

# **7 STEPS TO EARTHQUAKE SAFETY**

#1

## **IDENTIFY POTENTIAL HAZARDS IN YOUR HOME AND BEGIN TO FIX THEM.**

Earthquake safety is more than minimizing damage to buildings. We must also secure the contents of our buildings to reduce the risk to our lives and our pocketbooks.

Several people died and thousands were injured in the Northridge earthquake because of unsecured building contents such as toppling bookcases. Many billions of dollars were lost due to this type of damage. Much of this damage and injury could have been prevented in advance through simple actions to secure buildings and contents.

You should secure anything 1) heavy enough to hurt you if it falls on you, or 2) fragile and/or expensive enough to be a significant loss if it falls. In addition to contents within your living space, also secure items in other areas, such as your garage, to reduce damage to vehicles or hazardous material spills.

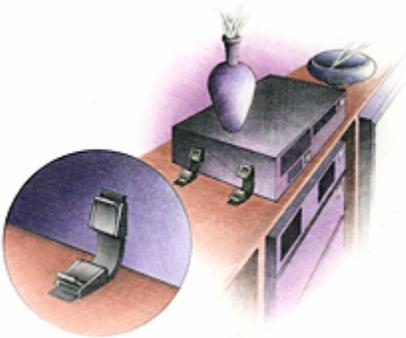
There may be simple actions you can do right now that will protect you if an earthquake happens tomorrow. **START NOW** by moving furniture such as bookcases away from beds, sofas, or other places where people sit or sleep. Move heavy objects to lower shelves. Then begin to look for other items in your home that may be hazardous in an earthquake.

Some of the actions recommended on this page may take a bit longer to complete, but all are relatively simple. Most hardware stores and home centers now carry earthquake safety straps, fasteners, and adhesives.



### **In the kitchen**

Unsecured cabinet doors fly open during earthquakes, allowing glassware and dishes to crash to the floor. Many types of latches are available to prevent this: child-proof latches, hook and eye latches, or positive catch latches designed for boats. Gas appliances should have flexible connectors to reduce the risk of fire. Secure refrigerators and other major appliances to walls using earthquake appliance straps.



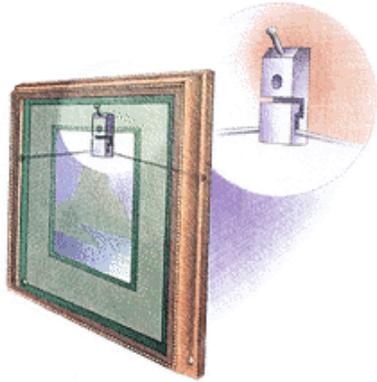
### **Electronics**

Televisions, stereos, computers, microwaves, and other electronics are heavy and costly to replace. They can be secured with flexible nylon straps and buckles for easy removal and relocation.



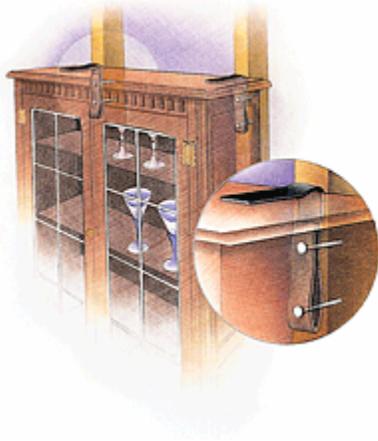
### **Objects on open shelves and tabletops**

Collectibles, pottery objects, and lamps can become deadly projectiles. Use either hook and loop fasteners on the table and object, or non-damaging adhesives such as earthquake putty, clear quake gel, or microcrystalline wax to secure breakables in place. Move heavy items and breakables to lower shelves.



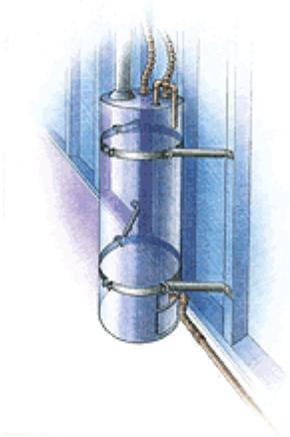
### **Hanging objects**

Mirrors, framed pictures, and other objects should be hung from closed hooks so that they cannot bounce off the walls. Pictures and mirrors can also be secured at their corners with earthquake putty. Only soft art such as tapestries should be placed over beds or sofas.



