



# Home Guide to Emergency Preparedness



*Dear Neighbors:*

*The events of the past year and a half have made us all aware of the need to be prepared for an emergency. You should be confident that Montgomery County will continue to do everything it can to prevent terrorism. We have been working together with other governments around the region and with the federal government to evaluate and update emergency response plans. Within our community our public health, fire and rescue and public safety personnel have been planning and preparing for the new realities of living in the Washington metropolitan area.*

*As you may already know, we have taken the critical step to vaccinate or provide medication to our frontline workers against smallpox and other biological agents. This was not an easy decision. But we did this so that our health professionals and emergency personnel will be ready to protect the public should a bioterrorism incident occur.*

*We will handle a biological threat just as we would any other threat to the public. Our health workers will open public clinics to dispense medications, should that be necessary. They recommend that everyone understand how to "shelter-in-place" should an incident occur. Staying in your homes, stocked with basic supplies, is the best form of self-sufficiency and protection. This and other information in these pages will help you plan for most emergency situations.*

*We live in times that are unsettling – even unnerving. To help settle those nerves, we urge everyone to create a personal family protection plan, in order to be as self-sufficient as possible. And stay tuned to the news for the latest information, and to avoid the spread of rumors.*

*I hope that we will never have to put our emergency response plans into action, but it is vital that everyone do their part to help keep their families and neighbors safe.*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas M. Duncan".

Douglas M. Duncan  
County Executive

# Bioterrorism: Frequently Asked Questions

*Our new concern about bioterrorism has produced additional stress for many of us. Information on coping with this stress can be found on the County's website by clicking on "Bioterrorism."*

*Mental health professionals suggest that striking a balance between keeping up-to-date on current events and spending time pursuing enjoyable activities can be an effective way of dealing with stress. Get plenty of rest and exercise. Spend time with family and friends. Take a break from the news when needed.*



## What is bioterrorism?

Bioterrorism is the intentional release of harmful bacteria, viruses or other germs (called agents). Bioterrorism, like all forms of terrorism, aims to:

- injure or kill people
- cause panic and fear
- disrupt daily routines.

Unlike other forms of terrorism, a biological attack may not be immediately obvious. While you may see signs of a biological attack, which was sometimes the case with the anthrax mailings, it is likely that an unusual pattern or illness may be the first sign to health care personnel that an attack has occurred and you will learn of the danger through an emergency television or radio broadcast.

## Could an agent be spread in a public water supply?

It's unlikely. An agent would most likely be too diluted to have much effect, if any (unless a vast amount was used). Also, most of the public water supply is filtered and treated.

## What can we do?

Stay alert. This helps reduce the risk. And stay calm if an attack occurs. This helps government agencies control the situation and protect you.

## What if an attack occurs?

- Listen for and follow instructions provided by TV and radio stations. Tune in to the emergency radio stations listed below, and County Cable Channel 6. Have a battery-powered radio or TV in the event of a power failure.
- Local authorities will give instructions. Follow their instructions, including whether to stay home, leave the area or go to an emergency shelter.
- Montgomery County Public Schools will issue instructions via TV and radio stations on plans for evacuating or sheltering students.
- Use common sense. Terrorists most often choose targets of national importance. It is unlikely that you would be the personal target of a terrorist attack.

- If you're at work, follow your emergency or escape plan.
- Montgomery County has an Emergency Operations Plan that details what should be done in any type of emergency situations. County staff regularly conduct training drills to deal with any emergency.

## Biological Agents

Federal, state and local health care, fire and rescue and law enforcement agencies are forming plans to deal with these and other agents.

### Anthrax

Anthrax spores may be spread by direct skin contact or through the air. Some symptoms of cutaneous (skin) anthrax include itching and boils. Symptoms of inhalation anthrax may be similar to the flu but without congestion. Anthrax is not contagious.

**Smallpox** - see following page

### Botulism

Botulism may be spread through the air or by contaminated food. Symptoms include trouble seeing, breathing or swallowing. It is not contagious.

