



# Emergency Contingency Guide



866-543-9625

[www.SchoolToursOfAmerica.com](http://www.SchoolToursOfAmerica.com)



# Before the Tour

As parents and educators, we understand your concern for your student's well-being. We will never operate a tour if we believe the safety of a single participant is compromised. To best prepare please do the following:

1. Hand out the STA Emergency Phone wristband or lanyard to all participants.
2. Require the wristband/lanyard be worn at all times, until safely home.
3. Teach them that the number is toll free and can be called from any cell or pay phone for free.
4. Instruct students to remain with an adult or buddy at all times - never alone!
5. Please provide your students with the cell phone number of a chaperone.
6. Create a list with all students' and their parents' cell phone numbers.
7. Please forward a list of these numbers to your Tour Coordinator before the tour.
8. Teachers should download a 'mass text' application in order to quickly communicate with students. In a citywide emergency, SMS texting may be the only form of communication.



# During the Tour

While a citywide emergency is highly unlikely, as the Tour Director, your students and chaperones will be looking to you to provide instruction. In the unlikely event of an emergency, it is always necessary to obey the commands of local authorities above all else. These authorities will be in the best position to determine the nature of the immediate threat and the quickest, safest route out of the threatened area.

To the greatest extent possible, follow these procedures to best insure the group's safety.



## Immediate Roll Call

Do an immediate roll call to account for all participants. If participants are split up and cannot return to one group, proceed to your meeting point immediately. If part of your group ever separates while on tour, make certain they know the time and location of your meeting point and understand that in the event of an emergency they are to immediately proceed to the meeting point.

## Get Informed

The most important thing you need during an emergency is information. Each emergency poses unique challenges that may require you making a critical decision. You need to plan for both possibilities.

First, seek information from local emergency officials, police, or paramedics on the scene.

Second, call the STA Tour Central Office. 866-615-3034

If you have difficulty getting through to Tour Central, call the STA Emergency Line at 866-491-1543, STA Hotel Representative cell, the STA Houston Office or Tour Coordinator until you reach a live person.

Store these numbers in your cell phone for easy access - especially the cell phone numbers of your driver, guide, Tour Coordinator and STA Hotel Representative so that you can also text these individuals if the phone lines are disabled.

Appendix B, on the back cover, is a quick reference emergency guide.

## Stay or Go?

The first big decision you will likely need to make in an emergency situation is whether you should stay where you are or evacuate. Plan for both possibilities.

Whenever possible, you should follow instructions from emergency personnel in deciding whether to shelter in place or evacuate.

If you need to decide on your own, use all available information to determine whether to shelter in place or evacuate. A sensible way to decide whether to stay or go is to ask yourself, "Will going outside or traveling expose me to more or less danger?"

Appendix A is a list of Emergency Scenarios containing specific information about sheltering in place and evacuating.



## Shelter In Place:

In some types of emergencies, being outside will increase the danger. In these emergencies, the best, safest response is to shelter in place. This means staying inside a safe building or entering a nearby building and seeking cover.

Shelter in a room with the fewest doors and/or windows possible. Ideally choose a room that has just one door and at least 10 square feet per person. Seal any doors, windows, and fireplaces. If the emergency is airborne turn off ventilation and hot air heating systems (radiator heat may remain on).

## Evacuate:

In some emergencies, you may be told to evacuate your location. Officials will tell you when to evacuate. If you have not received official word or been told to shelter in place, you may decide to evacuate on your own if you sense you are in immediate danger. Once at the Evacuation Base, information will be communicated to you regarding lodging, meals, and transportation home.

**BY BUS:** If possible, contact your driver and try to meet up at your designated meeting point.

- If you are instructed to evacuate the area and are able to reach your bus, the preferred Evacuation Base will be your hotel.
- If you determine that returning to your hotel is not safe or you are instructed by local authorities or Tour Central to evacuate to a different area, attempt to proceed to one of the back up Evacuation Bases listed on the Emergency Reference sheet (Appendix B).
- Always follow the instructions of local authorities or in consultation with your driver/guide in the event the Evacuation Bases are deemed unsafe or not possible.
- Remember to contact STA Tour Central as soon as you safely can to communicate your status and location.