### **Furniture**

Secure the tops of all top-heavy furniture, such as bookcases and file cabinets, to a wall. Be sure to anchor to the stud, and not just to the drywall. Flexible fasteners such as nylon straps allow tall objects to sway without falling over, reducing the strain on the studs. Loose shelving can also be secured by applying earthquake putty on each corner bracket.



### **Water heater**

Unsecured water heaters often fall over, rupturing rigid water and gas connections. If your water heater does not have two straps around it that are screwed into the studs or masonry of the wall, then it is not properly braced. This illustration shows one method of bracing a water heater. Bracing kits are available that make this process simple. Have a plumber install flexible (corrugated) copper water connectors, if not already done.

### **In the garage or utility room**

Items stored in garages and utility rooms can fall, causing injuries, damage, and hazardous spills or leaks. They can also block access to vehicles and exits. Move flammable or hazardous materials to lower shelves or the floor.



## **CREATE A DISASTER-PREPAREDNESS PLAN.**

Will everyone in your household do the right thing during the violent shaking of a major earthquake? Before the next earthquake, get together with your family or housemates to plan now what each person will do before, during and after.

Once the earthquake is over, we will have to live with the risk of fire, the potential lack of utilities and basic services, and the certainty of aftershocks. By planning now, you will be ready. This plan will also be useful for other emergencies.

### **Plan NOW to be safe during an earthquake:**

- Practice "drop, cover, and hold on."
- Identify safe spots in every room, such as under sturdy desks and tables.
- Learn how to protect yourself no matter where you are when an earthquake strikes.

### **Plan NOW to respond after an earthquake:**

- Keep shoes and a working flashlight next to each bed.
- Teach everyone in your household to use emergency whistles and/or to knock three times repeatedly if trapped. Rescuers searching collapsed buildings will be listening for sounds.
- Identify the needs of household members and neighbors with special requirements or situations, such as use of a wheelchair, walking aids, special diets, or medication.
- Take a Red Cross first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training course. Learn who else in your neighborhood is trained in first aid and CPR.
- Know the location of utility shutoffs and keep needed tools nearby. Make sure you know how to turn off the gas, water, and electricity to your home. Only turn off the gas if you smell or hear leaking gas.
- Get training from your local fire department in how to properly use a fire extinguisher.
- Install smoke alarms and test them monthly. Change the battery once a year, or when the alarm emits a "chirping" sound (low-battery signal).

- Check with your city or county to see if there is a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) in your area. If not, ask how to start one.

**Plan NOW to communicate and recover after an earthquake:**

- Select a safe place outside of your home to meet your family or housemates after the shaking stops.
- Designate an out-of-area contact person who can be called by everyone in the household to relay information.
- Provide all family members with a list of important contact phone numbers.
- Determine where you might live if your home cannot be occupied after an earthquake or other disaster.
- Know about the earthquake plan developed by your children's school or day care. Keep your children's school emergency release card current.
- Keep copies of essential documents, such as identification, insurance policies, and financial records, in a secure, waterproof container, and keep with your disaster supplies kits. Include a household inventory (a list and photos or video of your belongings).

Have occasional earthquake “drills” to practice your plan. Share your plan with people who take care of your children, pets, or home.



## CREATE DISASTER SUPPLIES KITS.

### Personal disaster supplies kits

Everyone should have personal disaster supplies kits. Keep them where you spend most of your time, so they can be reached even if your building is badly damaged. The kits will be useful for many emergencies.

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. Include at least the following items:

- 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 including elderly, disabled, small children, and animals.
- Copies of personal identification (driver's license, work ID card, etc.)

## Household disaster supplies kit

Electrical, water, transportation, and other vital systems can be disrupted for several days after a large earthquake. Emergency response agencies and hospitals could be overwhelmed and unable to provide you with immediate assistance. Providing first aid and having supplies will save lives, will make life more comfortable, and will help you cope after the next earthquake.

