

# Life's not always predictable Get ready for the unexpected



flooding - severe weather - pandemic flu - industrial accidents



City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

[www.bradford.gov.uk](http://www.bradford.gov.uk)

# Let's get ready

Some things in life we can plan for - like birthdays and weddings - but life isn't always that predictable.

We just need to look back to the floods of 2007, when unprecedented amounts of rain fell, to see how things can happen which significantly disrupt our daily lives.

Whilst we can't prevent emergencies happening, we can plan ahead to minimise the impact.

This booklet explains how your local council works alongside the emergency services and other agencies to prepare for the unexpected. However, there are measures you can take so you know what to do in an emergency, to help keep you and your family safe.

This guide outlines simple steps to help you prepare. A few minutes thinking about it now could make a big difference to the outcome for you and your family. Don't wait for the unexpected to happen – prepare now!



# How we plan

Emergencies are happening somewhere almost every minute of every day. Most are dealt with by the police, fire, and ambulance services as part of their day to day work.

Sometimes an incident is more serious and needs to involve other agencies - such as Local Authorities, the Environment Agency, Utility Companies, and the wider health family, amongst others. All of these agencies work together continuously to plan how we would react and manage any major emergency.

We have plans in place to respond to a range of situations that may affect communities and the environment.

## **The risks most likely to affect our region are:**

- Human/animal health type disease
- Severe weather
- Industrial accidents
- Environmental pollution
- Major transport accidents
- Utility failure e.g. major loss of power, water supply etc.

Our plans do not sit gathering dust. They are regularly reviewed, and staff from the emergency services and other agencies take part in simulated emergency exercises and training.

In the first stages of an emergency, the priority will be to protect life and property wherever we can, and then to enable communities to recover as quickly as possible.

Sometimes a major emergency will only affect one area of the community, at other times it could affect a wider region. Whatever the extent, we will work closely with the media to get information out to you quickly, so that you can assess any likely impact on you and your family.

## Get Ready - Make your own emergency plan

Don't panic! The chances of you being caught up in a major emergency are low but, just in case this happens, you and your family need to be ready. One way of doing this is to prepare a household emergency plan.

### Step 1 – Personal contact list

**Make an emergency contact list** - containing as many numbers as you think you will need. Always keep it where you could find it quickly in an emergency and give copies to your friends and family. If possible, keep a copy in your wallet or purse and store the numbers on your mobile phone.

#### Remember in the event of an emergency:

Mobile phone networks are likely to be very busy. Try to only use your mobile for essential purposes – either to send a text message or make a brief call to establish people's safety. The 999 number should only be used for genuine emergencies. For general information regarding an incident always use the non emergency numbers, where available. If an emergency happens, most organisations will give out designated help line numbers and it is best to use these if you are looking for general information.



You may find it useful to fill in these contact details. We've given you some examples to start you off – remember to include as many details as you can e.g. landline and mobile numbers, as well as any other relevant information.

<b>Contacts</b>	<b>Name and telephone numbers</b>
Family contact	
Family contact	
Neighbours	
School/college	
Carers/childminder	
Work contact	
Doctor	
Insurance details	
Vet	
Local Hospital	

**In case of an emergency please contact**




## We've put together a number of other contacts that may be useful in an emergency:

Remember, **999** should **only** be used in an emergency

### Environment Agency

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

### Floodline

0845 988 1188

### Met Office

[www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)

### Electricity (24 hour emergency service and supply failures only)

0845 733 1331

### Gas (24 hour emergency service and gas escapes)

0800 111 999

### Yorkshire Water (24 hour emergency service)

0845 124 24 24

### Police (non emergency)

[www.westyorkshirepolice.co.uk](http://www.westyorkshirepolice.co.uk)

0845 606 0 606

### NHS Direct (24 hour confidential health advice and information)

[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

0845 4647

### Department of Health

[www.doh.gov.uk](http://www.doh.gov.uk)

### Government website

[www.preparingforemergencies.gov.uk](http://www.preparingforemergencies.gov.uk)

### Yorkshire Post

[www.yorkshirepost.co.uk](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk)

### West Yorkshire Resilience

[www.westyorksprepared.gov.uk](http://www.westyorksprepared.gov.uk)

### City of Bradford MDC

[www.bradford.gov.uk](http://www.bradford.gov.uk)

### Calderdale MBC

[www.calderdale.gov.uk](http://www.calderdale.gov.uk)

