



What does “Shelter-in-Place” Mean?

Rev. Milo Ken Anderson, I-LERT member, Pacifica Synod

There are two ways “shelter-in-place” can be used:

1. The unofficial meaning: About a year ago, I had the opportunity to speak with Don Read, the Emergency Disaster Services Coordinator for the Salvation Army in San Diego County and the Chair for the county VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters). He commented that there were only 2 major highways in and out of the county. If we had a major disaster, those highways might well be severely clogged or closed, so we need to be prepared to stay in place, and care for ourselves, our neighbors, our congregation for a number of days. But don’t we always assume that if there is a problem, we can evacuate to somewhere safe, where someone will take care of us. What if we cannot leave?

I now live in Orange County, and every time I experience rush hour, or especially the holiday traffic, I remember Don’s words. I am in the process of getting ready to shelter in place for 10 days. Are you prepared?

2. The official meaning: I recently was informed that the term “shelter-in-place” has an official definition used by the Red Cross, Homeland Security and others. The official definition includes – “If chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants have been released accidentally or intentionally into the environment, one of the instructions you may be given in an emergency is to shelter-in-place. This is a precaution aimed to keep you safe while remaining indoors. Shelter-in-place means selecting a small, interior room, with no or few windows, and taking refuge there. In extreme cases, it may include sealing off windows, doors and vents. Should this occur, information will be provided by local authorities on television and radio stations on how to protect you and your family.”

If you want more information on being prepared for the official meaning of “shelter in-place”, check out these two websites for the Red Cross and Homeland Security:

<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/shelterinplace.html>

http://www.ready.gov/america/makeaplan/stay_or_go.html

To learn how your congregation can become prepared or to schedule preparedness training, please contact LSS-SW Disaster Preparedness and Response, La’Tresa Jester, at 877-258-2059, ljester@lmsaz.org or Tempie D. Beaman at 323.299-0729, tbeaman@lmsaz.org.