In addition to your personal disaster supplies kits, store a **household** disaster supplies kit in an easily accessible location (in a large watertight container that can be easily moved), with a **three-day to one-week** supply of the following items:

- 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
- Additional flashlights or light sticks
- Drinking water (minimum one gallon per person, per day)
- 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

Use and replace perishable items like water, food, medications, first aid items, and batteries on a yearly basis.

## **Supplies Purchase Plan**

Clearly there are many items that need to be purchased in order for you to be fully prepared to survive following a disaster.

Purchasing everything you need in the way of food, water and other supplies all at once can really add up to a hefty expense.

In order to spread out those expenses, a **'Family Emergency Preparedness Supplies Calendar'** has been developed for your convenience. This 6-month calendar is located at the end of Step #3.

## **A special note about children**

If earthquakes scare us because we feel out of control, think how much more true this must be for children, who already must depend on adults for so much of their lives. It is important to spend time with children in your care before the next earthquake to explain why earthquakes occur. Involve them in developing your disaster plan, prepare disaster supplies kits, and practice “drop, cover, and hold on.” Consider simulating post-earthquake conditions by going without electricity or tap water.

After the earthquake, remember that children will be under great stress. They may be frightened, their routine will probably be disrupted, and the aftershocks won't let them forget the experience. Adults tend to leave their children in order to deal with the many demands of the emergency, but this can be devastating to children. Extra contact and support from parents in the early days will pay off later. Whenever possible, include them in the recovery process.

# Your Family Emergency Preparedness Supplies Calendar

The Family Emergency Preparedness Supplies Calendar is intended to help you prepare for emergencies before they happen. Using the calendar, your family can assemble an emergency kit in small steps over a six month period. Check off each week as you gather the contents. Supplies may be stored all together in a large plastic garbage can or food may be kept on kitchen shelves. Remember to rotate your perishable supplies and change water every six months.

## Week 1

### Grocery Store

- 1 gallon of water\*
- 1 jar peanut butter\*
- 1 large can juice\*
- 1 can meat\*
- Hand-operated can opener
- Instant coffee, tea, powdered soft drinks
- Permanent marking pen to mark date on cans

(Remember 1 gallon of water for each pet)

Also: Pet food, diapers, and/or baby food, if needed.

### To Do

- Make a family plan.
- Date each perishable food item using marking pen.

## Week 2

### Hardware Store

- Crescent wrench
- Heavy rope
- Duct tape
- 2 flashlights with batteries
- "Bungee" cords

Also: A leash or carrier for your pet, if needed.

### To Do

- Check your house for hazards.
- Locate your gas meter and water shutoffs and attach a wrench near them.

## Week 3

### Grocery Store

- 1 gallon of water\*
- 1 can meat\*
- 1 can fruit\*
- Sanitary napkins
- Video tape

Also: Pet food, diapers and/or baby food, if needed.

### To Do

- Use a video camera to tape the contents of your home for insurance purposes.
- Store video tape with friend/family member who lives out of town.

## Week 4

### Hardware Store

- Plumber's tape
- Crowbar
- Smoke detector with battery

Also: Extra medications or a prescription marked "emergency use," if needed.

### To Do

- Install or test your smoke detector.
- Tie water heater to wall studs using plumber's tape.

*Items marked with an asterisk "\*" should be purchased for each member of the household.*

## Week 5

### Grocery Store

- 1 gallon of water\*
- 1 can meat\*
- 1 can fruit\*
- 1 can vegetables \*
- 2 rolls toilet paper\*
- Extra toothbrush\*
- Travel size toothpaste

Also: Special food for special diets, if needed.

### To Do

- Have a fire drill at home.

## Week 6

### First Aid Supplies

- Aspirin and/or acetaminophen
- Compresses
- Rolls of gauze or bandages
- First aid tape
- Adhesive bandages (in assorted sizes)

Also: Extra hearing aid batteries, if needed.

### To Do

- Check with your child's day care or school to find out about their emergency plans.

## Week 7

### Grocery Store

- 1 gallon of water\*
- 1 can ready-to-eat soup (not concentrate)\*
- 1 can fruit\*
- 1 can vegetables\*

Also: Extra plastic baby bottles, formula and diapers, if needed.

