

# Recommendations for adapting basements of buildings as shelters

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Taking shelter is the **temporary relocation** of a person to a room, building or underground space in an area under immediate and elevated danger, in order to protect their life and health.

Taking shelter may also be necessary during extreme weather conditions, major accidents or similar situations. In such cases, it refers more to taking shelter indoors, and ensuring that doors, windows, and ventilation are closed.

In the event of a military conflict, **sheltering must take place in a building or part of a building with reinforced structures; the basement is the best option.**

**A room that has been prepared and adapted for taking shelter and that meets at least the basic requirements is referred to as a shelter.**

Sirens and SMS alerts sent via EE-ALARM will signal the threat and the need to shelter. Behavioural guidelines will also be sent via SMS.

**PÄÄSTEAMET**  
Estonian Rescue Services Agency

Emergency number **112** State information **1247**

## Taking shelter is both a right and a duty for every person.

Taking shelter greatly reduces the likelihood of injury or death. The most dangerous threats to a person are objects propelled by explosions, shockwaves, air contamination, radiation, and being caught in a collapse.

In the case of apartment buildings, the Estonian Rescue Services Agency recommends taking shelter in the building's basement. If there is no basement, it is advised to take shelter on the lowest possible floor in a room with concrete or brick walls and no windows. If such a space is also not available, one should take shelter on their floor in a room with strong concrete or brick walls and no windows.

Leaving the building during a threat is generally not advisable, as it increases the risk of exposure to hazards, except if there are no sheltering options in your building and a public shelter is located nearby. In the case of a fire hazard, exit the building.

## Basic requirements for a shelter

**The most essential requirements of a shelter MUST be ensured at every location. They provide a higher chance of survival compared to remaining indoors or outdoors.**

Basic requirements:

- **strong protective walling;**
- **fresh air;**
- **at least 2 exits to the outdoors;**
- **clean and dry spaces suitable for people to stay in;**
- **availability of toilets;**
- **presence of the person responsible for the shelter.**

Basic requirements can be met in almost any basement relatively easily and with minimal cost.

## Additional requirements for a shelter

To ensure safer and more humane conditions for people in a shelter, it is **RECOMMENDED** to implement the following **ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS**.

Additional requirements:

- backup power supply for equipment and lighting;
- suitable temperature;
- seating;
- ceiling bracing materials;
- medical supplies;
- stretcher or rescue mat;
- sandbags and a shovel;
- signage for the shelter;
- ability to temporarily shut down technical systems;
- use of appropriate indoor materials;
- cooking facilities;
- water;
- waste management;
- facilities for childcare;
- personal protective equipment;
- basic fire-extinguishing equipment;
- CO<sub>2</sub> detector and smoke detector;
- information carriers;
- means of communication;
- assignment of roles for those managing the shelter;
- other necessary items.

**NB!** all building owners or apartment associations are encouraged to prepare a shelter plan, regardless of the building's size. However, under the Emergency Act, it is mandatory to prepare a shelter plan for buildings with a floor area exceeding 1,200 m<sup>2</sup> (gross internal area). The shelter plan must be completed by 1 July 2027, at the latest.

Under the same law, the shelter itself must be adapted by 1 July 2028, at the latest.

Read more  
[olevalmis.ee](http://olevalmis.ee)