### Kirklees Council

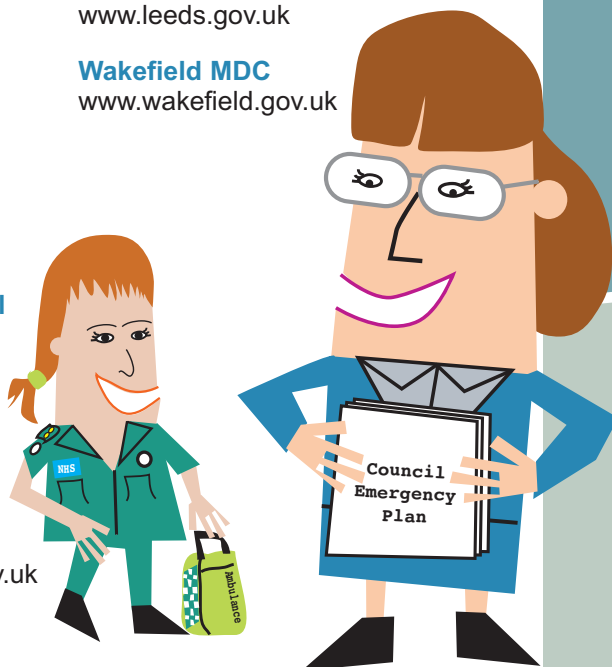
[www.kirklees.gov.uk](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk)

### Leeds City Council

[www.leeds.gov.uk](http://www.leeds.gov.uk)

### Wakefield MDC

[www.wakefield.gov.uk](http://www.wakefield.gov.uk)



## Step 2 – Household emergency plan

If you are in immediate danger you will be advised by the emergency services as to what you should do. You may be advised to leave your home for a place of safety, or remain inside with doors and windows closed. If you need to leave your home in a hurry many essentials may get forgotten in the rush. Thinking ahead and having an emergency plan in place can really help. Discuss your plan with family, friends and neighbours and encourage them to make their own plans.

**Note:** For people with a disability, specific information on what to do in preparation for an emergency can be found on the following web page: [http://www.pep.bc.ca/hazard\\_preparedness/disabilities\\_information.html](http://www.pep.bc.ca/hazard_preparedness/disabilities_information.html)

### Here are a few things to think about:

- Discuss the kind of emergencies that could happen e.g. a major power failure.
- Have a battery operated radio, to listen in to important announcements.
- Consider alternative accommodation arrangements (in case you are asked to evacuate your home).
- Keep supplies of tinned food, bottled water, candles and matches in case you are unable to leave your home.
- Be a good neighbour and consider people who may need extra help due to vulnerability or disability.
- Identify possible emergency exit routes from your home.
- Agree a couple of alternative meeting points for you and your family if you can't meet back at home.
- Create your check list for an 'emergency kit bag' in case you need to evacuate your home quickly.
- Know how and where to turn off the electricity, gas and water supply.
- Ensure that you have adequate and up to date insurance.
- Think about arrangements for family pets should you need to leave your home.
- Find out about the emergency plans for your workplace and children's schools.
- Develop your own emergency contact list (see step 1) and remember to include a family member or friend who lives out of town, as they are less likely to be affected by the same emergency.
- Remember to share your plan with your family and, twice a year, read, review and discuss it!

## Emergency Kit Bag

In a major emergency such as prolonged severe weather you may lose power, gas and water or have to evacuate your home quickly, so it's important to have all your basic necessities to hand.

The emergency services may not be able to reach you immediately and you may have to support yourself and your family for a time. An emergency kit of basic essentials stored in your home will help you. Keep the contents list attached to the outside of the kit bag indicating items with an expiry date. Remember to replace items before they go out of date. Store the kit bag somewhere safe and accessible and make sure everyone knows where it is kept.

Some suggestions for the basic essentials you should include in your Emergency Kit Bag.

- Key documents (such as passport, driving licence, your personal emergency contact list and insurance details).
- First aid kit.
- Written procedures for switching off gas, electricity and water supplies.
- Details of prescription medication/equipment (make sure these are kept up to date).
- Battery operated radio with spare batteries or wind up radio.
- Mobile phone/charger.
- Spare glasses or contact lenses (if worn).
- Whistle (for attracting attention).
- Toiletries (including nappies/sanitary supplies).
- Any special items for babies, children, elderly and disabled people.
- Spare set of keys (home/car/office).
- Bottled water/energy bars.
- Coins/cash (small denominations), credit cards and cheque book (machines may not be available).
- A torch and batteries or a wind up torch (with mobile phone charger adaptor).
- Change of clothes, blankets and sensible footwear (if necessary, waterproofs).
- Candles and matches.
- Notebook and pen/pencil.
- This pocket guide.





