The Pros and Cons of Shelter-in-Place

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ABSTRACT

Recently shelter-in-place has received a lot of attention regarding its effectiveness as an emergency response measure. While proponents feel that it is an effective measure, opponents are equally confident that shelter in-place itself could represent a threat and be the cause of injuries, fatalities, and general loss of comfort. This paper provides an overview of the current knowledge on shelter-in-place, procedures for effective shelter-in-place, and factors that should be taken into account in recommending shelter-in-place. The authors argue that shelter-in-place should not be the only alternative considered by emergency response planners. However, at the minimum, shelter-in-place should be considered as a high-level element in the hierarchy of emergency response options available to emergency response planners, emergency responders, and incident commanders.

Within this paper are summaries cataloging the effectiveness of shelter-in-place. It demonstrates the circumstances in which shelter-in-place can be a viable response measure. Also included are the initial steps towards development of a decision tree that can be used to evaluate the many options that safety managers are faced with. While all of these protective methods are viable, one method may be preferred over another in certain circumstances.