

Chester County Department of Emergency Services

First Hour Considerations

Purpose: These First Hour Considerations will help elected and appointed officials assess what has happened during the first hour of major event and make decisions concerning what actions need to be taken to help protect life, property, and the environment.

Immediate Actions for any Incident

1. Gain Situational Awareness
2. Determine Response Status
3. Review Status of Initial Protective Actions
4. Consider Additional Protective Actions
5. Evaluate Public Information Needs

1. Situational Awareness

- If an incident occurred, what happened, including where and when?
 - What kind of incident (natural disaster, accident, terrorism)?
 - Estimated injuries/fatalities?
 - Estimated damage to or status of critical infrastructure (transportation, power, medical, water, communications, cyber, chemical)?
 - Estimated duration of incident?
- If incident has not occurred, what is latest information/intelligence about threats? What is the potential impact? What is the expected timeframe?

2. Response Status

- Who is leading the response or investigation?
- What assets/agencies are on-scene, available, or needed?
- What is the threat status and/or emergency declarations status (federal, state, local)?

3. Initial Protective Actions (Schools, Workforce, and Transportation)

- Have any initial protective actions occurred for **schools** (e.g. lockdown)?
- Have any initial protective actions occurred for **citizens** and the **workforce** (e.g. shelter in place or evacuate)?
- How have special needs populations and pets been addressed?
- Have any initial protective actions occurred for **transportation** (e.g. public transportation operational, tolls suspended)?
- What schools, hospitals, other congregate care facilities, hospitals, and/or workforce facilities are in the hazard area?

4. Additional Protective Actions and who should be involved in these discussions.

- What additional protective actions may be needed to protect affected general public, schools, workforce, critical infrastructure, etc?
 - Evacuation, shelter in place, quarantine, school/work dismissal, cancellation of public meetings, closing of government facilities, closing of roads.
- How to prepare?
 - Activate emergency operations centers and joint information centers; inform health services sector, mass care facilities, transportation assets; request mutual aid; issue public advisories.
- What considerations should be included when making protective action decisions?

- For a **threat or hazard with a large area impact**, consider shelter in place or partial or full-scale evacuation of potentially impacted area.
- For a **threat or hazard with a local impact area**, consider shelter in place or local evacuation unless addressed below.
- For a **short air release of a toxic chemical** (e.g., brief plume), consider shelter in place initially downwind of release.
- For a **long air release of a toxic chemical** (e.g., continuous leak), consider local evacuation downwind of release.
- For an **explosion**, consider evacuating the impacted area and secondary devices.
- For **infectious contamination**, depending on type, consider quarantine, requesting the strategic national stockpile, and/or mass prophylaxis.
- For a **dirty bomb**, consider sheltering initially and then evacuation of people downwind.
- For **flooding**, consider evacuation of impacted area.

5. Public Information

- What should be communicated, when, how, and by whom?
- What information has been communicated to the general public/schools/workforce, and is the message uniform and consistent across all jurisdictions involved?
- First hour summary statement** can be filled in with details gathered in Sections 1 – 3. *[An incident] has occurred in [jurisdiction]. [Local, County, State, Federal officials and agencies] are [responding to/managing the incident]. At this time, [we] are asking individuals who live or work in the area to [shelter-in-place/evacuate] and monitor local radio and television stations for further information and instructions. Schools and daycare facilities throughout the impacted area are [locked down. Students will not be released until the situation has been fully assessed.]*
- Evacuation Statement.**
The emergency management agency of *[insert jurisdiction]* is directing all people in the area of *[identify areas]* to immediately evacuate. *[Insert incident]* has occurred and residents in this area are in immediate danger. Residents should leave via the following route(s). *[Identify streets/roads to use]*. Shelters have been opened at *[identify shelter locations]*. Residents needing emergency transportation should *[call / go to] [identify emergency transportation number or assembly location]*. Do not drive through barricades or off-limit areas. Do not go to your children’s school or day care center. They will probably be evacuated by the time you get there. Public safety officials are requesting residents to follow these instructions immediately and drive safely. Tune to local radio stations and follow message signs while driving for more information. Please make sure your neighbors, homebound people, latchkey children, and mobility impaired neighbors are aware of this bulletin and assist them if possible.
- Shelter-in-Place Statement.**
The emergency management agency of *[insert jurisdiction]* is directing all people in the area of *[identify areas]* to shelter-in-place. *[Insert incident]* has occurred and residents in this area should stay inside with your pets and close all windows, and doors. Tape cracks for extra protection. Close all vents on cooling, heating or ventilating systems. If you have a fireplace, put out the fire and close the damper. Do not go to your children’s school or day care center. They will be taking shelter there and you will not be allowed inside. Listen to instructions from emergency officials on radio or television. Please make sure your neighbors, homebound people, latchkey children, and mobility impaired neighbors are aware of this bulletin and assist them if possible.