National Institutes of Health

Division of Emergency Management
Office of Research Services

Workplace Emergency Procedures

Basic Emergency Procedures for NIH Staff

For questions, contact the Division of Emergency Management at orsdem@nih.gov.

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How to Report an Emergency

In an emergency, <u>dial 911</u> from your phone immediately.

An emergency is any situation that requires immediate assistance from the police, fire department or ambulance.

When you call 911, be prepared to answer the call-taker's questions, which may include:

- The location of the emergency, including the street address.
- The nature of the emergency.
- Your name and phone number.*
- Details about the emergency, such as a physical description of a person who may have committed a crime, a description of any fire that may be burning, or a description of injuries or symptoms being experienced by a person having a medical emergency.

* Callers to 911 are not required to reveal their names, addresses, or phone numbers if they wish to remain anonymous.

Preparedness Basics

All NIH employees should:

- Know how to activate emergency alarms and who to call to [report an emergency](.).
- Be familiar with the two nearest exit routes in your work area.
- Locate the two closest shelter-in-place areas.
- Know the location of your building's assembly area.
- Make sure your contact information and work location are accurate in the [NIH Enterprise Directory](.) (NIH network required*).

* See [Additional Resources](.) section below if you do not have network access.

Evacuation Procedures

Evacuations* may be required during emergencies such as a fire, earthquake, bomb threat, or suspicious package.

- Remember to stay calm.
- Walk, do not run, to the nearest emergency exit.
- DO NOT use elevators unless authorized by fire personnel.
- Offer help to people who may need assistance during an emergency.

- Notify the Occupant Emergency Coordinator (OEC) or an emergency responder if anyone remains in the building.
- Report to your designated assembly area** to allow for accuracy in accountability.
- Wait for instructions from the fire, police, or other emergency personnel before returning to your building.

* If you work in Building 10, you may have different procedures due to the use of fire zones (e.g., staff move horizontally from the affected fire zone to their designated assembly area in an adjacent zone). If you work in the Clinical Center, refer to the [Clinical Center Evacuation Plan](#).

** Locate your assembly area by visiting the [Workplace Emergency Plans](#) page (NIH network required) or contacting your supervisor.

Lockdown Procedures

Lockdown is a temporary sheltering technique used to protect employees from a security threat outside the facility.

- Stay calm and follow the instructions of law enforcement if provided.
- Lock doors and close window shades.
- Stay away from doors and windows.
- Move to an area that will provide cover.
- Individuals will not be allowed to enter or leave the facility.
- Remain in the secured area until the lockdown is lifted.

Shelter-in-Place (SIP) Procedures

During some types of emergencies, such as a tornado, severe thunderstorm, or a release of hazardous materials outside the facility, it is safer to shelter in place rather than evacuate.

- Immediately cease all operations.
- Confine hazardous materials and turn off oxygen/flammable gases.
- Shut all doors behind you.
- Do not block emergency exits.
- Move to a designated SIP location or interior room with few or no windows.
- Remain in your SIP location until you receive an "All Clear" message or until the severe weather warning expires.

Active Shooter

Active shooter situations are unpredictable, and you must quickly decide the most reasonable way to protect yourself. There are three basic response options: Run, Hide, or Fight.

Run: If possible, immediately flee the area.

- Getting away from the shooter(s) is the top priority.
- Leave belongings behind and get away.
- If possible, help others escape – but do not place yourself at risk.
- Warn others to not enter the area.
- Do not attempt to move the injured.
- Call 911 when you are safe.

Hide: If running is not feasible, find a secure hiding place and stay out of sight.

- Get out of the shooter's view and stay quiet.
- Find a hiding place in case shots are fired in your direction.
- Silence all electronic devices.
- Lock and block doors, close blinds, and turn off lights.
- Hide separately to make it difficult for the shooter.
- Call 911 and leave the line open.
- Stay in place until law enforcement tells you to evacuate.