## Step 3 – Know how to respond

### Go in, Stay in, Tune in

Being prepared and being kept informed on developing emergency situations reduces anxiety. Radio and television will be the main means of communicating what is happening.

There is an agreement with radio and TV companies that, if there is a major emergency, they will interrupt broadcasting to give public safety advice and information about the incident, and will advise if a public helpline has been established.

You may also get public information on the incident through the internet, by visiting your local authority, emergency services or your local BBC websites. BBC local radio for your area will be one of the broadcasters of emergency service messages. A list of local radio stations serving West Yorkshire is provided overleaf.

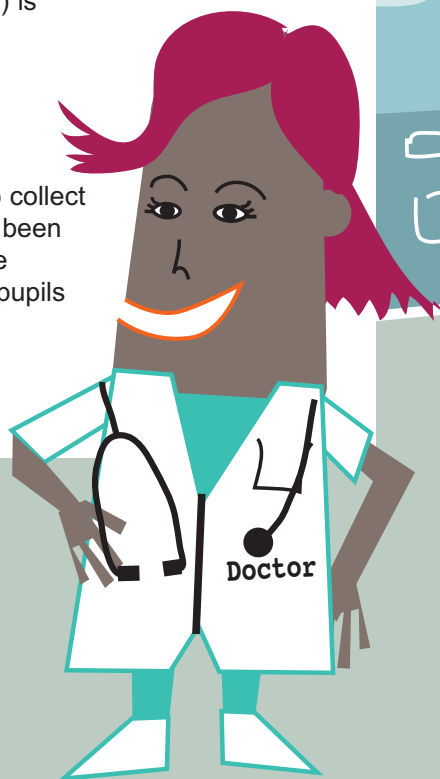
### Go in - close all doors and windows

Wait inside until the all clear (or further instruction) is given by the emergency services.

### Stay in

Keep away from all windows and doors.  
Remain calm and wait for further advice.

If you have children we know that you will want to collect them from school, but remain indoors if you have been advised to do so. Remember that all schools have emergency plans and teachers will look after the pupils in their care.



## Tune in

To your local radio station for further information or instructions, including updates on schools.

### **BBC Radio Leeds**

92.4, 95.3, 102.7 & 103.9FM;  
774AM; and DAB

### **Galaxy**

105. 105.1 & 105.6FM; and DAB

### **Real Radio**

106-108FM; and DAB

### **Pennine FM**

107.9FM (Calderdale & Kirklees)

### **Radio Aire**

96.3FM; and DAB

### **Ridings FM**

106.8FM; and DAB

(Wakefield & Pontefract)

(BBC will always broadcast emergency messages, however some local radio stations may not be able to broadcast during the night or at weekends)

### **The Pulse**

97.5 & 102.5 FM; and DAB  
(Bradford)

### **Asian Fever**

87.7 FM

(Central Leeds' Asian Community)

### **BCB**

106.6FM (Bradford)

### **Sunrise**

103.2FM; and DAB

(Bradford's Asian Community)

## In some emergencies you may be asked to evacuate

Always listen to and follow instructions from the emergency services.

If you choose to make your own arrangements, please remember to let someone know you are safe.

- Follow your household emergency plan.
- Collect your 'Emergency Kit Bag'.
- Gather family members and prepare to leave your home – in a calm and organised way.
- Remember to lock all doors and windows before you leave.
- Turn off all utility services.
- The Local Authority will provide rest centre facilities for your initial safety and welfare (if required).



## Are you ready West Yorkshire?

To find out if you and your family are ready for an emergency, try out our 'get ready' test.

1. Do you have a household emergency plan?
2. Have you discussed your plan with family and friends?
3. Do you know the emergency plan for your children's school/nursery/college?
4. Do you know the emergency plan for your place of work?
5. Have you completed a personal emergency contact list?
6. Have you prepared a check list for your 'emergency kit', or packed it ready to go?
7. Do you have emergency contact(s) in your phone, wallet or purse?
8. Do you have a contact person – someone unlikely to be affected by the same emergency - who can keep family and friends informed?
9. Do you have a wind up or battery-operated portable FM/AM radio?
10. Do you have alternative, agreed meeting points?
11. Do you have working smoke alarms in your home?
12. Do you have adequate contents and buildings insurance?
13. Do you have copies of your most important documents stored somewhere other than at home?
14. Do you have a written list of your valuables, plus photographs or DVD/video?
15. Have you considered alternative accommodation arrangements, if you are asked to evacuate your home?

