



Response to Disasters

WHAT IT IS

Response is the actions taken to save lives and protect property from damage during an emergency - it is putting preparedness plans into action.

When disaster strikes you may need to take specific actions to remain safe. These include sheltering-in-place, implementing a lockdown, evacuating, or relocating to an emergency shelter. These terms and some basic "how-to" procedures are outlined below.

WHY YOU MIGHT NEED TO SHELTER-IN-PLACE:

- Acts of Violence/Terrorism
- Civil Disturbance
- Chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants released accidentally or intentionally into the environment
- Various types of severe weather

WHY YOU MIGHT NEED TO LOCKDOWN:

- Acts of Violence/Terrorism
- Civil Disturbance

WHY YOU MIGHT NEED TO EVACUATE FROM A BUILDING:

- An internal chemical spill or gas leak
- Visible smoke, vapor cloud, or fire (inside the building)
- Bomb threat
- Suspicious mail
- Localized flooding

WHY YOU MIGHT NEED TO EVACUATE FROM AN AREA:

- Widespread flooding (or forecast)
- Forecast of severe weather to which your home is vulnerable
- Hazardous materials release
- Other involuntary or mandatory evacuation orders from the county

WHAT RESPONSE ACTIVITIES SHOULD YOU DO?

Response is the actions taken to save lives and protect property from damage during an emergency - it is putting preparedness plans into action. Here are some examples:



SHELTER-IN-PLACE

- Follow instructions from authorities if available to decide whether you should shelter-in-place or evacuate.
- Call 911 and report the emergency, if appropriate.
- Follow your emergency plan.
- In case of environmental release or threat:
 - *Tape around doors, windows, and vents, and place wet towels at bottom of doors, in order to seal out fumes and gases.*
 - *Turn off air-exchange heating systems, air conditioners, and exhaust fans.*
 - *Leave the electricity on.*
 - Use [SpotsyAlert](#) and other sources to get information during the event.

LOCKDOWN

- Do not panic - remain calm.
- Lock all doors and windows immediately. If a door can't be locked, quickly block the door with heavy items.
- Never open doors or windows unless ordered to do so by a verified public safety official. Always ask for documentation to confirm identity.
- Turn off all lights and close blinds or curtains.
- Instruct everyone in the room with you to stay low and away from windows and doors.
- Silence televisions, cell phones, and other electronics.
- Clear hallways, bathrooms, and any area or room that cannot be thoroughly secured.
- Assist those with access and functional needs if safe to do so.
- Remain indoors and under lockdown until you receive an "all clear" from authorized personnel.
- Follow all instructions from law enforcement personnel.

EVACUATION FROM A BUILDING

- Do not panic - remain calm.
- Do not run.
- In the event of a fire, do not open hot doors. Before opening any door, touch it near the top to see if it is hot.
- Do not use elevators.
- Do not break windows in a fire - oxygen feeds fires.
- Do not assist first responders unless you are asked to do so.
- Do not be a "rubber-necker" - move away from the problem area, to your safe area. Remain there until you are instructed to return or relocate.



AREA EVACUATION

- Decide whether you should shelter-in-place or evacuate; defer to instructions from authorities.
- Follow your emergency plan.
- Grab your go bag and any additional food, cash, and supplies you might need.
- Don't forget your keys and your pets.
- Shut off your gas service. Learn where your utilities are and how to shut them off.
- Identify a destination, and advise your out-of-state contact (and others) to let them know where you are headed.
- Research your route, as some roads may be closed based on the event - check Spotsylvania County information resources and internet resources. ([Virginia 511](#))
- Fuel up. Sometimes evacuations cause localized gas shortages.

PREPARING FOR AN EMERGENCY SHELTER

There are instances during which Spotsylvania County will open emergency shelters. The following are a few considerations if you have to relocate to a shelter.

- Bring your emergency go bag, including a three-day supply of any specialized supplies, such as:
 - Special items for any older adults, children, or people with access and functional needs, including any assistive technology.
 - Special food to accommodate any restrictions or allergies.
 - Prescription pharmaceuticals, supplies, and devices necessary for health maintenance.
- If you have a pet(s):
 - Verify that shelters are open to pets.
 - Bring your pet(s) with you!
 - Bring pet supplies.