



# If Officials Say to Evacuate

## Evacuation Planning

If you had to evacuate your home right now, would you be prepared; would you know what to do, what to take with you, where to go, who to notify?

Evacuations are more common than many people realize. Fires and floods cause evacuations most frequently across the U.S. and almost every year, people residents are forced to evacuate because of emergencies. In addition, hundreds of times a year, transportation and industrial accidents release harmful substances, forcing many people to leave their homes. Are you prepared to leave right now?

In some circumstances the hazards or threat may require mandatory evacuations. In other situations, evacuations may be advised for your safety with voluntary evacuations and in certain circumstances it may be best for you to remain indoors where you are located (shelter in place). Regardless of the type of situation, always follow instructions by public safety personnel; do not hesitate. When voluntary evacuations are issued, it is advised that you heed the warning and take that time to evacuate.

The amount of time you have to leave will depend on the hazard. Many incidents allow no time for people to gather even the most basic necessities, which is why planning ahead is essential.

Plan how you will assemble your family and supplies and anticipate where you will go for different situations. Choose several destinations in different directions so you have options in an emergency and know the evacuation routes to get to those destinations.

## Evacuation Warning (Voluntary Evacuation)

If an evacuation warning (voluntary evacuation ) is issued, heed this warning. It is advised that you evacuate regardless if it is mandatory or voluntary. In many instances, evacuation warnings become evacuation order shortly thereafter.

If you choose to stay until the evacuation is mandatory (evacuation order is issued), then use this time to prepare to evacuate.

Inform other family members you may need to evacuate.

Place pets in carriers and cage inside the home near the door (or for pets on leash, place pets on the leash and secure the leash inside the home near the door). Waiting until you



have to evacuate may be too late as some pets may become scared and react by running from you.

Close all the windows in the home.

Gather important documents (insurance policies, marriage & birth certificates, etc.) as well as pictures, photo albums, etc. It is best to have all these documents already prepared to take in your pre-made emergency kit. You can visit our “how to make a kit” page for more information.

If and when the voluntary evacuation becomes mandatory and you are told to evacuate, do not hesitate, leave immediately! If you do not evacuate, you potentially place first responders in harm’s way and take them away from doing their job in controlling the incident because they need to stay behind for you; or worse yet, you will be on your own and public safety personnel may not be able to return to assist you if needed.

Opt in for [Evanston Alerts](#), the City of Evanston’s Emergency Public Notification System and get alerted about emergencies and other important community information. This system enables the City of Evanston to provide you with critical information quickly in a variety of situations, such as active threats, hazardous materials incidents, severe weather, evacuations of building or neighborhoods or other urgent information.

You will receive time-sensitive messages wherever you specify, such as your home, mobile or business phones, email address, text messages and more. You pick where, you pick how.

## **Evacuation Order (Mandatory Evacuation)**

If an evacuation order (mandatory evacuation) is issued, do not hesitate to leave immediately, you may have very limited time to evacuate so every second counts!

Your foremost concern is for you and your family; life safety comes before property conservation. Do the following immediately, hesitation could be dangerous.

Gather your family and pets to evacuate. Place pets in carriers or on leashes.

Gather important documents (insurance policies, marriage & birth certificates) and any pictures, photo albums or other important items you can quickly gather without jeopardizing your safety or taking too much time. It is best to have all these documents already prepared to take in your pre-made emergency kit. You can visit our “how to make a kit” page for more information.



Leave immediately! If evacuation routes were provided to you, utilize those routes unless the situation changes and causes the route to be unsafe.

When ordered to evacuate, do not hesitate, leave immediately! If you do not evacuate, you potentially place first responders in harm's way and take them away from doing their job in controlling the incident because they need to stay behind for you, or worse yet, you will be on your own and public safety personnel may not be able to return to assist you if needed.

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## **Shelter-In-Place**

In some situations, such as severe weather or storms where it may be more dangerous for you to drive; or in hazardous material or environmental incidents where it is safer for you to remain indoors, it may be necessary to shelter-in-place instead of evacuate. Shelter-in-place only when advised to do so; if you are advised to evacuate, evacuate immediately, heisting could be dangerous!

If you are advised to shelter-in-place for weather related incidents such as blizzards, etc. simply remain indoors until the incident subsides. If the situation changes where the building you are taking shelter in becomes compromised, you may need to leave, if so, proceed with caution outdoors.

If you are advised to shelter-in-place for a hazardous materials incident or other environmental situations, additional steps beyond remaining indoors should be taken.

Immediately close all windows and vents!

Turn off air conditioning units.



Choose a room in the interior of the building to shelter in or a room with a limited number of windows and doors leading to the outside environment (a good room in a home is a master bedroom connected to a bathroom).

Do not leave until you are advised it is safe to do so!

As an additional precaution, you may choose to seal doors, windows and vents with duct tape or plastic sheeting.

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## **Reentry after an Evacuation**

Although the immediate obvious threat that caused an evacuation may have subsided, there may be additional hazards that may keep an area closed for some time after.

Following an evacuation, an area may be kept closed while public safety crews finish any mopping up of small isolated incident activity or complete investigations, while damage inspection crews assess the area or while utility and infrastructure crews make repairs.

In some situations, limited entry may be granted to residents with proper identification and proof of residency address in the affected area. In these situations, evacuees will be advised they may return to their residence to possibly gather additional items or assess their individual damage; however you will not be allowed to actually remain until the evacuation has been lifted. Depending on the situation and circumstances, insurance adjusters or contractors providing repair estimates may be allowed entry with the evacuee. If conditions or circumstances warrant, evacuees may need to be escorted into the area by incident personnel.

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