**If you answered YES to 12 or more questions** – your preparations are going well, congratulations! Just make sure you keep all your plans and information up to date.

**Scored between 8 and 12** – it's great that you've started work on your emergency preparations – however there's a lot more you can do.

**Less than 8** – you've not made enough preparations. Perhaps because you don't like thinking about the subject. Remember, the more prepared you are – the better you will cope in an emergency.

As explained earlier in the booklet, we have identified some of the risks that may affect our region. The following provides information and advice on each of these risks.

## Some Risks to Consider

### Seasonal and pandemic influenza

#### What is influenza (flu)?

Seasonal flu normally occurs during the winter months. It is a much more serious illness than a cold and it usually results in having to go to bed for several days, feeling very poorly with a high temperature and aching limbs.

Older people and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma) are most at risk of developing complications if they catch flu. This is why the seasonal flu vaccination is recommended to these groups of people each year.

#### What is pandemic flu?

A pandemic happens when a completely new strain of flu virus develops which no-one has built up any immunity against. As a result, the new flu strain spreads very rapidly around the world and affects many people. A pandemic could start at any time of the year.

Historically, pandemic flu outbreaks have happened every few decades. International health experts believe another flu pandemic is both inevitable and imminent. However, health organisations in the UK and around the world are closely monitoring flu viruses to anticipate a pandemic, and very detailed plans are in place to help people to respond if and when a pandemic happens.

Existing vaccines will not protect against the new strain and new vaccines take time to develop, and so are not available immediately. The symptoms of a pandemic flu strain are likely to be similar to seasonal flu but may be more severe and cause more complications.

#### Top tip

Consider what you would do for childcare if your children's nursery or school is closed.



## How do you catch flu?

Flu is mostly caught by breathing in air containing the virus. The virus is passed into the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes and others can then breathe it in. Flu is highly infectious and can spread very rapidly from person to person. People are most infectious soon after they develop symptoms, though they can continue to spread the virus for around five days – and longer in children.

## What you should do if you develop flu-like symptoms:

- If at work go home immediately (after informing your manager/supervisor).
- Stay at home and do not go to work or school until you are fully recovered.
- Take medicines, such as paracetamol, to relieve the symptoms – always follow the instructions on the medicines.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- For advice on treatment, contact NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or [www.nhs.gov.uk](http://www.nhs.gov.uk).
- Only see your doctor if you get complications (e.g. chest infection) or a worsening of any existing chronic condition.

## What you can do to protect yourself and others from flu:

- Use a tissue to cover your nose and mouth when coughing and/or sneezing.
- Dispose of the tissue promptly, by bagging and binning it, then wash your hands.
- Clean hands frequently with soap and water, especially after coughing, sneezing and using tissues. An alcohol handrub could be used as an alternative for cleaning hands, if water is not available.
- Avoid touching your mouth, eyes and nose, unless you have recently cleaned your hands.
- Use normal household detergent and water to clean surfaces frequently touched by hands.
- Wash your hands when arriving back from outside activities, before and after direct contact with contaminated surfaces, after contact with bodily secretions, before handling food, before eating or smoking.
- Make sure all members of your family follow this advice.

## Severe weather

When we think of severe weather, we usually imagine rain or snow, but significant disruption can be caused by gale force winds, heat waves, dense fog and snow.

**Gale force winds** – can cause widespread damage to your property and also injuries caused by flying debris and falling trees. Sometimes gales can result in loss of power if lines are down, or disruption to transport systems.

### If gale force winds are predicted:

- Secure loose objects such as ladders and garden furniture, which can be blown around and cause damage.
- Close and securely fasten doors and windows, including garages.
- Park vehicles in a garage or in a place clear of buildings, trees and fences.

### During gale force winds:

- Stay indoors.
- If you need to go outside, do not walk or shelter close to buildings or trees.
- Don't carry out repairs whilst the storm is in progress.
- Do not drive unless your journey is essential and avoid exposed routes.

### After a severe gale:

- Do not touch electric/telephone cables which may have been blown down.
- Check on vulnerable neighbours and relatives.
- Make arrangements for any structural repairs and check on general household maintenance.