### Tularemia

Tularemia is a disease caused by a bacterium found in animals and may be spread by breathing in the bacteria. Symptoms include sudden fever, chills, headaches, muscle aches and joint pain. It is not known to be spread from person to person.

### Plague

Plague can be spread by infected fleas on rodents, or through the air. Symptoms include trouble seeing, breathing or swallowing. Plague is contagious.

# Useful Phone Numbers and Information

Montgomery County has been working closely with federal, state and regional health and public safety agencies to respond quickly to any bioterrorism threat. The State of Maryland has designated the County as a regional center to administer smallpox vaccinations to neighboring jurisdictions and other emergency personnel.

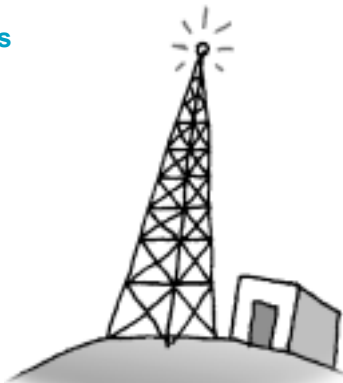
To answer residents' concerns about recent bioterrorist threats, the county has established a 24-hour taped message at **240-777-4200** (TTY **240-777-4684**) in English and other languages. Information on bioterrorism is also available on the County's web site at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov).



- Emergencies** Fire/Rescue, Police.....911 (Voice /TTY)
- Police Non-emergency**.....301-279-8000 (Voice/TTY)
- Fire Non-emergency**.....240-777-0744, TTY: 240-777-0725
- Allegheny Power**.....1-800-255-3443, TTY: 1-800-955-9445
- American Red Cross**.....301-588-2515  
or MD Relay at 711
- Verizon**  
Telephone repair:.....301-954-6260, TTY: 1-800-564-0999
- BG&E**.....1-800-685-0123, TTY: 1-800-735-2258
- Crisis Center**  
(24-hour hotline).....240-777-4000, TTY: 240-777-4815
- PEPCO**  
To report outages:.....1-877-737-2662  
To report downed wires:..202-872-3432, TTY: 202-872-2368
- Poison Center**.....202-625-3333, TTY: 202-362-8563
- Washington Gas**  
To report gas leaks:.....1-800-752-7520  
Emergencies:.....703-750-1400, TTY: 703-750-7975
- WSSC (24 hrs)**  
Maintenance.....1-800-828-6439 (x4002) TTY: 301-206-8232
- Montgomery County**  
**Emergency Management**.....240-777-2300  
or MD Relay at 711

## Emergency Radio Stations

- WMAL.....630 AM
- WTOP.....1500 AM
- WTOP.....107.7 FM
- WASH.....97.1 FM
- WAMU.....88.5 FM
- WBIG.....100.3 FM
- WMZQ.....98.7 FM
- WRC.....1260 AM
- WTNT.....570 AM



Copies of this Home Emergency Preparedness Guide in Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, French, Farsi, Cambodian and Chinese are available at the following locations:

### Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center

4805 Edgemoor Lane  
Bethesda  
301-986-4325, TTY: 301-986-4327

### Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center

3300 Briggs Chaney Road  
Silver Spring  
240-777-8400, TTY: 240-777-8418

### Executive Office Building

Lobby Information Desk  
101 Monroe St.  
Rockville  
240-777-1000, TTY: 240-777-2545

