

Going to a Public Disaster Shelter During the COVID-19 Pandemic

[Español \(Spanish\)](#)



Emergency managers, shelter managers, and public health professionals are taking measures to reduce the possible spread of COVID-19 among people who seek safety in a disaster shelter during severe weather events.

Here are some tips to help you prepare and lower the risk of infection while staying safe in a shelter.

Prepare to shelter

- Know a safe place to shelter and have several ways to receive weather alerts.
- Find out if your local public shelter is open, in case you need to evacuate your home and go there. Your shelter location may be different this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Follow guidance from your local officials on when and where to shelter.
- Stay informed with weather alerts, such as National Weather Service [cell phone alert](#)[external icon](#), [NOAA Weather Radio](#)[external icon](#), or (@NWS) Twitter alerts.
- If you need to evacuate, prepare a “go kit” with [personal items](#) you cannot do without during an emergency. Include items that can help protect you and others from COVID-19, such as hand sanitizer, or bar or liquid soap if not available, and two cloth face coverings for each person. Face covers should not be used by children under the age of 2. They also should not be used by people having trouble breathing, or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or unable to remove the mask without assistance.

- [Make a plan and prepare a disaster kit for your pets](#). Find out if your disaster shelter will accept pets. Typically, when shelters accommodate pets, the pets are housed in a separate area from people.

Protect yourself and others while in a public shelter

- [Practice social distancing](#). Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) from other people outside of your household.
- Follow [CDC COVID-19 preventive actions](#)—wash your hands often, cover coughs and sneezes, and follow shelter policies for wearing [cloth face coverings](#). Avoid sharing food and drink with anyone if possible.
- Follow disaster shelter policies and procedures designed to protect everyone in the shelter, particularly [older adults \(65 and older\)](#) and [people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions](#). These people are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- Avoid touching high-touch surfaces, such as handrails, as much as possible. If not possible, [wash hands](#) or use hand sanitizers containing 60% alcohol immediately after you touch these surfaces.
- Keep your living area [clean and disinfect](#) frequently-touched items such as toys, cellphones, and other electronics.
- [If you feel sick](#) when you arrive at the shelter or start to feel sick while sheltering, tell shelter staff immediately.

Help your children stay safe while in a public shelter

- Teach and reinforce [everyday preventive actions](#) for [keeping children healthy](#).
- Make sure children aged 2 and older wear cloth face coverings. Face covers should not be used by children under the age of 2. They also should not be used by people having trouble breathing, or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- Be a good role model—if you wash your hands often, your children are more likely to do the same.
- Watch your children to ensure they stay at least 6 feet away from anyone who is not in your household.
- Watch your child for [any signs of illness](#) and tell shelter staff if your child may be ill.
- Try to deal with the disaster calmly and confidently, as this can provide the best [support for your children](#). [Help children cope with emergencies](#).