**Heat waves** – most people in the UK are unused to extreme high temperatures and our bodies do not cope well with intense heat.

- Try and plan your day to stay out of the heat, keep rooms shaded and, where possible, use a fan.
- If you must go out, stay in the shade, wear a hat and loose fitting, cotton clothing.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Take care with those at greater risk – older people, babies and young children, and those with health problems, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart complaints.

- Don't leave children or animals unattended in cars in warm weather.
- Seek medical help if you suffer heat exhaustion or heat stroke (headaches, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, muscle cramps, high temperature and confusion). Remain somewhere cool, sponge yourself with cold water and drink plenty of fluids.
- Check [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk) for heat health watch updates.

**Dense fog** – presents a number of hidden dangers to both drivers and pedestrians, as it can drift rapidly and be unexpectedly patchy.

When driving:

- Avoid travel where possible.
- Drive slowly, as fog can cause familiar landmarks and road markings to be obscured.
- Drive with dipped headlights, as full beam lights reflect off the fog causing a 'white wall' effect.
- Use fog lights if visibility is seriously reduced, but remember to turn them off when conditions improve.
- Take note of illuminated signs warning of fog ahead.

When walking:

- Remember that you may not be visible to traffic, so take care when crossing roads.
- Use reflective clothing, particularly for children.

**Snow and ice** – not only make driving conditions hazardous but the associated low temperatures put older people at risk from heart attacks and respiratory problems.

- Check on older friends and neighbours, ensuring they are warm and safe. Watch out for signs of hypothermia – uncontrollable shivering, slow or slurred speech, drowsiness and memory lapse.
- Plan your journey around main routes, which are more likely to have been gritted.
- It is better to wear several layers of clothing to maintain body heat, rather than one thick layer. Wear a hat - up to half of your body heat is lost through your head.
- Inform a family member or friend of your intended travel arrangements and expected arrival time.



### Carry an emergency kit in your vehicle –

- Mobile phone and car charger kit.
- Your personal emergency contact list.
- First aid kit.
- Warm, waterproof clothes and footwear.
- Blanket.
- Food.
- Water.
- Torch (with spare batteries).
- Spade – in case you are stranded in heavy snow.



The Council is on standby 24 hours a day from late autumn until late spring, and can respond quickly to carry out salting of main roads. This period is extended if wintry conditions persist.

## Flooding

Floods happen quickly and often without warning. There is nothing you can do to prevent a flood, and scientists warn that an effect of climate change will be more frequent flash flooding in the future.

### Particular care needs to be taken when driving in heavy rain and during flooding:

- If you come across flood water you should only attempt to drive through it if you know it is safe to do so.
- Drive slowly and steadily to avoid creating a bow wave (which can increase flooding for affected areas).
- Test your brakes as soon as you can after leaving the water
- Don't try driving through fast moving water, your car could easily be swept away

### Flooding facts:

- Just 150mm (six inches) of fast flowing water can knock an adult off their feet.
- Electric currents can pass along downed power lines in flood waters.
- A car can float in just 600mm (two feet) of water.
- Flash floods can cause walls of water 10 to 20 feet high.
- Around 5 million people in the UK live in areas at risk of flooding.

### What to do if there's a flood on the way

To try and stop water entering your home, here are a few simple measures which can help keep you safe and minimise damage to your property:

#### Top tip

If your premise is at risk from river flooding you can register for Floodline Warnings Direct, a free service that provides flood warnings direct to you by telephone, mobile, email, SMS text, fax or pager. You'll also get practical advice on preparing for a flood, and what to do if one happens.

Phone Floodline  
0845 9881188



- Listen to your local radio and TV weather forecasts for advice from the emergency services.
- Be a good neighbour and consider those who are vulnerable and may require assistance.
- Move your car to higher ground.
- Roll up carpets and rugs and move them out of harm's way.
- Empty furniture, drawers and cupboards. Place the contents and any furniture you can move upstairs.
- Any furniture you can't move could be raised on bricks and pulled away from the wall. Weigh down any furniture which is too heavy to move, to stop it from floating and damaging walls and windows.
- Fasten plastic bags around the legs of wooden furniture to help minimise absorption of water.
- If possible, take the curtains down or wrap them round the curtain pole.
- Move computers and other electrical equipment upstairs or above the anticipated water level.
- Turn off mains gas and electricity.
- Put plugs in sinks and weigh them down with something heavy to prevent backflow from the drains. Weigh down the toilet seat too.
- Disconnect electrical appliances.
- Check food and water supplies and take upstairs.
- Bring caged outdoor pets inside, and move all pets with food, water, bedding and litter trays upstairs.
- Get into the habit of storing valuable or sentimental items and important documents upstairs or in a high place.
- If you have any flood protection equipment, such as floodboards or sandbags, put them in place.
- Do as much as you can in daylight. Doing anything in the dark will be a lot harder, especially if the electricity fails.

