

QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED BY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS OR TEACHERS

How do I know if I should evacuate rather than Sheltering-in-Place?

CAER has always promoted Shelter-In-Place as the best first action to take during any chemical emergency. We want to make sure that emergency response personnel who have the training and knowledge respond to size up the situation with help from industrial facilities, if that is where the problem is, to determine if actions other than Shelter-In-Place are warranted. Here are some points to remember regarding trying to evacuate:

- You potentially place yourself and those around you in a contaminated zone.
- The air you are breathing may contain material that is not healthy.
- If you are like most people, you may not have a good sense of direction and travel into a cloud rather than away or across from it.
- You will deal with traffic, panic, and frustration due to congested streets.

Is an incident at a fixed facility more dangerous than a transportation incident involving hazardous materials?

Most fixed facilities have trained operators and other personnel on site 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and the larger refineries all have some type of emergency response team also on duty 24/7. So, in these cases, fixed facilities are less dangerous because they can usually mitigate the problem much quicker than a transportation incident. Transportation incidents may require specialized teams that need to come in from other locations outside the area and this can in some cases take hours. The other problem is that you may not be able to stop a transportation emergency from continuing to emit toxic vapors into the air.

What do we do if parents show up and insist on taking their children out of school?

CAER recommends that the school provide as much information regarding their safety plans to the parents of students with specific instructions not to take your children out of school when the school is Sheltering-in-Place. Parents should be advised that it is better to leave the children Sheltering-in-Place at the school location and the parents to Shelter-in-Place either at home or their place of employment until the incident is over. Many schools have classrooms where children would Shelter-in-Place that only have one door that opens to the outside air. If that door is opened during an incident, outside air would enter the classroom and potentially expose everyone within the room. If parents do show up, you can't stop them from taking their children with them. It would be nice if the school could set up a separate entrance where parents can be brought in and their child can be brought to them so that you don't contaminate the location where students are Sheltering-in-Place. Schools may be able to establish a recorded message on the school telephone line that identifies that all children and staff are safely Sheltering-in-Place and for parents not to risk contaminating themselves or others or impeding emergency responders by coming to the school.

How do I know when it's all clear?

The all clear for all chemical releases, whether from a fixed facility or a transportation incident where the Community Warning System is used, comes from the County Health Services Department using the media (TV and radio KCBS 740AM). **CWS sirens are only used to warn people of an ongoing incident, they are not used to announce an "all clear"**. The County also operates a telephone ring down system that **may** be used to call people in close proximity to an incident. These calls only go to those locations that are of immediate concern. Most people will **not** receive one of these calls, but if you do a second telephone call will be made to you that identifies the situation is all clear. In the future, all clear messages may be broadcast over National Weather Service radios.

How long will I have to shelter-in-place with my students?

State law requires that teachers Shelter-in-Place with their students until the incident is deemed to be all clear by the County or the Incident Commander in charge of the incident.

What if access to the bathrooms is located outside?

Once you Shelter-in-Place you don't break the seal to go outside. If bathroom facilities are not located inside, schools should get portable potties that can be utilized for these types of emergencies. Earthquake supplies can be used to provide water and other refreshments to students and teachers who are required to Shelter-in-Place. In a pinch, a 5-gallon bucket can be used to store emergency supplies and then be emptied and used as a temporary potty.