**ON FOOT:** If you are unable to return to your bus, it may be necessary for your group to walk out of the affected area.

- Washington, DC - If possible, DC groups should proceed to the Pentagon City Mall (1100 South Hayes Street Arlington, VA).
- NYC - If possible, New York groups should walk back to your hotel. If unable to walk back to hotel, walk to the Central Park YMCA (West 63rd between Central Park West and Broadway) and call Tour Central or if you are unable to get through, the STA Office, for further instruction.
- Other Cities - In all other cities, the hotel is always the main Evacuation Point (or find another hotel in the event you cannot feasibly make it to your hotel).

## Communicate:

Once your group is in a safe place, please contact STA Tour Central (or another STA representative or the Emergency Line) to report your status, location and to receive further instruction. STA's Emergency Line will communicate instructions to the tour groups and relay information to concerned parents.

# Other Emergency Tips:

## Carry at all times:

- The Emergency Guide
- Necessary phone numbers
- Medical Releases / Medical data

Wear a whistle, and ask all chaperones to wear a whistle. This can be an invaluable tool in the event of an emergency.

## Cell Coverage and Texting

During citywide emergencies, it is certainly possible for cell phone reception to be down. It is also possible that texting or SMS messaging will be sporadically available even if phone calls are not available. This is another reason you should prepare for the ability to send mass texts to your group, as well as the cell phone of your STA Hotel Representative and Driver / Guide.

## Getting Information

During and after an emergency, it might be difficult to get information or instructions right away. If possible, listen to official emergency personnel to know what you should do. The STA Tour Central personnel will be consulting a variety of official sources and will attempt to get you emergency instructions.

## Getting Official Information: Alert DC

If touring in DC, you may wish to register with The Emergency Information Center Website and Emergency Text Alerts (<http://hsema.dc.gov/page/alertdc>) in order to receive emergency text messages on your cell phone or email.

## Stay Calm

Your group will be looking to you to act quickly in an emergency. Your ability to communicate to the group in a calm and clear manner will maximize the chances everyone remains safe and no miscommunications occur.

## Pre-Trip Parent Meeting

While no one wants to think about the possibility of an emergency involving their child, parents will appreciate knowing their tour leader has a qualified and experienced support team coordinating the logistics and is fully prepared to act in the event of any scenario. Additionally, the East Coast has some of the finest, most qualified first responder networks and response systems in the world and is ready to immediately respond to any threat.

Make sure parents emphasize to their children not only the safety rules, but that in the event the Tour Leader announces they are in an emergency situation, the child is to dutifully obey all commands. The whistle should be used as an emergency tool with every student knowing that in the event they hear it, they are to immediately assemble and obey.

Make sure parents understand that in an emergency, cell phone reception is commonly affected and thus their inability to contact their child right away is NOT a reason to panic. This is a very common occurrence and they should not make assumptions or jump to conclusions. Many groups will employ a phone tree system but the STA Emergency Line will be able to provide parent information just as soon as any details are known.



# Appendix A: EMERGENCY SCENARIOS

Different types of emergencies require different types of responses. It is important for you to know what to do in each scenario. The following list of emergency scenarios and suggested responses has been issued by the Washington, DC mayor's office.

## EXTREME WEATHER

The East Coast is vulnerable to severe weather including thunderstorms, hurricanes, flash floods, snowstorms, and tornadoes.

**The safest place to ride out any storm is inside a secure building:**

- Listen to weather updates and stay informed. Be ready to evacuate if necessary. Keep away from windows and doors.
- A severe weather watch means that severe weather may develop, and you should be alert to further warnings and information.
- A severe weather warning means a storm has developed and is on its way—take cover immediately!
- Thunderstorms may produce heavy winds and lightning. In general, if you are close enough to a storm to hear thunder, you are close enough to be struck by lightning.

