

## What to Do During a Nuclear Power Plant Emergency

**Listen carefully to the warning.** Not all incidents result in the release of radiation. The incident could be contained inside the plant and pose no danger to the public.

- **Stay tuned to a local radio or television station or monitor the Internet.** Local authorities will provide specific information and instructions. The advice given will depend on the nature of the emergency, how quickly it is evolving, and how much radiation, if any, is likely to be released.
- **Be aware that local instructions should take precedence over any advice given on national broadcasts or in books.**
- **Evacuate if you are advised to do so.**
- Close and lock doors and windows.
- Keep car windows and vents closed; use re-circulating air.
- Listen to a local radio station for evacuation routes and other instructions.
- Keep your pets with you and take them with you if you evacuate. You will not be allowed to return for them until local authorities say that it is safe to return.
- **If you are not advised to evacuate, remain indoors.**
- Shelter livestock and give them stored feed, if time permits.
- Bring pets indoors with you.
- Close doors and windows.
- Turn off the air conditioner, ventilation fans, furnace, and other air intakes.
- Go to a basement or other underground area if possible.
- Keep a battery-powered radio with you at all times.
- Use the telephone only to report life-threatening emergencies. Lines will be needed for emergency calls.
- Wash uncovered food before eating it.
- **If you suspect you have come into contact with radioactive particles:**
- Take a thorough shower.

- Change your clothes and shoes.
- Put exposed clothing in a plastic bag.
- Seal the bag and place it outside.
- If you suspect that your pets have also come into contact with radioactive materials, shower with your pet if at all possible. If you shower first and then deal with your pet, you may re-contaminate yourself. Be sure to lather fur and rinse thoroughly.

### After a Nuclear Power Plant Emergency

- **If you were told to evacuate, do not return home until local authorities say it is safe.**
- **If you were advised to stay in your home, do not go outside until local authorities say it is safe.**
- **Get medical treatment for any unusual symptoms, like nausea, that may be related to radiation exposure.**
- **Until local authorities say it is safe, do not return home or, if you are sheltering at home, do not allow your pets to go outdoors for any reason.**

### Facts and Fiction

**Fiction:** *People exposed to radiation “glow” with radioactivity.*

**Facts:** Radioactive material can burn the human body, but exposed people do not become radioactive themselves. Radiation never causes a person to “glow.”

**Fiction:** *I should stay well away from people who have been exposed to radioactive particles because, if I get too close, they will contaminate me.*

**Facts:** While people exposed to radioactive particles may be burned and may become sick, as long as they do not have radioactive fallout or particles on their clothing or skin, they are not “carriers” of radioactivity. An exposed person cannot pass his or her exposure on to you.

**Teach all responsible members of the household how and when to turn off the water, gas, and electricity at the main switches or valves.** Turn off utilities only if you suspect a leak or damaged lines, or if you are instructed to do so by authorities. If you turn the gas off, you will need a professional to turn it back on. Become familiar with the location and operation of shut-off valves. Do not actually turn any valve unless it is a real emergency. Place a tag on shut-off valves to make them easier to identify.

- **Attach a shut-off valve wrench or other special tool in a conspicuous place close to the gas and water shut-off valves.**

- **Check if you have adequate insurance coverage.** Homeowners' insurance does not cover flood losses. Ask your insurance agent to review your current policies to ensure that they will cover your home and belongings adequately. If you are a renter, your landlord's insurance does not protect your personal property; it protects only the building.

Renters' insurance pays if a renter's property is damaged or stolen.

Renters' flood insurance costs less than \$15 a month in most areas of the country. Contact your insurance agent for more information.

- **If you are especially vulnerable to floods, consider relocating.**

- **Be sure to have working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in your home.** Smoke alarms cut *nearly in half* your chances of dying in a home fire. For new homes, interconnected smoke alarms are recommended on every level of the home, outside each sleeping area, and inside each bedroom.

Install CO alarms following the manufacturer's instructions. It is especially important to have a CO alarm near sleeping areas. Use only CO alarms with labels showing they meet the requirements of the latest safety standards for CO alarms (UL 2034, IAS 6-96, or CSA 6.19.01). Test and maintain the smoke and CO alarms according to the manufacturer's instructions

- **Consider equipping your home with alternative heating sources, such as fireplaces, wood- or coal-burning stoves, or space heaters.** Be sure all heating sources are installed according to local codes and permit requirements and are clean and in working order.

- **Get training from the fire department in how to use your fire extinguisher** (A-B-C type), and show household members where extinguishers are kept. Different extinguishers operate in different ways. Make sure that responsible members of the household know how to use your particular model. There is no time to read directions during an emergency. Only adults should handle and use extinguishers.

- **Conduct a home hazard hunt.** During a disaster, ordinary objects in your home can cause injury or damage. Anything that can move, fall, break, or cause a fire is a home hazard. For example, during an earthquake or a tornado, a hot water heater or a bookshelf could turn over or pictures hanging over a couch could fall and hurt someone. Look for electrical, chemical, and fire hazards. Contact your local fire department to learn about home fire hazards. Inspect your home at least once a year and fix potential hazards. In your hazard hunt, include your barns, outbuildings, or any other structures that house animals. Be aware of hazards at nose and paw or hoof level, particularly debris, spilled chemicals, fertilizers, and other substances that may not seem to be dangerous to humans. Make sure your fences are sound and positioned to allow grazing animals to move to high ground in the event of flooding.

- **Consider your need to add physical protection measures to your home.** Bolt your house to the foundation to reduce earthquake damage; or take other measures you may find on [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) (click on Preparation and Prevention). Ensure that access and evacuation are manageable for elderly members of your household or those with disabilities.