

# What to do before, during and after an earthquake

## Before

- Secure anything heavy enough to hurt you if it falls on you, or fragile and/or expensive enough to be a significant loss if it falls. Also, secure items to reduce hazardous material spills.

For example, secure refrigerators and other major appliances to wall using earthquake appliance straps.

Collectibles and lamps can become deadly projectiles. Use either hook-and-loop fasteners on the table and object, or non-damaging adhesives.

- Make sure you know how to turn off the gas, water and electricity to your home.
- Create a disaster-preparedness plan.

Select a safe place outside your home to meet after the shaking stops.

Designate an out-of-area contact person who can be called by everyone in the household to relay information.

Keep copies of essential documents, such as identification, insurance policies and financial records, in a secure, waterproof container.

- Prepare disaster supplies kits.

Everyone should have personal disaster supplies kits. Keep them where you spend most of your time. They should include items such as medications, spare eyeglasses or contact lens solutions, a whistle, sturdy shoes and emergency cash.

In addition to personal kits, store a household disaster supplies kit with items to last up to two weeks. Among items to include: water, wrenches to turn off gas and water supplies, portable radio with extra batteries, flashlights, canned and packaged food, and pet food.

## During

- 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 a building to collapse.
- **Indoors:** Drop, cover and hold on. 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. If you are not near a desk or table, drop to the floor against an interior wall and protect your head and neck with your arms. Do not go outside.
- **In bed:** If you are in bed, hold on and stay there, protecting your head with a pillow.
- **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 and set the parking brake. Avoid overpasses, bridges, power lines, signs and other hazards. Stay inside the vehicle until the shaking is over.

## After

- Aftershocks may cause additional damage or items to fall, so get to a safer location. Take your disaster supplies kit.
- If you are trapped by falling items or a collapse, 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, put out small fires in your home or neighborhood immediately, if possible. Call for help, but don't wait for the fire department. Shut off the main gas valve only if you suspect a leak. Shut off power at the main breaker switch if there is any damage to your house wiring.
- Turn on your portable, or car radio for information.
- Call your out-of-area contact, tell them your status then stay off the phone.
- 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.
- 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.

SOURCE: [Southern California Earthquake Center](#)

# WHAT TO DO *BEFORE* AN EARTHQUAKE

*The information contained in this section does not represent weaknesses in the earthquake resistance of homes. It is valuable information to keep in mind to reduce risks to yourself, your family, and your home. These lists are only highlights of the actions you should take.*

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## Gather Emergency Supplies

*Be sure you have these basic supplies on hand:*

- Fire extinguisher
- Adequate supplies of medications that you or family members are taking
- Crescent and pipe wrenches to turn off gas and water supplies
- First-aid kit and handbook
- Flashlights with extra bulbs and fresh batteries
- Portable battery-powered radio or television and extra fresh batteries
- Water for each family member for at least three days (allow at least one gallon per person per day) and purification tablets or chlorine bleach to purify drinking water from other sources
- Canned and packaged foods, enough for three days, and at least an additional four-day supply readily accessible for use if you are confined to home. Don't forget a mechanical can opener and extra pet food!
- Camp stove or barbecue to cook on outdoors (store fuel out of the reach of children)
- Waterproof, heavy-duty plastic bags for waste disposal
- Copies of personal identification, such as driver's licenses, Passports, and work identification badges, and copies of medical prescriptions and credit cards
- An extra set of car keys and house keys
- Matches in waterproof container
- Map of the area marked with places you could go and their telephone numbers
- Cash and coins
- Special items, such as denture needs, contact lenses and supplies, extra eyeglasses, and hearing aid batteries
- Special items for seniors, disabled persons, or anyone with serious allergies
- Special items for infants, such as formula, diapers, bottles, pacifiers, powdered milk, and medications not requiring refrigeration

## Plan Ahead



1. Create a family disaster plan; practice and maintain the plan.
2. Make and complete a checklist.
3. Plan home escape routes.
4. Conduct fire and emergency evacuation drills at least twice a year and include your pets in your evacuation and sheltering drills.
5. Test your smoke alarms once a month (daylight savings time or birthdays) and replace batteries at least once a year in battery-powered smoke alarms.
6. Make sure each member of your family knows what to do no matter where they are when earthquakes occur.
  - ~ Establish two meeting places where you can all reunite afterward: one right outside your home, in case of a sudden emergency, and one outside your neighborhood in case you cannot return home or are asked to leave your neighborhood.
  - ~ Find out about the earthquake plan developed by your children's school or day care.
  - ~ Remember that since transportation may be disrupted, you may have to stay at your workplace for a day or two following a major earthquake. Keep some emergency supplies—food, liquids, and comfortable shoes, for example—at work.
  - ~ Pick two out-of-town contacts:
    - » A friend or relative who will be your household's **primary** contact,
    - » A friend or relative who will be your household's **alternative** contact.
7. Know where your gas, electric, and water main shutoffs are and how to turn them off if there is a leak or electrical short; if in doubt, ask your utility companies. Make sure that all the older members of your family can shut off the utilities.
8. Locate your nearest fire and police stations and emergency medical facility. Remember that telephones may not work after an earthquake. If you can, use your land line rather than your cell phone to call 911, but only if you need emergency help.
9. Talk to your neighbors—how could they help you, or you help them, after an earthquake?
10. Take a Red Cross first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training course.
11. Make arrangements with friends or relatives to temporarily house **your pets** after disasters because emergency shelters will not accept pets.
12. If your home is located near a steep hillside, in an area near the shore of a body of water or below a dam, check with your local building or planning department to see if you are in a landslide, tsunami or dam inundation zone. Plan for how, when, and where your family should evacuate.