**If caught outside:**

- Try to get inside a building as quickly as possible.
- If a building is not available, try to locate your bus or move to a covered area, if possible.
- In a group of people, spread out so that you are several yards apart from each other.
- Do not stand beneath trees.
- Winds from a tornado can lift and move heavy objects. If you receive a tornado warning, seek shelter immediately.
- If you are caught outside, lay down on the ground, cover your head and wait for the tornado to pass.
- In a hotel or public building: Move to the interior, preferably a stairwell or hallway. Stay away from doors and windows.
- Flash flooding can be very dangerous because of strong, swift currents. Move immediately and quickly to higher ground.
- Six inches of swiftly moving water can knock people off their feet.
- Winter storms can include any combination of heavy snow, ice accumulation, freezing temperatures, and dangerous wind chills.
- If possible, get inside a building and stay inside.

## EXTREME HEAT

This is the most common emergency condition experienced on tour. During the summer, your students are vulnerable to heat related illnesses.

**Follow these steps to stay cool:**

- Stay indoors as much as possible.
- Drink plenty of water (or non-caffeinated beverages).
- Wear light-colored, lightweight, and loose-fitting clothes.
- Limit your exposure to the sun, and apply sunscreen at least 20 minutes before going outside (at least SPF 15).
- Watch for heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heatstroke.
- Extreme heat is particularly dangerous for young children, seniors, and people with special needs.

## FIRES

It's important to know that fires spread quickly. In just two minutes a fire can become life threatening, and in five minutes a hotel floor can be engulfed in flames. In addition, the heat and smoke from a fire can be even more dangerous than the flames.

**If a smoke detector or hotel alarm goes off, or if you see, smell, or hear a fire or explosion:**

- Leave the building immediately.
- Do not try to put out a fire that is getting out of control.
- Don't stop to bring anything with you.
- If smoke is entering your room under the door, find another way out.
- Before opening any door in a fire, feel the door with the back of your hand. If it is hot, find another way out. Close all doors behind you.
- If you must exit through smoke, crawl or stay as close to the floor as possible.
- Do not use elevators.
- If your clothes catch on fire, stop, drop to the ground, and roll over and over to smother the flames.
- Count your group to determine if everyone is out. Give this information to the firefighters.
- Never go back into a burning building.
- If you are trapped in a burning building, stay close to the floor by a window and try to signal for help.
- If you smell gas, exit the building immediately.

## EXPLOSIONS

**An explosion can cause a fire or a building collapse. If there is an explosion in your building:**

- Exit the building as quickly as possible.
- Leave all possessions behind.
- Never use elevators.
- Take shelter under a sturdy table or desk if you can't exit the building.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a cloth or piece of clothing.
- If there is a fire, follow the directions above.

**If you are trapped by debris:**

- Move around as little as possible to avoid kicking up dust.
- Cover your nose and mouth with cloth or a piece of clothing.
- Tap on a pipe or wall so rescuers can hear where you are.
- Use a whistle if one is available. Shout only as a last resort because it could cause you to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.

**Once you are out:**

- Don't stand in front of windows, glass doors, or other potentially hazardous areas.
- Move away quickly to leave streets and sidewalks clear for emergency officials or others still exiting the building.



## RADIOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES

A radiological threat can result from an accidental or intentional release. Radiation is odorless and invisible, and unless there is some form of explosion, you may not be immediately aware of the risk.

**In a radiological emergency, there are three keys to increased safety:**

- Time: Reduce the amount of time that you are exposed to radiation (either by evacuating to a safe area or by sheltering in place in a safe area).
- Distance: Moving farther away from the radiation source will reduce your exposure.
- Shielding: If you shield yourself from the radiation source (for example by staying within the walls of a building), you will be exposed to less radiation.

**If you have advance warning of a radiation release:**

- Take cover immediately, preferably below ground.
- If you can't get underground, any shield or shelter will help protect you.

**In the event of a radiation release outside:**

- Cover your nose and mouth and immediately seek shelter inside a building.
- If you are already inside a building and the building is stable, shelter in place—close and seal (using plastic or other materials) all doors, windows, and fireplaces. Shut off air conditioners, hot air heating, and other ventilation systems (radiator heat may remain on).

**If the release is inside a building where you are located:**

- Cover your nose and mouth.
- Get out of the building and to a safe area.

**In the event of a nuclear explosion:**

- If you are outside, immediately take cover from the blast and cover your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Take immediate steps to either seek shelter and remain there, or evacuate to a safe area outside the area of radiation.
- If you shelter in place, try to do so below ground.
- Close and seal (using plastic sheeting and duct tape if available, or other materials) all doors, windows, and fireplace. Shut off air conditioners, heating, and other ventilation systems.