Fight: As a last resort if you are in imminent danger, defend yourself against the shooter.

- Commit to your actions.
- Act as aggressively as possible against the shooter.
- Throw items and improvise weapons to distract and disarm the shooter.
- Recruit others to ambush the shooter with makeshift weapons like chairs, fire extinguisher, scissors, books, etc.
- Be prepared to cause severe or lethal injury to the shooter.

When Law Enforcement Arrives:

- Keep your hands visible, and empty.
- Know that law enforcement's first task is to end the incident. They may have to pass injured persons along the way.
- Follow law enforcement's instructions and evacuate in the direction they tell you to.

- Once you have reached a safe location, you may be held in a protected area by law enforcement until the situation is under control and the initial investigation is complete.

For mental health and other support services, visit the
[NIH Employee Assistance Program (EAP)](#) website.

Workplace Violence Prevention

To report a person showing [warning signs of Potentially Violent Behavior](#), contact the [NIH Civil Program](#).

- **Phone:**
  - Anti-Harassment Hotline: 833-224-3829
  - Main Office: 301-40-Civil (301-402-4845)
- **Email:** civilprogram@nih.gov
- **Make a report using the [Online Reporting Form](#).**

If someone is directly threatening you or others, whether it is with a weapon or not, or if you feel that a situation may escalate to violence, [call 911](#).

Bomb Threat

- Stay calm.
- Try to get the attention of a coworker to [call 911](#) from a landline.
- Keep the caller on the line as long as possible and get as much information* as you can.
- Do not hang up the phone even if the caller does.
- If a coworker has not already done so, call 911 to pass on all information to the police.
- Follow the instructions of emergency personnel and if told to evacuate, do so immediately.
- DO NOT use a radios or cell phones during a bomb threat or activate the fire alarm, as this may trigger the bomb.

* For a printable quick reference checklist, refer to the [DHS Bomb Threat Checklist](#).

Earthquake

If you are indoors:

- Seek cover under a sturdy table/furniture and hold on until shaking stops.
- If unable to seek cover, get as low as possible and protect your head and neck.

- Stay away from glass, windows, exterior doors, walls, and anything that could fall.
- Once shaking stops, evacuate the building, DO NOT use the elevator or pull the fire alarm (unless there is a fire).

If you are outdoors:

- Do not going inside buildings.
- Stay away from buildings, trees, and power lines.
- Move to an open area and wait for shaking to stop.

Fire

- Pull or activate the fire alarm.
- Alert others in the area.
- If possible:
    - Turn off any oxygen/flammable gas.
    - Secure hazards materials on your way out.
    - Close door(s) where the fire is located.
- Call 911.
- Follow basic evacuation procedures.

Hazardous Materials Spill or Release

If a hazardous materials spill occurs, follow your lab's written emergency response procedures. DO NOT attempt to clean up a spill unless you have the training and resources to clean the spill without risk to yourself or others.

For more information on hazardous materials spills in a laboratory, refer to guidance in the Division of Occupational Health and Safety (DOHS) Laboratory Procedures for Spills and in the NIH Chemical Hygiene Plan.

For High-Level Hazard Spills (laboratory spills that cannot be controlled)

- Evacuate the area and close doors behind you.
- Initiate first aid to any exposed or injured employees in accordance with the safety data sheet.
- Call 911.
- Warn others to not enter the area.
- Do not attempt to reenter the space until told it is safe to do so.
- Report to OMS in Building 10, Room 6C306 within one hour of an exposure.

Maintenance Emergency (Power Failure, Flooding, Gas Leak)

For all maintenance or facility-related emergencies:

- Stop and secure hazardous work.
- Call the 24-hour Maintenance Operations Center at 301-435-8000 to report the emergency.

Note: Routine (non-emergency) maintenance service requests can be submitted using an online form (NIH network required) or by calling 301-435-8000. More information can be found on the Maintenance Service Requests website.

