



Frequently asked questions about civil defence shelters and civil defence

### **What is civil defence?**

The purpose of civil defence is to protect the population from devastation caused by war and other comparable circumstances and to limit resulting damages and to mitigate the consequences. Civil defence duties include, among other things, warning the population, evacuation and seeking shelter in civil defence shelters, fire-fighting and rescue operations and medical care. In addition to the Rescue Services, civil defence is the responsibility of the authorities in charge of the related duties under normal conditions.

### **When should shelter be taken in a civil defence shelter?**

Shelter is taken in a civil defence shelter only when ordered by the authorities to do so, after the shelter has been prepared for this purpose. Before the preparation measures, the civil defence shelter provides only structural protection. For example, ventilation and sealing of the shelter are not automatically in operation.

### **When is a civil defence shelter taken into use?**

An authority order on taking civil defence shelters into use will be made, after which there is a time period of 72 hours to prepare the shelter for use. The preparations are done by a person in charge of the civil defence shelter or some other person in charge of property maintenance. It is recommended to provide information about the preparations of the civil defence shelter in the property's rescue plan.

### **Who can be in charge of a civil defence shelter?**

It is recommended to have an appointed and trained person in charge of the civil defence shelter, who is responsible for, among other things, the maintenance of the civil defence shelter and preparing it for use. The person in charge of the civil defence shelter can be, for example, a property maintenance person. It is recommended that the person in charge of the civil defence shelter would reside or stay regularly in the property. When taking shelter in the civil defence shelter, the person in charge of the shelter runs things from inside the shelter.

### **Is there any training for the person in charge of the shelter?**

Rescue associations provide training for persons in charge of a civil defence shelter. In Western Uusimaa, courses are organised by Uudenmaan Pelastusliitto and Finlands Svenska Brand- och Räddningsförbund.

<https://upl.fi/turvallisuuden-edistaminen/kurssitarjotin/>

<https://www.fsbr.fi/sv/utbildning/foretagsutbildning/beredskapsutbildning/>



## **Where is my civil defence shelter?**

A civil defence shelter is most often found in connection with larger housing companies or workplaces and is available for use by the residents or employees of such properties. There are also civil defence shelter places in connection with public facilities, such as schools and day-care centres, which are intended for the needs of the property's users.

Usually, civil defence shelters are located in the basement, on the ground level or they are part of separate buildings, for example, storage buildings. All civil defence shelters are marked with an international sign, which is a blue triangle on an orange background. Smaller housing companies and detached houses do not usually have a civil defence shelter. In this case, the primary measure is to take shelter indoors or to build a temporary shelter.

## **Where is the public civil defence shelter?**

There are no public civil defence shelters in Western Uusimaa. If you do not have your own civil defence shelter, the primary measure is to take shelter indoors. Another option is to evacuate people without a civil defence shelter from the danger area in a situation where it would be necessary to take shelter in a civil defence shelter. Evacuation of the area will be announced by the authorities.

## **I do not know if I have access to a civil defence shelter, how can I find out?**

It is possible that your housing company/property does not have a civil defence shelter or designated civil defence shelter places in other properties. If you are uncertain, look for information about the civil defence shelter or civil defence shelter places in the property's rescue plan or building permit documents.

## **What does taking shelter indoors mean?**

Taking shelter indoors is one of the operating models for dangerous situations, and is not in itself related to exceptional circumstances or the threat of war. Taking shelter indoors may also be necessary, for example, in the event of a chemical accident or a nearby fire. In this case, all doors, windows and ventilation openings are closed and all cracks are sealed with, for example, plastic wrap or duct tape. If the property has a mechanical ventilation system, it can be stopped either by pressing the emergency stop button or, in some flats, by stopping the flat-specific ventilation machine. It is recommended to establish the possibility of using an emergency stop in advance. The need to take shelter indoors is announced using the general alarm signal and/or an emergency warning, for example, via the television or the 112 app.

## **Is the civil defence shelter in a working order? Tightness test and annual tests**

The civil defence shelter must be inspected annually, involving, among other things, testing of the ventilation units. Every 10 years, a tightness test must be carried out for the shelter, testing the actual working order of the shelter. If these test intervals have not been adhered to or there is no record of them, it may be a good idea to carry out the annual tests and the tightness test. Companies providing such testing services



can be found, for example, by using search terms 'civil defence shelter tightness test'. In connection with the tests missing equipment can be replaced or the shelter can be repaired. Make sure to ask about the price in advance.

### **What to bring with you to the civil defence shelter? What is not allowed?**

**YES:** For your own use food for 2–3 days, drink, personal medicines and toiletries, bedding (e.g. a sleeping bag and pad), flashlight and batteries, iodine tablets and also entertainment (books, games, paper, pens) and, if necessary, earplugs.

**NO:** Pets, alcohol, drugs, weapons, heat generators (gas cooker, storm lantern, etc.) and smelly products. Smoking is not allowed in the shelter.

### **Home emergency supply kit**

Regardless of the civil defence shelter matters, having a sufficient home emergency supply kit is essential for every municipal resident.

For various disturbances, such as long-term power outages, or in case of illness, everyone should have a home emergency supply kit. You should reserve a sufficient amount of food, drink, containers with lids for storing water, medicines, cash, a charged powerbank and other supplies needed in daily life for at least three days.

The home emergency supply kit is also used when moving to the civil defence shelter, since residents must bring their own food and personal supplies, among other things.

### **General alarm signal/warning the population**

Warning the population includes alerting the population with the general alarm signal through the civil defence sirens. The general alarm signal is an ascending and descending sound signal given through the civil defence sirens. The general alarm signal is always accompanied by an emergency warning. When you hear the general alarm signal, go indoors and follow the news and authority announcements. Be sure to check the origin of the news and announcements.

The general alarm signal can be given in situations where people are asked to take shelter indoors. For example, due to smoke from a fire in the area. The general alarm signal is tested on the first Monday of each month at 12 noon, with the exception of public holidays.

### **Municipal preparedness plans**

Different preparedness plans of municipalities usually contain confidential information and therefore the plans are not publicly available. However, the website of the city/municipality can contain, for example, the municipality's safety plan or other plans that have taken a stand on emergency measures.

For more information:



## Länsi-Uusimaa Rescue Department

<https://pelastustoimi.fi/en/western-uusimaa/services/preparedness>

<https://pelastustoimi.fi/en/rescue-services/preparedness/civil-defence>

<https://www.spek.fi/turvallisuus/varautuminen-ja-paloturvallisuus/vaestonsuojelu/>

<https://pelastustoimi.fi/en/home-everyday-life/emergencies/alarm-signal>

<https://72hours.fi/>

<https://upl.fi/turvallisuuden-edistaminen/kurssitarjotin/>

<https://www.fsbr.fi/sv/utbildning/foretagsutbildning/beredskapsutbildning/>