

General Chemical Agent Extended and Short Messages

Health and Safety Information for the First Hours

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Grade Level: 8.2

General Chemical Agent Extended Message Health and Safety Information for the First Hours

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NOTE TO HHS USERS: Initial health and safety information is almost identical for all chemical agents, with the exception of symptoms. These messages are general for all categories of chemical agents. Specific symptoms are listed by category of agent. It will be necessary to carefully review and revise the messages during an actual event once the agent is confirmed.

What is happening?

- This is an urgent health message from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Please pay careful attention to this message to protect your health and that of others.
- Public officials suspect that a chemical agent has been released in the *xxx area* or *xxx building*.
- *xxx number* of cases have been reported, with symptoms of [*chemical agent*]. These symptoms include: [*list of symptoms*].

NOTE TO HHS USER: Give description of agent (e.g., colorless gas, odorless, or mild smell of garlic or almond), depending upon the agent.

- If the chemical was released in your building, follow emergency personnel's instructions. You should leave the building as quickly as possible.
- How people were exposed to this chemical or the full extent of the problem is unclear.
- Local, state, and federal officials, including HHS, FBI, and Homeland Security, are working together to find out more about this situation. Updates will be made as soon as officials know more.
- If you are near the *xxx area*, protect yourself and your family by staying home or where you are and wait for further instructions.
- If you are not close to the *xxx area*, stay where you are and avoid unnecessary travel until further instructions.

- We have challenges ahead, and we are working to find out more about this situation. By staying informed and following instructions from health officials, you can protect yourself, your family, and the community against this public health threat.
- For more information on chemical agents, go to the HHS Web site at www.hhs.gov, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Chemical Emergencies Web site at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/chemical/>, or call the CDC Hotline at 1-800-CDC-INFO for the latest updates.
- This message contains additional information that can help protect your health and the health of others.

What to do if you are near the release of the chemical – either in the immediate area or the surrounding area:

- If you are outdoors, emergency personnel may ask you to leave the area or find shelter nearby. If you are told to go indoors or you are already inside a shelter, follow these instructions:
 - ***Go to the highest level of the building.*** Find a room with as few windows and doors as possible.
 - ***Reduce air flow from outside to inside.*** Close vents, air conditioning, fireplace dampers, and anything else that exposes the room to outside air.
 - ***Seal the room.*** Use plastic and duct tape to close all openings, including windows, doors, vents, and electrical outlets. Even if you cannot seal all openings, follow the other instructions.
 - ***Eat only sealed, stored food and water.*** Do not eat or drink anything that may have been exposed to the chemical.
 - ***Turn to the radio, television, or Internet news for updated health and safety announcements.*** Announcements will be made about when it is safe to go outside.

What to do if you have symptoms or think you have had contact with a chemical.

- Do not touch other people to prevent getting the chemical on them.
- Remove your outer layer of clothing.
- Do ***not*** remove clothes over your head. If necessary, cut clothes off.
- If possible, put clothes inside a bag and seal it. Put this sealed bag into another bag and seal again.
- Wash your hair and body thoroughly with soap and water right away.
- If eyes are burning or irritated, rinse with water for 10-15 minutes. Do not use soap in your eyes.
- After you have followed these instructions, call your doctor or local public health department right away at xxx-xxx-xxxx. They will tell you how and where to get more help.

Can the illness caused by a chemical agent be spread from person to person?

- The ***illness*** caused by a chemical agent ***cannot*** spread from person to person. It is ***not*** a contagious disease that can be spread by coughing or sneezing.
- People can spread the ***chemical*** if it is on their skin, clothing, or hair. People can also spread the ***chemical*** if it is in their body fluids, such as vomit. If someone else comes into contact with the chemical in these ways, they may become ill.

- Once exposed people take off their clothes and shower, most of the chemical will be removed and is much less likely to be spread by these people.

What are the symptoms of contact with various chemical agents?

Symptoms of contact with a blister agent:

- Contact with this type of chemical causes blistering on the skin and in the nose, mouth, and throat.
- After contact with a blister agent, symptoms may occur immediately or may take up to 24 hours to appear.
- First symptoms may include red, itchy, or painful skin, followed by blisters.
- Later symptoms may include pain or swelling in the eyes and lungs, tears in the eyes, and trouble breathing.

