ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY GUIDE

The **Cancer and Environment Network of Southwestern Pennsylvania** made this guide to help protect your health. Our region faces specific risks from factories, trains, and industrial plants. This guide gives your household simple, proven steps to stay safe during sudden air or water emergencies. Use it to keep your family's medical facts in one place, check off your safety supplies, and know exactly what to do during a crisis.

Personal & Emergency Information

Keep this page updated with your most important medical and contact details. Review and update it every year. **Last updated:**

Critical Contact Information

Note: List important phone numbers so you have a printed copy on hand. Also, save them directly to your cell phone for fast access during an emergency.

Contact	Phone number
Emergency Services	**911**
Doctor	
Doctor	
Pharmacy	
Local emergency	
Personal contact	
Personal contact	

Medication List

Medication	Dosage	Frequency

Emergency Medications

Medication	Allergy	Expiration date
(sample) Epipen	*Nuts*	*July, 2027*

Allergy List

Allergy	Reaction	Severity
(sample) Nuts	*Face swelling*	*Severe*

Family Members & Pets

Family Member Names	
Name:	Name:
Name:	Name:
Name:	Pet:
Name:	Pet:

Proactive Preparation: Your Readiness Checklist

Planning ahead at home and with your neighbors is the best way to stay safe during a disaster. Use this checklist to get your household ready before an emergency.

Neighborhood & Community Readiness

- [ ] **Connect with your neighbors:** Get to know people on your block or in your building now. Start a group chat or create another way to check on each other easily during a crisis.
- [ ] **Identify vulnerable residents:** If you are healthy and able, offer to help neighbors who might need someone to pick up medicine or groceries.
- [ ] **Look for local training:** Find free emergency training classes in your area to build your skills.

Medication & Health Supplies

- [ ] **Secure a 7-day supply:** Keep at least 7 days of your important prescription medications in a safe, clean, easy-to-reach place.
- [ ] **Plan for hot and cold weather:** Ask your doctor about medicines that can spoil in extreme temperatures (like insulin). Learn how to protect them from overheating or freezing if the power goes out.
- [ ] **Plan for special medical care**: If you get special treatments (like cancer care), ask your provider for a backup plan in case you miss an appointment or your medicine is delayed.
- [ ] **Backup medical equipment:** If you use devices like oxygen tanks or infusion pumps, know what to do and who to call if the power goes out.

Water & Emergency Supplies

- [ ] **Store emergency water (the "1-1-3" rule)**: Store 1 gallon of water for each person and pet every day, for at least 3 days. This covers 2 quarts for drinking and 2 quarts for cooking and cleaning each day.
- [ ] **Pack a "Go-Bag":** Pack a portable bag with survival items in case you have to leave your home quickly. Use checklists from Ready.gov or the PA Department of Health.

Scan the QR code or access the PA Emergency Disaster Preparedness Guide here: https://tinyurl.com/4ht3wrnp

Registries & Communication

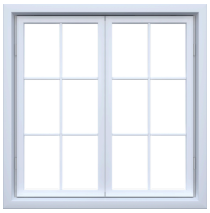
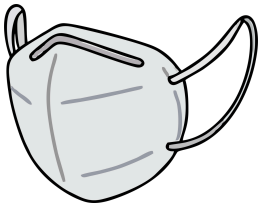
- [ ] **Join a Special Needs Registry:** If you or a family member need extra help during a crisis due to a disability, sign up for your county's free registry (like the one in Allegheny County). Contact your local county emergency management agency or services department for more information.
- [ ] **Choose Your Emergency Alerts:** Follow your county's official social media accounts. You can also visit the Pennsylvania Emergency Alerts website to choose which state accounts to follow. During an emergency, turn on notifications to get real-time updates about local dangers, stay-at-home orders, or evacuation notices.

Scan the QR code or access the PA Emergency Alerts website here: https://tinyurl.com/4cyve5ak

Acute Crisis Response: What to Do During A Crisis

Like we prepare for severe weather, we can prepare for other major emergencies in our area. Southwestern Pennsylvania faces specific risks like industrial accidents and sudden bad air quality. When an environmental emergency happens, take the immediate, proven steps below to protect your health. These steps match those used by public health experts in past emergencies.

