

Not Every Emergency Means Leaving the Building:

Understanding “Shelter-in-Place”

Why doesn't everyone evacuate when an alarm is activated?

Many people think every fire alarm means they must leave the building. That is not always true.

The FDNY created different Emergency Action Plans because every emergency is different. Some emergencies are safer if people leave the building. Other emergencies are safer if people stay inside until the danger has passed.

The goal is always the same: keep everyone as safe as possible.

Examples of a Shelter-in-Place

A Shelter-in-Place announcement may be used for situations such as:

- A violent or unruly confrontation in another area of the building.
- Police activity outside or near the building.
- A suspicious package near a building entrance or exit.
- Severe weather that makes it unsafe to go outside.
- A hazardous material (chemical) incident outside the building that makes it safer to stay indoors.

Every situation is different, and the response will depend on the specific emergency.

What Should You Do?

If you hear a Shelter-in-Place announcement:

- Stay calm.
- Remain where you are unless told otherwise.
- Listen carefully for updates.
- Follow instructions from your Fire & Life Safety Team.

Your building's Fire & Life Safety Director will always make an announcement explaining the Emergency Action Plan that has been implemented.

Questions?

For questions about your building's Emergency Action Plan or Fire & Life Safety procedures, contact your building's Fire & Life Safety Director.

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Post Until 8/31/26