Symptoms of contact with a blood agent:

- Contact with this type of chemical deprives the blood and organs of oxygen.
- After contact with a blood agent, symptoms may occur immediately or may take up to 24 hours to appear.
- In general, symptoms may include rapid breathing, nausea, convulsions, and loss of consciousness.

Symptoms of contact with a nerve agent:

- Contact with this type of chemical can damage the nervous system and affect movement and breathing.
- After contact with a nerve agent, symptoms may appear immediately or up to 18 hours later.
- Symptoms include seizures, drooling, eye irritations, sweating or twitching, blurred vision, and muscle weakness.

Symptoms of contact with a choking agent:

- This type of chemical attacks the respiratory system and causes difficulty breathing.
- After contact with a choking agent, symptoms may occur immediately or may take 24 to 48 hours to appear.
- In general, symptoms may include coughing; burning in the eyes, nose, or throat; blurred vision; upset stomach; fluid in the lungs; and difficulty breathing.

NOTE TO HHS USERS: Officials might offer particular instructions for reducing exposure if people are in their cars. Following is a message for staying in the car and pulling over.

If you are in your car in xxx area, you can help prevent being exposed to the chemical by following these steps:

1. Pull over to the side of the road in a manner that will not block or interfere with the movement of emergency vehicles.

2. Temporarily turn off the engine and shut down any vents that draw outside air, including those of the air conditioner. Running the engine and driving pull outside air into the car and could expose you to additional chemicals.
3. To minimize the amount of chemical you inhale, cover your mouth and nose with a cloth, such as a scarf or a handkerchief.
4. Listen for further instructions from emergency personnel on the scene or listen for news on the radio.

What to do if you are concerned about xxx chemical agent

- It is natural to be concerned or afraid at a time like this. Staying informed and following instructions from public health officials will help you stay as safe and healthy as possible.
- Many chemical agents are commonly used in industry and household products. In this situation, [chemical agent] may have been released deliberately. We are not sure at this time if this is the case.
- If you near the xxx area, protect yourself and your loved ones by staying home or where you are and wait for further instructions from officials.
- If you are not close to the xxx area, stay where you are and avoid unnecessary travel until further notice.
- Stay informed by turning to the radio, television, or Internet news for updated health and safety announcements.

What is being done and how to get more information

- Federal, state, and local health officials are working together to find and treat people who have symptoms or who may have had contact with xxx chemical agent. They are also taking actions to prevent others from being exposed.
- Officials will share information and give more instructions as the situation develops and they learn more.
- Go to [insert local media information here] to hear the latest information from local officials.
- For more information on botulism, visit the HHS Web site at <http://www.hhs.gov>, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Chemical Emergencies Web site at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/chemical/>, or call the CDC Hotline at 1-800-CDC-INFO for the latest information.

Grade Level: 9.3

General Chemical Agent Short Message

Health and Safety Information for the First Hours

- This is an urgent health message from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Public officials suspect that a chemical agent has been deliberately released in the *xxx area* or *xxx building*.
- *xxx* number cases have been reported with symptoms of [*chemical agent*]. These symptoms include: [*list of symptoms*].

NOTE TO HHS USERS: Give description of agent (e.g., colorless gas, odorless or mild smell of garlic or almond), depending upon the agent.

- If you are outdoors in the *xxx area*, emergency workers will ask you to leave the area or find shelter nearby.
- If you are indoors in the *xxx area*, go to the highest level of the building and close windows, doors and fireplace dampers. Turn off heating and cooling systems and close vents so that the room is not exposed to outside air.
- If the chemical was released in your building, follow emergency personnel's instructions.
- How people were exposed to this chemical or the full extent of the problem is unclear.
- Local, state, and federal officials, including HHS, FBI, and Homeland Security, are working together to find out more about this situation. Updates will be made as soon as officials know more.
- If you are near the *xxx area*, protect yourself and your family by staying home or where you are and wait for further instructions.
- We have challenges ahead, and we are working to find out more about this situation. By staying informed and following instructions from health officials, you can protect yourself, your family, and the community against this public health threat.
- Go to [insert local media information here] to hear the latest information from local officials.
- For more information on chemical agents, go to the HHS Web site at www.hhs.gov, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Chemical Emergencies Web site at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/chemical/>, or call the CDC Hotline at 1-800-CDC-INFO for the latest updates.