

# Earthquake Safety

## Prepare, Survive, Recover

### PREPARE

#### STEP 1: Secure Your Space

Use the list below as a guideline of household items and areas which should be secured.

- Water Heater
- Kitchen
- Cabinets
- Food Safety
- Refrigerators
- Bookcases
- Filing Cabinets
- Electronics
- Small Objects
- Shelf Units
- Hanging Objects
- Floor Objects
- Wheel-mounted Furniture
- Vending Machines
- Lockers
- Garage
- Chemicals
- Cylinders
- Propane Tanks
- Glass
- Closed Shelves
- Display Cases
- Gas Safety
- Shop Equipment
- Full Wall Partitions
- Masonry Partitions
- Modular Partitions
- Equipment Racks
- Access Floors
- Emergency Power System
- HVAC units
- Ducts
- Filtration Tanks
- Suspended Ceilings
- Pendant-mounted Lights
- Wiring
- Batteries
- Cable Trays
- Fixed Anchorage
- Skids
- Isolators
- Exit Doors
- Rooftop Heating
- Rooftop Mechanical Units
- Space Heaters
- Suspended A/C Units
- Piping
- Large Windows

#### STEP 2: Plan to be Safe

Create a disaster plan including:

- evacuation routes
- reunion site
- out-of-state contact person
- location of emergency supplies

#### STEP 3: Organize Disaster Supplies

Everyone should have disaster supply kits stored in accessible locations.

- *Keep one kit in your home, another in your car, and a third kit at work.*
- *Backpacks or other small bags are best for your disaster supplies kits, so you can take them with you if you evacuate.*
- *In addition to your personal disaster supply kits, store a household disaster supply kit in an easily accessible location (in a large watertight container that can be easily moved).*

#### STEP 4: Minimize Financial Hardship

Minimize financial hardship by organizing important documents, fortifying your property, and considering insurance.

Consider what important documents you will need:

- Copies of identification
- Copies of insurance cards
- List of emergency contact numbers
- Photos of belongings in your home (This will help you file an insurance claim)

Read on to learn how to survive and recover.

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## SURVIVE

### STEP 5: Drop, Cover, and Hold On

In MOST situations, you will reduce your chance of injury if you do the following:

#### DROP where you are, onto your hands and knees.

This position protects you from being knocked down and also allows you to stay low and crawl to shelter if nearby.

#### COVER your head and neck with one arm and hand.

- If a sturdy table or desk is nearby, crawl underneath it for shelter.
- If no shelter is nearby, crawl next to an interior wall (away from windows).
- Stay on your knees; bend over to protect vital organs.

#### HOLD ON until shaking stops.

- Under shelter: hold on to it with one hand; be ready to move with your shelter if it shifts.
- No shelter: hold on to your head and neck with both arms and hands.

### When to Evacuate

If you are near a large body of water, move to higher ground as soon as you can safely do so. Tsunami waves can arrive within minutes.

If you are not in a tsunami zone, evacuate your home or office only if there is damage to the building or the surrounding area is unsafe.

### What to Do When Trapped

- Protect your mouth, nose, and eyes from dust.
- If you are bleeding, put pressure on the wound and elevate the injured part.
- Signal for help with your emergency whistle, a cell phone, or knock loudly on solid pieces of the building, three times every few minutes. Rescue personnel will be listening for such sounds.

### Helping the Injured

Immediately check to see if anyone is injured, and if you have been trained in first aid, put your skills to use by assisting those in need.



Image courtesy of Earthquake Country Alliance

### STEP 6: Improve Safety

Improve safety immediately after an earthquake by evacuating if necessary, helping the injured and preventing further injuries or damage.

The moment the ground stops shaking it is important to take action quickly and safely. *First take care of your own situation.* Remember your emergency plans. Aftershocks may cause additional damage or items to fall, so get to a safe location. Use your “grab-and-go” disaster supplies as needed.

### Preventing Further Injuries or Damage

Be prepared for aftershocks and stay away from anything that looks like it may fall, in addition to other potential dangers.

### Notifying Others of Your Safety

- Register on the Red Cross “Safe and Well” website so people will know you are okay: [SafeAndWell.org](http://SafeAndWell.org)
- Phone service may be out. When possible, text or call your out-of-area contact and tell them where you are, **THEN STAY OFF THE PHONE**. This will allow calls to be made for emergencies.

### Staying Informed

- Surf the (battery-powered) radio dial to find a station that is on the air. Listen for public announcements and alerts.
- Also, listen to your NOAA Weather Radio for emergency information.
- Your smart phones and computers are a great resource for information, as long as you have power or can recharge your batteries.
- Know your tsunami zone by going to: [MyHazards.Calema.ca.gov](http://MyHazards.Calema.ca.gov)

For more information on earthquake safety, visit [earthquakecountry.org](http://earthquakecountry.org)

## RECOVER

### STEP 7: Reconnect and Restore

Your recovery period can take several weeks to months or longer. Take the actions listed below to be safe and to minimize the long-term effects of the earthquake on your life.



#### The first DAYS after the earthquake...

Use the information you put together in your disaster plan and the supplies you organized in your disaster kits.