**Get informed - Watch for official alerts that provide the following information:**

- Are you in an area where radiation is present?
- Are you in a safe area?
- Are authorities instructing you to remain sheltered in place, or are you being told to evacuate?
- What routes do authorities want you to use to evacuate?
- Who should seek medical care? Where is such care available? When is it safe and appropriate to seek such care?
- If, after a radiological release, you feel nauseous, vomit, or feel generally sick, you may have been exposed to radiation.
- Remove all clothing and wash thoroughly.
- Put contaminated clothing and other items where you will not be exposed to them.
- When safe and appropriate, seek emergency medical assistance.



## AIRBORNE EMERGENCIES

(Chemical and Biological)

A chemical emergency can result from either an accidental or malicious release of a chemical that can make you sick. A pandemic or biological emergency can result from either a natural outbreak of disease or a deliberate release of germs or other biological substances that can make you sick.

**If you become aware of an unusual and suspicious substance:**

- Get to a safe area (either by evacuating or sheltering in place).
- Inform authorities.
- Protect yourself by covering your mouth and nose with layers of fabric to filter the air.
- Seek information from public health authorities via official alerts or Tour Central.
- Seek medical assistance if you or any student becomes sick.

**If you believe that anyone in your group has been exposed to a dangerous chemical:**

- Get to a safe area.
- Remove all clothing immediately and wash thoroughly.
- Seek medical assistance.

**Get Informed:**

During a pandemic or biological emergency, public health officials may not immediately be able to provide information on what you should do.

**Watch for official alerts that give you the following information:**

- Are you in the group or area authorities consider in danger?
- What are the signs and symptoms of the disease?
- Are medications or vaccines being distributed?
- If so, where? Who should get them?
- Where should you seek emergency medical care if you become sick?

**During a pandemic or biological emergency, take steps to avoid exposure:**

- Practice good hygiene: wash your hands regularly; don't share food, drinks, or utensils; and cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid areas where the threat has been identified.
- Avoid crowded areas.

**If you or someone in your group becomes sick:**

- Take the illness seriously—don't just pass it off as a cold.
- Follow the steps provided in official alerts to determine if you have been exposed.
- If your symptoms match those described and you are in the group considered at risk, immediately seek emergency medical attention or follow any specific instructions that have been provided by public health officials.

# Appendix B: EMERGENCY QUICK GUIDE

## Tour Central: 866-615-3034

Tour Central is your first point of contact in the event of an emergency on tour. The office is staffed by full time STA employees with decades of experience who constantly monitor group safety and will be coordinating emergency response with local officials, FEMA, Homeland Security, SYTA and other agencies if necessary. In the event of an emergency, tour leaders should speak with Tour Central, while parents should communicate with the STA Emergency Line. As information is available, Tour Central will update the STA Emergency Line in order to relay the information to your families at home.

## Emergency Line: 866-491-1543

If for some reason you are unable to get in touch with Tour Central, contact the STA Emergency Line for instructions or to relay information about your group's status. It is essential to relay any information to STA once you are in a safe place to do so.

If you can not get a live person, call your STA Hotel Representative, Tour Coordinator, and the Houston Office until you reach someone to relay your whereabouts and receive instruction.

Driver cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Guide cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Hotel Rep. cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Hotel number: \_\_\_\_\_

Houston Office: 713-973-1189

## Evacuation Bases:

In the event of evacuation in any city, your hotel will be the preferred base. If your hotel is not deemed safe and you are unable to connect with Tour Central, proceed to one of the following bases if deemed safe.

Washington, DC:  
Courtyard Marriott  
4641 Kenmore Ave  
Alexandria VA 22304  
703-751-4510  
  
(If by foot)  
Pentagon City Mall

New York City:  
  
Central Park YMCA  
W63rd and Central Park West

All Other Cities:  
Option A: Group Hotel  
Option B: (If by bus)  
STA Tour Central  
774 Warrenton Rd  
Fredericksburg, VA 22406  
866-615-3034  