### Mid-County Regional Services Center

2424 Reddie Dr.  
Wheaton  
240-777-8100, TTY: 240-777-8111

### Silver Spring Regional Services Center

962 Wayne Ave.  
Silver Spring  
301-565-7300, TTY 1-800-735-2258

### TESS Community Services Center

8513 Piney Branch Rd.  
Silver Spring  
301-565-7675 or via MD Relay at 711

### Upcounty Regional Services Center

12900 Middlebrook Rd.  
Germantown  
240-777-8000, TTY: 240-777-8002

# Some Common Questions and Answers about Smallpox

## **What should I know about smallpox?**

Smallpox is an acute, contagious, and sometimes fatal disease marked by fever and a distinctive progressive skin rash. In 1980, the disease was declared eradicated following worldwide vaccination programs. However, in the aftermath of the events of September and October, 2001, the U.S. government is taking precautions to be ready to deal with a bioterrorist attack using smallpox as a weapon. As a result of these efforts: 1) there is a detailed nationwide smallpox response plan designed to quickly vaccinate people and contain a smallpox outbreak. 2) there is enough smallpox vaccine to vaccinate everyone who would need it in the event of an emergency.



## **How serious is the smallpox threat?**

The deliberate release of smallpox as an epidemic disease is now regarded as a possibility, and the United States is taking precautions to deal with this possibility.

## **How dangerous is the smallpox threat?**

Smallpox is classified as a Category A agent by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Category A agents are believed to pose the greatest potential threat for adverse public health impact and have a moderate to high potential for large-scale dissemination. The public is generally more aware of category A agents, and broad-based public health preparedness efforts are necessary. Other Category A agents are anthrax, plague, botulism, tularemia, and viral hemorrhagic fevers.

## **If I am concerned about a smallpox attack, can I go to my doctor and get the smallpox vaccine? Is my previous vaccination still good?**

At the moment, the smallpox vaccine is not recommended for members of the general public. In the event of a smallpox outbreak, however, there is enough smallpox vaccine to vaccinate everyone who would need it. A safer vaccine will be available in 2004 to the general public. If you were vaccinated years ago, that vaccine is no longer adequate protection.

## **What are the symptoms of smallpox?**

The symptoms of smallpox begin with high fever, head and body aches, and sometimes vomiting. A rash follows that spreads and progresses to raised bumps and pus-filled blisters that crust, scab and fall off after about three weeks, leaving a pitted scar.

## **Is smallpox fatal?**

The majority of patients with smallpox recover, but death may occur in up to 30 percent of cases. Many smallpox survivors have permanent scars over large areas of their bodies, especially their face. Some are left blind.

## **If someone comes in contact with smallpox, how long does it take to show symptoms?**

After exposure, it takes between 7 and 17 days for symptoms of smallpox to appear (average incubation time is 12 to 14 days). During this time, the infected person feels fine and is not contagious.

## **How is smallpox spread?**

Smallpox normally spreads from contact with infected persons. Generally, direct and fairly prolonged face-to-face contact is required to spread smallpox from one person to another. Smallpox also can be spread through direct contact with infected bodily fluids or contaminated objects such as bedding or clothing. Indirect spread is less common.

## **Is smallpox contagious before the smallpox symptoms show?**

A person with smallpox is sometimes contagious with onset of fever, but the person becomes most contagious with the onset of rash. The infected person is contagious until the last smallpox scab falls off.

## **Is there any treatment for smallpox?**

Smallpox can be prevented through use of the smallpox vaccine, which can be administered up to five days after exposure. There is no proven treatment for smallpox, but research to evaluate new antiviral agents is ongoing. Patients with smallpox can benefit from supportive therapy (e.g., intravenous fluids, medicine to control fever or pain) and antibiotics for any secondary bacterial infections that may occur.