### To Do

- Establish an out-of-state contact to call in case of emergency.

## Week 8

### First Aid Supplies

- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Antiseptic
- Thermometer
- Liquid hand soap
- Disposable hand wipes
- Sewing kit

Also: Extra eyeglasses, if needed.

### To Do

- Place a pair of shoes and a flashlight under your bed so that they are handy during an emergency.

## Week 9

### Grocery Store

- 1 can ready-to-eat soup\*
- Liquid dish soap
- Plain liquid bleach
- 1 box heavy-duty garbage bags

Also: Saline solution and a contact lens case, if needed.

### To Do

- Send some of your favorite family photos (or copies) to family members out of state for safe keeping.

## Week 10

### Hardware Store

- Waterproof portable plastic container (with lid) for important papers
- Portable AM/FM radio (with batteries)

Also: Blankets or sleeping bag for each family member.

### To Do

- Make photocopies of important papers and store safely.

## Week 11

### Grocery Store

- 1 large can juice\*
- large plastic food bags
- 1 box quick energy snacks
- 3 rolls paper towels

Also: Sunscreen, if needed.

### To Do

- Store a roll of quarters for emergency phone calls.
- Go on a hunt with your family to find a pay phone near home.

## Week 12

### First Aid Supplies

- Anti-diarrhea medicine
- Rubbing alcohol
- 2 pairs of latex gloves
- Ipecac syrup and activated charcoal (for accidental poisoning)
- Children's vitamins

Also: Items for denture care, if needed.

### To Do

- Take your family on a field trip to gas meter and water meter shutoffs.

Items marked with an asterisk "\*" should be purchased for each member of the household.

### Week 13

#### Hardware Store

- Whistle
- ABC fire extinguisher
- Pliers
- Vise grips

#### To Do

- Take a first aid/CPR class.

### Week 14

#### Grocery Store

- 1 can fruit\*
- 1 can meat\*
- 1 can vegetables\*
- 1 package paper plates
- 1 package eating utensils
- 1 package paper cups
- Adult vitamins

#### To Do

- Make a plan to check on a neighbor who might need help in an emergency.

### Week 15

#### Hardware Store

- Extra flashlight batteries
- Masking tape
- Hammer
- Assorted nails
- "L" brackets to secure tall furniture to wall studs
- Wood screws

#### To Do

- Brace shelves and cabinets.

### Week 16

#### Grocery Store

- 1 can meat\*
- 1 can vegetables\*
- 1 box large heavy-duty garbage bags
- Kleenex
- 1 box quick energy snacks (such as granola bars or raisins)

#### To Do

- Find out if you have a neighborhood safety organization and join it!

### Week 17

#### Grocery Store

- 1 box graham crackers
- Assorted plastic containers with lids
- Assorted safety pins
- Dry cereal

#### To Do

- Arrange for a friend or neighbor to help your children if you are at work.

### Week 18

#### Hardware Store

- "Childproof" latches or other fasteners for your cupboards
- Double-sided tape or Velcro-type fasteners to secure moveable objects

#### To Do

- Pack a "go-pack" in case you need to evacuate.

### Week 19

#### Grocery Store

- 1 box large heavy-duty garbage bags
- 1 box quick energy snacks (such as granola bars or raisins)

#### To Do

- Have an emergency drill at home.

### Week 20

#### Hardware Store

- Camping or utility knife
- Extra radio batteries

#### To Do

- Find out about your workplace emergency plans.

### Week 21

#### Hardware Store

- Heavy work gloves
- 1 box disposable dust masks
- Screwdriver
- Plastic safety goggles

### Week 22

#### Grocery Store

- Extra hand-operated can opener
- 3 rolls paper towels

### Week 23

#### Hardware Store

- Battery-powered camping lantern with extra battery or extra flashlights

### Week 24

#### Grocery Store

- Large plastic food bags
- Plastic wrap
- Aluminum foil

Items marked with an asterisk "\*" should be purchased for each member of the household.

## CREATE A FAMILY EMERGENCY SUPPLIES KIT

### To Get Started

- Check your house for supplies that you already have on hand.
- Decide where you will store supplies (food may be packed together in a single container or kept on shelves for easy rotation).

