

Protect Yourself and Others after a Chemical Fire

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If you have been evacuated because of a chemical fire, you may need to take steps after you return to ensure that the materials in and around your home, school, business, or farm have not been contaminated.

Governmental agencies will conduct tests to determine what byproducts from the fire were left in the soil, air, or water, and whether they could harm people, animals, or the environment.

In Texas, the tests will be administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

Until the results are known, consider taking the following measures to protect yourself and others.

People and pets

Wash potentially contaminated surfaces with soapy water, and flush the area with plenty of clean water to remove any remaining residues. Prevent people and pets from contacting any surfaces where harmful substances could have been carried by wind.

Thoroughly wash fruits and vegetables before eating them. If you have serious concerns,

do not consume food or drinks that could have been exposed to contaminants until regulatory agencies confirm that no potentially toxic substances were released during the fire.

Home gardeners should wash their produce thoroughly before eating it, or wait until a governmental agency gives the all-clear.

Pet owners should consider getting rid of any pet food or water that could have been contaminated.

Crops

Farmers should adhere to all standard food-handling procedures by thoroughly washing the produce with clean, fresh, uncontaminated water. Also follow any governmental instructions on its handling and use.

Livestock

Keep animals away from possibly contaminated water. Consider these mitigation actions:

- Erecting temporary fencing
- Providing fresh water
- Moving the livestock to a new pen that can be provided with fresh, uncontaminated water.

Give uncontaminated feed and hay to the animals and prevent them from eating any contaminated feedstuff.

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