# Preparing Your Home for an Emergency

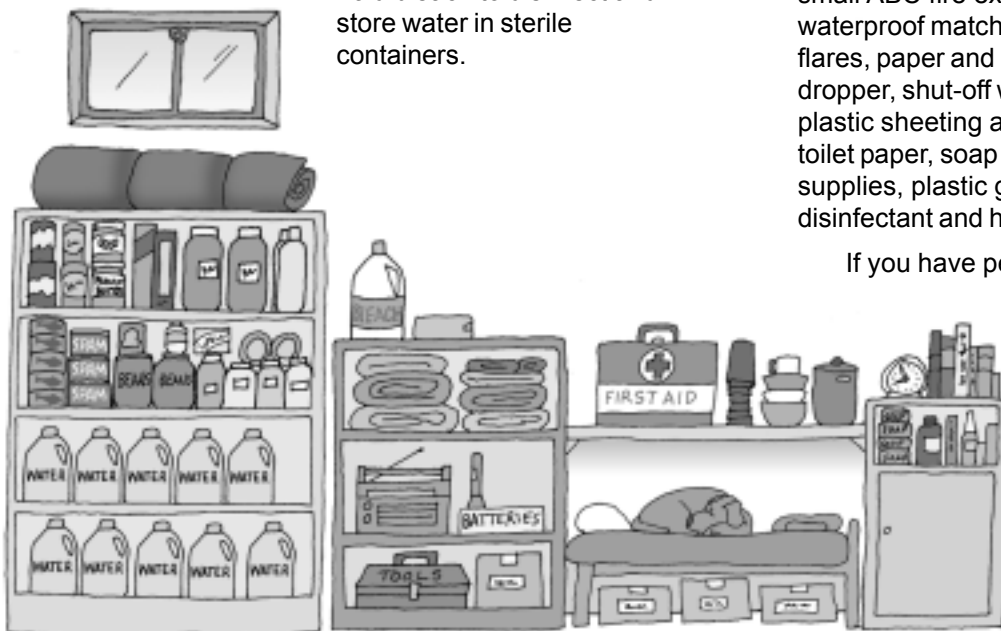
*Planning for any emergency requires considering scenarios that could disrupt your daily life, affecting electricity, water, heat, air conditioning, telephone service and transportation. Consequently, you should plan to have food, water and other essentials to get you through the emergency. Most emergency planning experts suggest having enough supplies to last you and your family for three to five days.*

## Your Emergency Preparedness Kit

The seven basic items that should be stored in your home are water, food, first-aid supplies, clothing and bedding, tools, emergency supplies and specialty items. Keep the items that you would most likely need at home in one easy-to-carry container such as a clean, watertight can, camping backpack or duffel bag. Store it in a convenient place and put a smaller version in your car. Keep items in airtight plastic bags. Remember to change the stored water and rotate the food supplies every six months (place dates on containers). Check the supplies and re-think your needs every year. Consult your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications, and maintain copies of your prescriptions.

## Water

Store water in plastic containers or purchase bottled water, avoiding containers that will decompose or break, such as glass bottles. Plan for one gallon of water per person per day. Water should be stored in a cool, dark place with the date labeled on the container. Tap water generally may be stored up to two weeks without further disinfection. Use 2-3 drops per gallon of standard household bleach to disinfect and store water in sterile containers.



## Food

Store a supply of three to five days' worth of nonperishable food per person. Foods should require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking and little or no water. Examples include: ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables; canned or boxed juices, powdered milk and soup; condiments such as sugar, salt and pepper; high-energy food like peanut butter, jelly, low-sodium crackers, granola bars and trail mix; vitamins; foods for infants or persons on special diets; cookies, hard candy, instant coffee and sweetened cereals. Bulk food items such as wheat, powdered milk, corn and soybeans can be stored for long periods of time.

## First-Aid Kit

Assemble a first-aid kit for your home and each vehicle. Items should include sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes, gauze pads, hypoallergenic adhesive tape, triangular bandages, sterile roller bandages, scissors, tweezers, needle, moistened towelettes, antiseptic, thermometer, tongue blades, tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant, safety pins, cleansing soap, latex gloves, and sunscreen. Include aspirin and non-aspirin pain medications, cough syrup, anti-diarrhea medication, Syrup of Ipecac, activated charcoal (to counter poisoning) and laxatives.