### Meet With Your Family To Plan

- Discuss the types of emergencies that could occur.
- Explain how to prepare; explain when and how to respond.
- Discuss what to do if you need to evacuate.
- Practice your plan.

### **Suggested Foods**

*Select based on your family's needs and preferences. Pick low-salt, water-packed varieties when possible.*

Canned Meat	Tuna, chicken, ravioli, chili, beef stew, spam, corned beef, etc.
Vegetables	Green beans, kernel corn, peas, beets, kidney beans, carrots, etc.
Fruit	Pears, peaches, mandarin oranges, applesauce, etc.
Cereal	Cheerios, Chex, Kix, Shredded Wheat, etc.
Quick Energy Snacks	Granola bars, raisins, etc.

***Remember to rotate your supplies every six months!***

In case of evacuation, your "Go-Pack" should:

- be in a back pack or other similar container that is easily carried.
- contain your most important items such as a change of clothes, quarters for pay phones, out-of-state contact information, medications, important papers, etc.

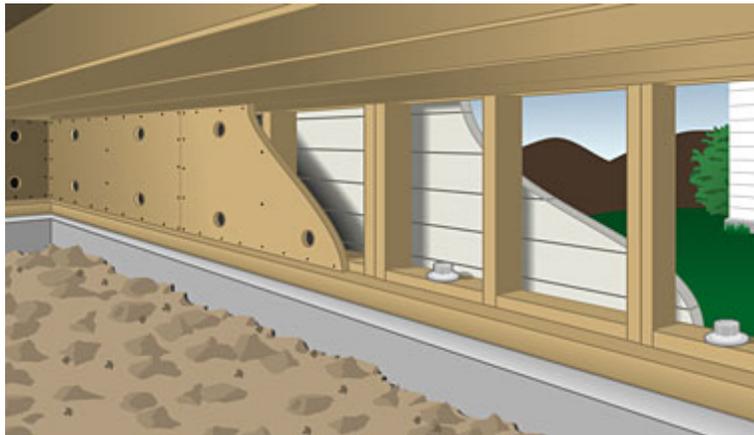
## #4

### IDENTIFY YOUR BUILDING'S POTENTIAL WEAKNESSES AND BEGIN TO FIX THEM.

Buildings are designed to withstand the downward pull of gravity, yet earthquakes shake a building in all directions – up and down, but most of all, sideways. There are several common issues that can limit a building's ability to withstand this sideways shaking.

#### Common building problems

Most houses are not as safe as they could be. The following presents some common structural problems and how to recognize them. Once you determine if your building has one or more of these problems, prioritize how and when to fix them, and get started.



This cutaway diagram shows how weak cripple walls can be strengthened by properly attached plywood sheets.

***Inadequate foundations.*** Look under your house at your foundation. If the foundation is damaged or built in the “pier and post” style, consult a contractor or engineer about replacing it with a continuous perimeter foundation. Look for bolts in the mudsills. They should be no more than 1.8 meters (6 feet) apart in a single story and 1.2 meters (4 feet) apart in a multistory building. Adding bolts to unsecured houses is one of the most important steps toward earthquake safety. This can be done by a contractor or by someone skilled at home maintenance.

*Unbraced cripple walls.* Homes with a crawl space should have panels of plywood connecting the studs of the short "cripple" walls (see figure). You or a contractor can strengthen the cripple walls relatively inexpensively.

*Soft first stories.* Look for larger openings in the lower floor, such as a garage door or a hillside house built on stilts. Consult a professional to determine if your building is adequately braced.

#### For those who rent:

As a renter, you have less control over the structural integrity of your building, but you *do* control which apartment or house you rent:

- Structures made of unreinforced brick or block walls can collapse and cause great loss of life.
- Apartment buildings with "tuck-under" parking space openings can also collapse.
- Foundation and cripple wall failures can cause expensive damage but less loss of life.
- Objects attached to the sides of buildings, such as staircases, balconies, and decorations, can break off in earthquakes.

Ask the property owner these questions:

- What retrofitting has been done on this building?
- Have the water heaters been strapped to the wall studs?
- Can I secure furniture to the walls?

