

Earthquake Preparedness

There are many things you can do before a disaster to prevent loss of life and damage to property. Before the Earthquake hits you can:

- **1- Practice drop, cover and HOLD.**

Why? Many people try to run when they feel an earthquake. Injuries occur as people lose balance and move themselves into the path of falling objects. You must practice for it to feel natural to hold still, preferably with your head covered by something protective like a strong table. At least, hold your arms over your head and stay down until the shaking stops. Then prepare for the aftershocks.

- **2- Teach all responsible members of the household how to turn off the gas, if your house has gas and ask your neighbors to do the same.**

Why? Gas lines rupture during earthquakes. Most firefighters in our area are volunteers who are often the same people who are our EMTs and Search and Rescue teams. After an earthquake they will very likely be fighting fires, before beginning to search in rubble for other injured victims. If there are too many fires, many victims may not be able to be helped in time.

- **3- Teach all responsible members of the household to turn off the electricity.**

Why? In addition to the possibility of fires, (see above) electrical lines will be broken with risk to all who must respond in the earthquake zone. It is safest for you to turn off your system, even if the power company is forced to shut down the area. When the power is restored you can safely turn your system back on in an orderly manner.

- **4- Keep at least 72 hours worth of water and food and emergency supplies for of your household. And ask yourself if 72 hours of food and water is available to you at work and in your car.**

Why? If our earthquake is major, we will be on our own for some time. We must rely on our own fire, medical and search resources. The most important time for the injured is the first hour-- often called the "golden hour" in medical circles. In Jefferson County, your best source of immediate aid is likely to be the person you see when you look in the mirror. We are all volunteers, if our loved one is trapped under rubble. Are you prepared to act safely to help someone close to you at work or at home?

- **5- Plan to stay off the telephone after a major disaster.**

Why? The phone lines, if they are working, must be kept open for life threatening 911 calls. If you all reach for the phone to check on each other, emergency calls will not get through. Stay off the phone unless a life depends on the call. That means you need to plan with, loved ones, your family strategy for contact. Generally, it is best to wait until the Red Cross sets up shelters and creates family contact systems. Prepare all members of your family to be on their own for a time

if separated. For the first few hours or perhaps days, no news may be the best news. Lives will be saved if you keep the phone lines clear for emergency calls.

- **6- Plan to stay off the roads.**

Why? The fire trucks and ambulances will need clear routes. After an earthquake there will be problem enough with damaged roads, glass, power lines and debris on the roads. Rescue workers won't appreciate having non essential traffic blocking access. You wouldn't want a loved one to suffer unnecessarily because roads were blocked with cars. Stay off the roads unless a life depends on the trip.

- **7- Moms and Dads, plan for your children to stay at school.**

Why? If an earthquake happens during school hours, you must prepare yourself and children to be separated. You must stay off the roads for the reasons stated above. Your own attempt to reach your child may be the very act that prevents emergency aid from reaching the school. Additionally, there is no way to know what roads and bridges are safe for use after an earthquake. You yourself could be injured trying to reach a child. Then what? If you want to help your children after an earthquake, start now by volunteering to assist the school district in earthquake preparedness. Do you know the district earthquake plans? Does your district train staff to care for students up to 72 hours, then transport them, if needed, to Red Cross shelters to reunite with family members. Does your school have enough water available for 72 hours? What about emergency food and heat? Volunteer. Get involved.

- **8- Keep sturdy shoes under your bed, at work or school, and in your car.**

Why? After an earthquake, there is broken glass everywhere. If you move about even in your own home, you will need shoes that protect your feet from cuts. If you are caught in your car, you may find yourself needing to walk for miles to get to help. Even if you do not see cracks in the road or downed power lines, you are safer walking than driving after an earthquake.

- **9- Make the time to find out who in your area is a HAM radio operator.**

Why? In east Jefferson County, we have no local radio or television station. Our local newspapers, the Leader and the Peninsula Daily News are printed outside of our local area. They would not likely be available for some time, after the size and type of earthquake that is being predicted for our area. HAM operators will become very important for all communication. The HAM folks can even relay information onto the Internet which may become another major communication link with people outside of the earthquake zone.

- **10- Find out who is involved on your local community preparedness committee.**

Why? Some communities have active preparedness groups with neighbors looking out after neighbors. If you have special needs, such as small children or senior citizens in your household you may need extra assistance in case of an emergency. No one will know if you don't speak up. If a committee exists in your area, let your needs be known and offer to help others whose

needs are even greater. Sharing resources is easier than trying to do everything yourself. If no group exists, step up and start one.