## Tools and Supplies

Keep the following items handy for all-around use: extra batteries of assorted sizes (check shelf life before purchasing), paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, or mess kit; battery-operated radio, flashlight, carbon monoxide and smoke detectors, cash (include change) and/or traveler's checks, non-electric can opener and utility knife, small ABC fire extinguisher, tube tent, pliers, compass, waterproof matches, plastic storage containers, signal flares, paper and pencil, needles and thread, medicine dropper, shut-off wrench for house gas and water, whistle, plastic sheeting and a local map. For sanitation, pack toilet paper, soap and liquid detergent, feminine hygiene supplies, plastic garbage bags, a plastic bucket with lid, disinfectant and household chlorine bleach.

If you have pets, make sure you have an identification collar and rabies tag, a carrier or cage and leash, newspapers and plastic trash bags for handling waste and any medications, and at least a two-week supply of food and water and food bowls, along with veterinary records.

# Shelter in Place

*Wherever you are, at home, work or elsewhere, there might be situations when it's recommended that you stay where you are, or "shelter in place," in the event of a terrorist attack, whether it be a biological, chemical or radiological attack. This means that you will be asked to protect yourself and your family by staying sheltered in your home for a few days.*

1. Select the room in which you will shelter. The safest place in your home during an emergency is a centrally located room or basement or one with as few windows and doors as possible.
2. Store emergency supplies in this area. An emergency could happen at any time, so it is best to stock supplies in advance and have everything that you need stored in the shelter. Keep three days worth of supplies (listed below). Separate the supplies you would take if you had to evacuate quickly, and put them in a backpack or container, ready to go.
3. Make sure that all family members know where the shelter is and what it is for. Caution them not to take any items from that area. If someone "borrows" items from your shelter, you may find that important items are missing when they are most needed.
4. If you have pets, prepare a place for them to relieve themselves in the shelter.
5. Every six months, check the supplies in your shelter. Replace any expired medications, food or batteries. Also, replace the water in your shelter every six months to keep it fresh.

## Family Protection Supply List

- ✓ Water – one gallon per person per day
- ✓ Nonperishable food
- ✓ First aid supplies
- ✓ Clothing and bedding
- ✓ Tools
- ✓ Battery powered radio and extra batteries
- ✓ Flashlights and batteries
- ✓ Soap, water and bleach

For a complete list of what to include, contact the American Red Cross at 301-588-2515 or go to [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

## If you should need to evacuate

Unless in immediate danger, or if an incident is inside, do not evacuate unless instructed. If instructed, use routes suggested by authorities. Others may be blocked, jammed or close to danger.

## If you should need to shelter in place

1. Before entering the shelter, turn off fans, air conditioners, and forced-air heating units that bring air in from the outside. Close and lock all windows and doors, and close fireplace dampers.
2. Seal all doors, windows and vents in the room in which you will shelter in place.
3. Keep your radio tuned to an emergency response network at all times for updates on the situation. The announcers will provide information about when you may leave your shelter and whether you need to take other emergency measures.

## Have a family communication plan

Every household should decide ahead of time how it will stay in touch in case of an emergency.

1. Pick two meeting places: a place near your home – in case of a sudden emergency, such as a fire— and a place outside your neighborhood in case you cannot return home after a disaster.
2. Pick one out-of-state and one local friend or relative for family members to call if separated by disaster (it is often easier to call out-of-state than within the affected area).
3. Plan what to do with pets if you have to evacuate.



## Public emergency shelters

When conditions warrant, Montgomery County's Emergency Management Office may establish community-based shelters for local residents. Normally, shelters are set up in public high schools, recreation centers or other appropriate facilities where residents can seek refuge, as well as sleep and eat. If you are instructed to go to a public emergency shelter, you should bring a change of clothing, bathing and sanitary supplies, medications, denture and eye care materials, and special dietary supplies or requirements. Pets, except for service dogs, are not allowed in the shelters.