*Unreinforced masonry.* All masonry (brick or block walls) should be reinforced. Some communities have a program for retrofitting buildings made of unreinforced masonry. If your house has masonry as a structural element consult a structural engineer to find what can be done. Inadequately braced chimneys are a more common problem. Consult a professional to determine if your chimney is safe.

### **If you live in a mobile home...**

Look under your home. If you only see a metal or wood “skirt” on the outside with concrete blocks or steel tripods or jacks supporting your home, you need to have an “engineered tie-down system” or an “earthquake-resistant bracing system” (ERBS) installed. An ERBS should have a label on the bracing that says, “Complies with the California Administrative Code, Title 25, Chapter 2, Article 7.5.”

## #5

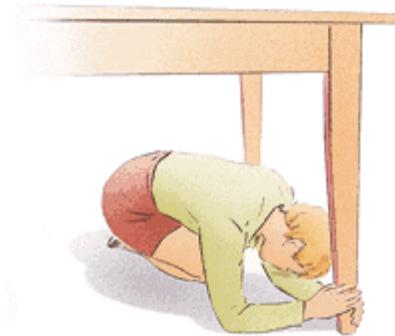
### PROTECT YOURSELF DURING EARTHQUAKE SHAKING- DROP, COVER, AND HOLD ON.

The previous pages have concentrated on getting ready for the next earthquake. What should you do during and after earthquakes?

During earthquakes, drop to the floor, take cover under a sturdy desk or table, and hold on to it firmly. Be prepared to move with it until the shaking stops.

The area near the exterior walls of a building is the most dangerous place to be. Windows, facades and architectural details are often the first parts of the building to collapse. To stay away from this danger zone, stay inside if you are inside and outside if you are outside.

#### If you are...



**Indoors: Drop, cover, and hold on.** If you are not near a desk or table, drop to the floor against the interior wall and protect your head and neck with your arms. Avoid exterior walls, windows, hanging objects, mirrors, tall furniture, large appliances, and kitchen cabinets with heavy objects or glass. Do not go outside!

**In bed:** If you are in bed, hold on and stay there, protecting your head with a pillow. You are less likely to be injured staying where you are. Broken glass on the floor has caused injury to those who have rolled to the floor or tried to get to doorways.

*In a high-rise:* Drop, cover, and hold on. Avoid windows and other hazards. Do not use elevators. Do not be surprised if sprinkler systems or fire alarms activate.

*Outdoors:* Move to a clear area if you can safely do so; avoid power lines, trees, signs, buildings, vehicles, and other hazards.

*Driving:* Pull over to the side of the road, stop, and set the parking brake. Avoid overpasses, bridges, power lines, signs and other hazards. Stay inside the vehicle until the shaking is over. If a power line falls on the car, stay inside until a trained person removes the wire.

*In a stadium or theater:* Stay at your seat and protect your head and neck with your arms. Don't try to leave until the shaking is over. Then walk out slowly watching for anything that could fall in the aftershocks.

*Near the shore:* Drop, cover and hold on until the shaking stops. Estimate how long the shaking lasts. If severe shaking lasts 20 seconds or more, immediately evacuate to high ground as a tsunami might have been generated by the earthquake. Move inland 3 kilometers (2 miles) or to land that is at least 30 meters (100 feet) above sea level immediately. Don't wait for officials to issue a warning. Walk quickly, rather than drive, to avoid traffic, debris and other hazards.

*Below a dam:* Dams can fail during a major earthquake. Catastrophic failure is unlikely, but if you live downstream from a dam, you should know flood-zone information and have prepared an evacuation plan.



## **AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE, CHECK FOR INJURIES AND DAMAGE.**

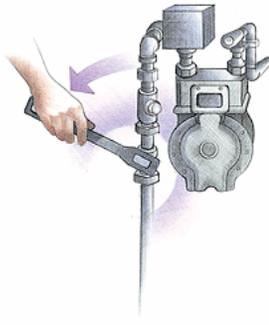
First take care of your own situation. Remember your emergency plans. Aftershocks may cause additional damage or items to fall, so get to a safe location. Take your disaster supplies kit.

If you are trapped by falling items or a collapse, 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.

Once you are safe, help others and check for damage. Protect yourself by wearing sturdy shoes and work gloves, to avoid injury from broken glass and debris. Also wear a dust mask and eye protection.

