

What does civil defense shelter mean?



Finland has approximately 50 500 civil defence shelters, providing around 4.8 million places.



A civil defence shelter is a space designed to protect people from, among other things, the effects of explosions and shrapnel, building collapses, radiation, and toxic substances.



Civil defence shelters are generally located where large numbers of people live, work and move around. For this reason, they are particularly common in cities and population centres.

Where is the nearest civil defence shelter?



Civil defence shelters are marked with the international symbol of a blue equilateral triangle on an orange background.



Civil defence shelters are often located in apartment and row houses, schools, hospitals, shopping centres, office buildings and other larger buildings. Anyone who needs protection may seek shelter in a civil defence shelter, provided there is space available.



In an actual emergency, people would generally seek shelter where they happen to be at the time the alarm is sounded. If there is no civil defence shelter nearby, people should take shelter indoors.



Information about a property's civil defence shelter, for example in an apartment building, or the nearest possible public civil defence shelter can often be found in the property's rescue plan. The locations of all civil defence shelters in Finland are not available on a map.



You can find more information about preparedness for civil defence on the website of your local rescue department.



Take these with you to the shelter:

- ☐ Drinks and food for 2–3 days, without heating
- ☐ Personal medication and hygiene supplies
- ☐ Equipment for sleeping and staying in the shelter (for example, a sleeping bag and sleeping mat)
- ☐ A headlamp or flashlight, and a portable power bank
- ☐ Earplugs and an eye mask for sleeping
- ☐ Things to pass the time (books, games, toys, paper and pens)
- ☐ Iodine tablets – take them only if instructed to do so by the authorities



Alcohol, drugs, weapons, heat-producing devices or strongly scented products must not be brought into a civil defence shelter. Smoking in the shelter is prohibited.

What if there's no civil defense shelter?

Civil defence shelters are not the only means of protecting the population. The appropriate method of protection is chosen according to the situation and the area concerned.

The population can also be protected by other means, which the authorities will provide more detailed instructions on when necessary. These include taking shelter indoors, using temporary shelters, voluntarily moving to a safer area, and evacuating the population under orders from the authorities.

If there is no civil defence shelter nearby, the basic instruction is to take shelter indoors. In this case, seek shelter in an indoor space protected by the strongest possible structures, such as the central parts of a building.



What can be found inside the shelter?



A civil defence shelter has strong structural protection and at least two independent reinforced emergency exits. It has its own ventilation system, which can also operate without electricity.

The ventilation system can be used to filter the air entering the shelter, if necessary, to protect against toxic gases or radioactive substances.

Civil defence shelters differ from one another in terms of size, location, the time when they were built and their equipment. Therefore, the need for material preparedness varies between shelters.

When should you go to the civil defense shelter?

Civil defence shelters would be taken into use on the order of the authorities if war were to threaten. Shelters are not brought into use unexpectedly.

The need to seek shelter is announced by the general danger signal (a siren with a rising and falling tone lasting one minute) and by an official emergency warning. If you cannot reach a civil defence shelter within a few minutes, take shelter indoors.



Can I bring my pet with me?



Civil defence shelters are primarily designed to protect people. An exception is guide dogs, which must be allowed to accompany their owners into civil defence shelters. In addition, the confined conditions in civil defence shelters may cause animals stress and anxiety.

The safest and least stressful place for a pet is its own home. In general, people stay in civil defence shelters only for short periods.

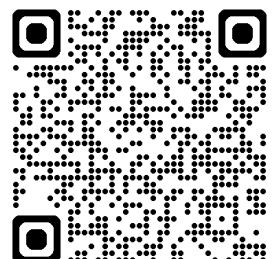
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Sources: Helsinki City Rescue Department, SPEK