Power Failure:

- Remain where you are and open all available blinds/shades/curtains to receive outside light.
- If you are in an unlit area, carefully move to an area that has emergency lighting.
- If instructed to evacuate, walk to the nearest exit and to your designated assembly area to await further instructions.

Flooding:

- If water is present, stop using all electrical equipment and use extreme caution if any electrical appliances/outlets are near the water.
- Never attempt to unplug or remove an electrical appliance or wire from a flooded area.
- If instructed to evacuate, proceed carefully to the nearest exit.
- Be aware of loose ceiling tiles, uneven or unstable floors, and risk of personal injury from slips, trips, or falls.

Gas Leaks:

- Unusual odors should be considered an emergency. Immediately call 911.
- Extinguish any open flames.
- Do not use any electrical appliances (microwaves, stoves, etc.).
- Do not turn on/off light switches.
- If you begin to feel ill or suspect a serious leak, evacuate the building/leave the area and call 911 if you need medical assistance.
- If instructed to evacuate, proceed carefully to the nearest exit.

Severe Weather (Tornado or Thunderstorm)

A **Watch** means that the severe weather event is possible in and near the watch area. Be ready to act quickly if a warning is issued.

A **Warning** means that the hazardous weather is now occurring, imminent, or likely. There is imminent danger to life and property, and you should take protective actions immediately.

- Seek shelter in a designated shelter-in-place location.
- Otherwise, go to a basement, underground excavation, or lower floor of interior hallway or corridor (preferably a steel-framed or reinforced concrete building).
- As a last resort, seek shelter under a sturdy workbench or heavy furniture.
- Avoid:
    - Top floors of buildings
    - Areas with glass windows or doors
    - Auditoriums, gymnasiums, cafeterias, or other areas with large, wide-span ceilings
- Listen for news reports or instructions from emergency personnel.

Closures and Dismissals

How you should respond to Operating Status Changes are affected by [Emergency Tier Designations](), workplace flexibilities agreements, and whether you work in the Washington, DC area. Visit the [OHR Website]() for how operating status changes affect each Tier Designation.

Check the current Operating Status based on location using the links below.

Inside the Washington, DC Area

- [U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) website]()
- [OPM Alert mobile app]()

NIH Locations Outside the Washington, DC area

- [Click here for closure and dismissal guidance for NIH locations outside of the Washington, DC area.]()

Guidance for Individuals with Disabilities

If you may need help during an emergency (such as assistance evacuating or with moving to an area of refuge location), you should inform your supervisor. Your supervisor and the

building's Occupant Emergency Coordinator (OEC) should work with you to develop a personal preparedness plan, including identifying individuals who can assist and are likely to be present during your on-site workdays.

More information and a Preparedness Plan template can be found on the Guidance for Individuals with Disabilities page.

Additional Resources

Clinical Center Emergency Management Plan Links

- CC Building Evacuation Plan
- CC Fire Emergency Plan

IC Emergency Coordinators Roster

- IC Emergency Coordinators Roster

NIH Enterprise Directory (NED) Updates

- Most NIH staff with network access can use the NED self-service portal to update their work location and contact information. See this Job Aid for step-by-step instructions.
- If you do not have NIH network access, contact your supervisor or Administrative Officer (AO). Your AO or Project Officer can also update your opt-in preferences for emergency alerts when you submit an Opt-In Form.

Supervisors and Managers

- General Guidance for Workplace Emergency Preparedness
- Fillable Staff Roster for Contacting Staff during Emergencies

Workplace Violence Prevention

- Learn the indicators of potentially violent behavior
- Make a report of warning signs of potentially violent behavior by contacting the NIH Civil Program.
    - **Anti-Harassment Hotline:** 833-224-3829
    - **Main Office:** 301-40-Civil (301-402-4845)
    - **Email:** civilprogram@nih.gov
    - **Online Form:** Submit a Civil Intake Form