. Build a Kit.

Radiation Incident

Nuclear power plants use heat generated from nuclear fission in a contained environment to convert water to steam, which powers generators to produce electricity. Nuclear power plants operate in most states of the country. Nearly 3 million Americans live within 10 miles of an operating nuclear power plant.

Although the construction and operation of these facilities are closely monitored and regulated by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), accidents are possible.

A nuclear power plant accident could result in the release of dangerous levels of radiation with potential to affect the health and safety of the public living nearby.

Other accidental radiation incidents can occur as a result of highway, train, or shipping accidents in which trucks, trains, or ships are transporting radioactive materials.

Intentional radiation incidents can occur through the intentional explosion or release of radioactive materials.

Radioactive materials are carried in the air, usually in a cloud-like formation, called a plume. Radioactive ash from the plume can also fall to the ground, contaminating the water, environment, and anything else it touches.

Radiation has a cumulative effect. The more radiation a person receives, the greater the effect. A high exposure to radiation can cause serious illness or death, immediately and/or in the long-term.

Before a radiation incident, know the risks for your community:

- Do you live near a nuclear power plant?
- Do you live near a railway where trains carry radioactive materials?
- Do you live near a highway where trucks transport radioactive materials?
- Know your community plan for an accident at the nuclear power plant.
- Understand the warning sirens or other alert systems.

How to respond to a radiological incident:

- Check the radio, TV, Internet, or social media for instructions from emergency management officials.
- If told to evacuate, do so immediately, and follow the routes laid out by emergency management officials.
- If told to shelter in place, close and seal doors and windows with duct tape, and turn off air conditioning units.

If you evacuate:

- Do not return to the area until directed by local emergency management officials.
- Heed all warnings and directions of emergency management officials.