### **Safeguarding your home**

Long term preparation can help protect your home and possessions against flooding.

- Boarding your loft gives you more space to move possessions above the flood water levels. This is especially useful if you live in a bungalow.
- You can buy flood protection products which can be fitted for the duration of the flood risk period.
- Check that there are no cracks around the sealants on window and door frames.

- Keep an eye open for any gaps in the brickwork and cracks around the windows, doors and piping.
- Make sure your gutters are cleaned out regularly and do not deposit oil, building materials etc. down gullies.
- If you are adding an extension or other building works make sure that you or your builder consult building and planning regulations for advice on flood prevention measures.
- New electrical sockets should be installed as high as possible above anticipated water levels, and it is advisable to put new boilers and/or other heating units on the first floor.
- Keep any watercourses, such as ditches or culverts, which run across or border your garden, free from blockages and check for bank erosion. Never be tempted to fill them in, to create an extra patch of garden.

## Gully and drain cleaning

**Keeping gullies clear is critical to making sure water can drain away.**

Gullies on public highways will be cleaned by the Council as part of our regular gully cleaning programme. If you own your home or rent from a private landlord, the homeowner is responsible for keeping privately owned gullies clean – including drains on un-adopted roads.

## Sandbags

Sandbags can be an effective defence system to protect buildings from flooding.

You can buy bags and sand at builders' merchants and most DIY/garden centres. In an emergency some local council's may be able to assist in the provision of sand bags.

**Sandbags are easy to make and use.**

All you have to do is:

- Half fill an old pillow case or refuse sack with sand. Sand is abrasive so always wear rubber gloves when handling it.
- Tie or tuck in the neck of the bags.
- Lift the sandbag by the neck and place it across the doorway.
- Make sure it sits snugly against the door and frame.
- Pull the neck back across the top of the bag, then layer in a brick formation so that the joints are staggered.
- Stamp on the bags to plug any gaps.

Sandbags last longer if you store them out of the rain or direct sunshine. Alternatively self inflating flood defence systems are available from suppliers.

## Industrial Accidents

If you live close to a large chemical site, you should regularly receive information from the site(s) in your area advising you of the actions to take in the event of an accident.

**Generally, the advice in a chemical incident is to 'Go in, stay in and tune in'.**

- Go into a house or building straight away and stay indoors until you hear an all-clear message.
- Close all external doors, turn off all ventilation and central heating systems.
- Close all windows and curtains.
- Stay in a room away from the source of the chemical release, preferably upstairs.
- Tune into your local radio station to receive information and instructions.
- Do not ring the emergency services unless you have a medical emergency, as their telephone lines need to be kept clear.
- General medical advice can be sought from NHS Direct on 0845 4647.
- Please co-operate with any instructions given by the emergency services.
- After the all-clear, doors and windows can be opened and ventilation restored.

**If you are evacuated following a chemical incident, on your return home you will need to:**

- Open all windows and doors to ventilate your home fully for as long as possible, preferably for several hours.
- Don't eat any food which was left uncovered prior to evacuation.
- Don't eat vegetables from the garden until they have been thoroughly scrubbed and peeled.
- Clean all surfaces in the home thoroughly.
- Re-wash any laundry which was left outside on a washing line.





## General safety tips

- In the first phases of an emergency, there may be some confusion which leads to panic - try to remain calm, tune in, get the facts and follow instructions.
- Teach your children how and when to call the emergency services (999).
- Install smoke detectors in your home, especially near bedrooms, and regularly check the batteries are working. Also consider using a carbon monoxide detector.
- Make sure that you have a complete first aid kit. Think about taking a first aid course.
- Carry out regular maintenance checks on your home, any outbuildings and your car, and make sure that you keep up to date with repairs.
- If you smell gas, turn off at the main valve. Open all windows and report the fault.
- Always keep medication and hazardous cleaning products locked safely away from children.
- Teach your children to stay away from potential dangers including open water, electricity pylons and railway lines.

This document can be made available in other formats  
- please contact your local council.

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