### **Check for injuries:**

- Check your first aid kit or the front pages of your telephone book for detailed instructions on first aid measures.
- If a person is bleeding, put direct pressure on the wound. Use clean gauze or cloth, if available.
- If a person is not breathing, administer rescue breathing.
- If a person has no pulse, begin CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).
- Do not move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger of further injury.
- Cover injured persons with blankets or additional clothing to keep them warm.
- Get medical help for serious injuries.
- Carefully check children or others needing special assistance.



### Check for damage:

- FIRE. If possible, put out small fires in your home or neighborhood immediately. Call for help, but don't wait for the fire department.
- GAS LEAKS. Shut off the main gas valve only if you suspect a leak because of broken pipes or the odor or sound of leaking natural gas. Don't turn it back on yourself — wait for the gas company to check for leaks. The phone book has detailed information on this topic.
- DAMAGED ELECTRICAL WIRING. Shut off power at the main breaker switch if there is any damage to your house wiring. Leave the power off until the damage is repaired.
- BROKEN LIGHTS AND APPLIANCES. Unplug these as they could start fires when electricity is restored.
- DOWNED POWER LINES. If you see downed power lines, consider them energized and stay well away from them. Keep others away from them also. Never touch downed power lines or any objects in contact with them.
- FALLEN ITEMS. Beware of items tumbling off shelves when you open the doors of closets and cupboards.
- SPILLS. Use extreme caution. Clean up any spilled medicines, drugs, or other non-toxic substances. Potentially harmful materials such as bleach, lye, garden chemicals, and gasoline or other petroleum products should be isolated or covered with an absorbent such as dirt or cat litter. When in doubt, leave your home.
- DAMAGED MASONRY. Stay away from chimneys and walls made of brick or block. They may be weakened and could topple during aftershocks. Don't use a fireplace with a damaged chimney. It could start a fire or let poisonous gases into your home.



## **WHEN SAFE, CONTINUE TO FOLLOW YOUR DISASTER- PREPAREDNESS PLAN.**

Once you have met your and your family's immediate needs after an earthquake, continue to follow the plan you prepared in advance. Aftershocks will continue to happen for several weeks after major earthquakes. Some may be large enough to cause additional damage. Always be ready to drop, cover, and hold on.

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 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.

#### *Be in communication*

- Turn on your portable or car radio for information and safety advisories.
- Place all phones back on their cradles.
- Call your out-of-area contact, tell them your status, then stay off the phone. Emergency responders need to use the phone lines for life-saving communications.
- Check on the condition of your neighbors.

### *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.
- Listen to your radio for safety advisories.
- 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...**

This is a time of transition. Although aftershocks may continue, you will now work toward getting your life, your home and family, and your routines back in order. Emotional care and recovery are just as important as healing physical injuries and rebuilding a home. Make sure your home is safe to occupy and not in danger of collapse in aftershocks. 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) to find out about financial assistance

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 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. Take the following, if possible, when you evacuate:

- Personal disaster supplies kits
- Medications and eyewear
- Supply of water, food, and snacks
- Blanket/pillow/air mattress or sleeping pad
- Change of clothing and a jacket
- Towel and washcloth
- Diapers, food, and other supplies for infants
- A few family pictures or other comfort items
- Personal identification and copies of household and health insurance information.

*Do not take to a shelter:*

- Pets (Service animals for people with disabilities are allowed; take food for them. Have a plan for your pets in advance.)
- Large quantities of unnecessary clothing or other personal items
- Valuables that might be lost, stolen, or take up needed space

Once a Presidential Declaration has been issued, FEMA may activate the *Individuals and Households Program*. This program includes:

- Home-repair cash grants; the maximum Federal grant available (as of 2005) is \$26,200
- Housing Assistance in the form of reimbursement for short-term lodging at a hotel

- Rental assistance for as long as 18 months in the form of cash payment
- If no other housing is available, FEMA may provide mobile homes or other temporary housing

**Once you have recovered from the earthquake, go back to Step 1 and do the things you did not do before, or do them more thoroughly. Learn from what happened during the earthquake so you will be safer next time.**