In addition, check for **official alerts and announcements** from local emergency management offices, town and city websites, county alert systems, and trusted local TV and radio news stations. You can also **call 311** for local information and updates.

If you see, smell, or hear...	Your Main Action	Take These Steps Right Away
Chemical Odors / Shelter in Place Alert (like a factory leak or train derailment)	**Block Outdoor Air** 	Close all windows and doors. Turn **OFF** your heating and AC system, window AC units, and fans completely to keep outdoor air out. Go to an inside room. Pick a room on a higher floor if you smell heavy gases, or use a central room to put as much distance as possible between you and the outdoors.
Visible Smoke / Air Quality Alert (like an industrial fire or high emissions)	**Protect Your Indoor Air** 	Close all windows and doors. Wear an N95 mask if you must go outside, or if smoke starts leaking inside. **Keep your central AC or heat running, but set it to recirculate.** If your system cannot do this—or if you use window AC units—turn it completely OFF. Turn on portable air purifiers if you have them, and run them on high. Check **AirNow.gov** or **PurpleAir.com** to see the current local air quality.
Water Contamination / Industrial Spill Alert (like chemical runoff or spills into local water)	**Do Not Use Tap Water** 	**Stop using tap water right away.** Do not use it for drinking, cooking, brushing teeth, or washing dishes. (*Note: Boiling water kills germs, but it will NOT remove toxic chemicals.)* **Use sealed bottled water** for all drinking and cooking. Use the water you stored for emergencies. **Keep pets away from tap water**. Do not let them drink from or swim in local creeks, ponds, or puddles. **Stay away from local rivers and lakes.** Do not fish, boat, or swim until public health officials say it is completely safe to do so. **Check local news and alerts for "Do Not Drink" or "Do Not Use" orders.** Look for places where officials are giving out free clean water.

Safety Tip: Regular home air filters can catch tiny pieces of ash and soot in **smoke**. This makes it safe to run your AC on recirculate. Filters cannot stop **invisible chemical gases**. You must turn your system completely off during chemical leaks to keep toxic vapors out.

Health Monitoring

Symptom Tracking Log

Use this log to write down how you and those around you feel following an environmental event. The first two rows are an example. This provides your doctor with an accurate timeline to guide your care.

Important: Keep a notebook and pen with this guide or in your Go-Bag to keep writing if you run out of space below.

List everyone who was with you: Write down every person who was there and where they were (like, home, outdoors, work, or school) when the event started. Writing down exactly when and where you were helps doctors understand how long and how closely you were exposed.

Date	Time	Location	Person	Symptom	Severity
(Sample) June 30, 2026	*9:00 am*	*Home (windows shut)*	*Mom*	*Wheezing, coughing*	*Moderate*

Common Symptoms to Track

Use this list to help name and describe symptoms in the log. Environmental and industrial exposures can cause many different changes in your body. Write down any new or unusual health changes you notice, even if they aren't on this list.

- **Chest & Heart:** Chest pain, or racing heart.
- **Nose & Throat:** Burning or stinging in your nose or throat.
- **Stomach:** Feeling sick to your stomach (nausea), throwing up, or stomach pain.
- **Mental Status:** Confusion, feeling dizzy, or getting mixed up.
- **Breathing:** Shortness of breath, coughing, or wheezing.
- **Skin:** Rashes, itching, red skin, or burning sensations.

When to Call for Help

- **Call 911 Right Away if:** You have serious problems like trouble breathing, chest pain, or sudden confusion.
- **Call Your Doctor if:** You have symptoms that will not go away, but are not an immediate emergency.

Resource for Additional Information

For more detailed guides, including information on weather emergencies, look at the PA Department of Health Emergency Preparedness Guide: [2017 PA DOH Emergency Preparedness Guide]

Scan the QR code or access the PA Emergency Disaster Preparedness Guide here: https://tinyurl.com/4ht3wrnp

Please Note: *This guide is meant to help you track information and symptoms. It does not replace professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. In a life-threatening emergency, always call 911 right away. Always follow instructions from local emergency and public health officials first.*

Cancer & Environment Network of Southwestern Pennsylvania

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROJECT
DEFENDING PUBLIC HEALTH SINCE 2012

University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health

PSR Pennsylvania

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WOMEN for a Healthy ENVIRONMENT