



Personal Risk Services

Preparing for an Earthquake

Unlike other natural hazards, earthquakes can strike suddenly and without warning. If you live in an area at risk for earthquakes, there are things that you can do to reduce the chance that you or members of your household will be injured, that your property will be damaged, or that your home life will be disrupted. These things all fit under the term preparedness, because to be effective, they must be done before earthquakes occur.

Prepare your home

- Make your home safer to be in during an earthquake and more resistant to damage by assessing its structure and contents. Depending on when and how it was designed and built, the structure you live in may have weaknesses that make it more vulnerable to earthquakes. If you own your home, find and correct any such weaknesses, yourself or with professional help.
- If you are a renter, ask what has been done to strengthen the property against earthquakes, and consider this information in deciding where to rent.
- If you are building or buying a home, make sure that it complies with the seismic provisions of your local building code.
- Walk through each room of your home, make note of items that can be a hazard, pay particular attention to tall, heavy, or expensive objects. Also, be aware of unsecured objects that can move, break, or fall as an earthquake shakes your home. These are potential safety hazards and property losses.
- Items such as bookcases, home electronics, appliances (including water heaters), and items hanging from walls or ceiling should be strapped in with flexible fasteners.
- Relocate heavier items away from beds and seating and when possible, to lower shelves, or to cabinets with latched doors.
- Ensure that plumbers have installed flexible connectors on all gas appliances.

Prepare yourself and your family

- Learn to react safely when an earthquake hits. Hold periodic family drills to practice what you have learned.
- In each room of your home, identify the safest places to “drop, cover, and hold on” during an earthquake.
- Stock up on emergency supplies. Keep the basics: flashlight, first-aid kit, whistle, gloves, goggles, blankets and sturdy shoes. Plan as if food and water may not be available for about 24 hours and other supplies for up to 3 days.
- Keep a list of important addresses, telephone numbers, and evacuation sites for all places frequented by family members (e.g., home, workplaces, and schools). Include the phone number of an out-of-state contact. Ensure that family members carry a hard copy of this list, and include copies in your emergency supply kits.
- Get training in first aid and CPR.
- Identify safe places in your work area to “drop, cover and hold on.” Coordinate emergency supplies with your work group or department. Know at least two ways to exit the building safely after an earthquake.



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- Find out where you could shelter your pet should it become necessary to evacuate your home.
- Ensure that family members know how and when to call 9-1-1, how to use your home fire extinguisher, and how, where, and when to shut off your home's utilities (water, natural gas, and electricity). Ask your state insurance commissioner about the availability of earthquake insurance in your state.

During an earthquake

- Remain calm as the quake occurs – others will respond to your actions which will prevent panic.
- If you are indoors when the earthquake starts, move away from windows and unsecured tall furniture. Drop, cover and hold on under a desk, a table or along an interior wall. Protect your head, neck and face. Stay under cover and calm until the shaking stops and debris settles.
- If you are outdoors, move to an open area away from falling hazards such as trees, power lines, and buildings. Drop to the ground and cover your head and neck.

After an earthquake

- Expect aftershocks. After large earthquakes, tremors and aftershocks can continue for days.
- Remain calm and reassuring for yourself and those around you. Check yourself and others for injuries and do not move anyone who is injured unless they are in danger.
- Be ready to act without electricity or lights. Know how to move around your work area and how to exit in the dark, access and use your emergency supplies, and be aware of objects that have shifted during the quake.

- Use extreme caution when exiting a building. Continually assess your surroundings and be on the lookout for falling debris and other hazards. Take your keys, personal items and emergency supplies with you if safe to do so. Do not re-enter damaged buildings until an all-clear is given.
- Use telephones only to report a life-threatening emergency. Cell and hardline phone systems will most likely be jammed. An alternative is to opt for text messages since they use less bandwidth and may go through when voice calls can't be made.

Sources: ready.gov, FEMA



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