# Emergency Planning for Frail Seniors and People with Disabilities

If you are a person who is elderly and consider yourself frail or are a person with a disability, you are encouraged to have a plan in the event of an emergency that addresses your particular needs. The first step is to obtain and complete the *File of Life*, provided free by the Department of Health and Human Services, Aging and Disability Information and Assistance Unit 240-777-3000 Voice, 240-777-4575 TTY or email to [hhsmail@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:hhsmail@montgomerycountymd.gov). The *File of Life* organizes your health history, medications, allergies, etc. in one place in the event emergency personnel need to treat you. The *File* has a magnet so that it can be kept on your refrigerator door. You might also want to carry one with you.



The County encourages every resident to develop a personal plan in the event of an emergency. If you need assistance in developing this plan, please let us know. The following questions may be helpful in thinking about the issues that your plan needs to include:

- How will I arrange for personal care assistance if in-home care support is unavailable?
- How will I get food, water and other necessary supplies?
- If I am dependent on home-delivered meals, and deliveries are interrupted, how will I get food?
- How will I fill prescriptions for life-sustaining and other important medications, and replace vital personal equipment (e.g., hearing aids, wheelchair batteries) damaged or lost in the disaster?
- If I live in a group home or assisted living facility, do I know whether the facility has a disaster plan and is taking measures to support me in a disaster?
- Is there a designated person who will contact me to check on my status and help me get the services I need? This could be a friend, family member, a personal care attendant or an agency.
- If you have a special need or medical consideration, please be sure to indicate that whenever calling for help so that emergency personnel can be responsive to your needs.

There is a free on-line service called Emergency Email and Wireless Network that alerts people to emergencies via email, call phone or pager. It is particularly useful for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, but it can be used by anyone. You can sign up at [www.emergencyemail.org](http://www.emergencyemail.org).

The following websites may also provide helpful information on emergency planning:

The National Organization on Disability  
[www.nod.org](http://www.nod.org)

U.S. Access Board – Emergency Planning  
[www.access-board.gov/evac.htm](http://www.access-board.gov/evac.htm)

## Children in School

In the event of a community or national emergency, the Montgomery County Public Schools and area private schools will work closely with public health and safety officials and act at the direction of emergency response personnel. While parents can always pick up their children during the school day, the best place for children during a regional or local crisis might very well be the school itself, where they will remain under supervision and be protected from hazards outside. Students may be held in school, dismissed early or transferred to evacuation sites, depending on the situation and direction of authorities. Parents are advised to pay close attention to public announcements on radio, television and the Internet. MCPS parents may sign up for automatic email updates directly to their mailbox at [www.Schools-Out.com](http://www.Schools-Out.com). To subscribe or unsubscribe, scroll to the bottom of the page and click “**I WANT E-MAIL.**” Private school parents should contact their school directly to learn about security and communications procedures.

## Stay Informed

Getting information during an emergency is vital. Stay tuned to radio and television stations to obtain the latest information. Purchase a battery-operated radio and keep it tuned to a local all-news or talk-radio station. Updated information can also be found on the County Cable Montgomery- Channel 6, the County’s website at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov) or by calling the Bioterrorism Information Line at 240-777-4200.



# Additional Resources

American Red Cross: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)  
Centers for Disease Control  
Public Health Emergency Preparedness: [www.bt.cdc.gov](http://www.bt.cdc.gov)  
Federal Emergency Management Agency: [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)  
Maryland Emergency Management Agency:  
[www.mema.state.md.us](http://www.mema.state.md.us)  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security: [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)  
Montgomery County Public Schools:  
[www.mcps.k12.md.us/info/emergency/](http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/info/emergency/)  
National Weather Service: [www.nws.noaa.gov](http://www.nws.noaa.gov)  
Montgomery County Division of Fire and Rescue  
Services: [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/services/dfrs/](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/services/dfrs/)

Additional copies of this publication are available in public libraries or by calling Montgomery County's Department of Health and Human Services at 240-777-1245.

Alternative formats of this document are available upon request by calling 240-777-6530 or email to [hhsmail@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:hhsmail@montgomerycountymd.gov).

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## Home Guide to Emergency Preparedness

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