- Until you are sure there are no gas leaks, do not re-enter your home.
- Do not use open flames (lighters, matches, candles, or grills) or operate any electrical or mechanical device that can create a spark (light switches, generators, motor vehicles, etc.).
- Never use the following indoors: camp stoves, gas lanterns or heaters, gas or charcoal grills, or gas generators. These can release deadly carbon monoxide or be a fire hazard in aftershocks.
- Following aftershocks, continue to check for gas leaks, chemical spills, damaged electrical wiring and broken water pipes.
- Take pictures of any damage to your property and home.
- Contact your insurance agent or company right away to begin your claims process. Keep records of any repair or cleaning costs.
- Check on the condition of your neighbors, especially those who are seniors or disabled.

#### Be in Communication

Monitor local radio or television reports about where to get emergency housing, food, first aid, clothing and financial assistance.

- Place all phones back on their cradles.
- Update your out-of-area contact, tell them your status, then stay off the phone. Emergency responders need to use the phone lines for lifesaving communications.

#### Food and Water

- If power is off, plan meals to use up refrigerated and frozen foods first. If you keep the door closed, food in your freezer may be good for a couple of days. Save canned goods for later.
- If your water is off or unsafe, you can drink from water heaters, melted ice cubes, or canned vegetables. Avoid drinking water from swimming pools or spas.
- Do not eat or drink anything from open containers that are near shattered glass.

#### The first WEEKS after the earthquake...

If you were able to remain in your home or return to it after a few days, you will have a variety of tasks to accomplish:

- If your gas was turned off, you will need to arrange for the gas company to turn it back on.
- If the electricity went off and then came back on, check your appliances and electronic equipment for damage.
- If water lines broke, look for water damage.
- Locate and/or replace critical documents that may have been misplaced, damaged, or destroyed.
- Contact your insurance agent or company right away to begin your claims process.
- Contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Small Business Administration, or other federal and state agencies to find out about financial assistance for your home, apartment, farm or business. Find out about financial assistance by visiting [www.fema.gov/apply-assistance](http://www.fema.gov/apply-assistance).
- If you need repairs to your home, check with the Contractors State Licensing Board to ensure that your contractor is fully licensed. Fraud is common following a disaster. In California, visit [cslb.ca.gov](http://cslb.ca.gov).
- Talk with your family about how they are feeling. Children and older adults are of special concern in the aftermath of disasters. Contact local faith-based organizations, voluntary agencies, or professionals for counseling.
- Reach out to neighborhood or community organizations and get involved. Your voice is important in deciding how your community will rebuild in the years to come.

#### If you cannot stay in your home...

If your home is structurally unsafe or threatened by a fire or other hazard, you need to evacuate. However, shelters may be overcrowded and initially lack basic services, so do not leave home just because utilities are out of service or your home and its contents have suffered moderate damage. If you do evacuate, tell a neighbor and your out-of-area contact where you are going. As soon as possible, set up an alternative mailing address with the post office in person or online with the USPS.

## Personal Disaster Kit Checklist

- Medications, prescription list, copies of medical cards, doctor's name and contact information
- Medical consent forms for dependents
- First aid kit and handbook
- Examination gloves (non-latex)
- Dust mask
- Spare eyeglasses or contact lenses and cleaning solution
- Bottled water
- Whistle (to alert rescuers to your location)
- Sturdy shoes
- Emergency cash



- Road maps
- List of emergency out-of-area contact phone numbers
- Snack foods, high in water and calories
- Working flashlight with extra batteries and light bulbs, or light sticks
- Personal hygiene supplies
- Comfort items such as games, crayons, writing materials, teddy bears
- Toiletries and special provisions you need for yourself and others in your family
- Copies of personal identification (driver's license, work ID card, etc.)

## Household Disaster Kit Checklist

In addition to your personal disaster supplies kits, store a household disaster supply kit in an easily accessible location (in a large watertight container that can be easily moved), with a supply of the following items to last at least 3 days and ideally for 2 weeks:

- Water (minimum one gallon a day for each person)
- Wrenches to turn off gas and water supplies
- Work gloves and protective goggles
- Heavy duty plastic bags for waste, and to serve as tarps, rain ponchos, and other uses
- Portable radio with extra batteries (or hand crank for charging)
- Additional flashlights or light sticks
- Canned and packaged foods
- Charcoal or gas grill for outdoor cooking and matches if needed
- Cooking utensils, including a manual can opener
- Pet food and pet restraints
- Comfortable, warm clothing including extra socks
- Blankets or sleeping bags, and perhaps even a tent
- Copies of vital documents such as insurance policies



**Once a Presidential Declaration has been issued, FEMA may activate the Individuals and Households Program ([www.fema.gov/about/process](http://www.fema.gov/about/process)).**

### This program includes:

- Home-repair cash grants; the maximum Federal grant available (as of 2005) is \$26,200.
- Rental assistance for as long as 18 months in the form of cash payment.
- Housing Assistance in the form of reimbursement for short-term lodging at a hotel.
- If no other housing available, FEMA may provide mobile homes or other temporary housing.

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