

Get Ready Now for the Big Quake

Everyone knows California is earthquake country. The occasional quake has become a part of everyday life for all of us in this state. As in previous years, the governor of California has designated April as Earthquake Preparedness Month. During this time, the state urges California residents to recognize the importance of planning for the next temblor. The following checklist should help.

Before: Be Prepared

- Store emergency supplies in a place that will be as safe as possible during an earthquake – in a closet, under a bed, or in your garage. Perishable supplies remain stable and fresh longer if they are stored in a cool, dark place. Supplies should include water and food (including baby formula for infants), flashlights, a portable radio and plenty of batteries, a fire extinguisher, tools, blankets, a first aid kit, medication, and, if possible, a complete change of clothes, including coats and shoes, for everyone.
- Inspect your home to make it as quakeproof as possible. Because things tend to "walk around" during a quake, move heavy items to lower shelves. Secure large appliances and furniture to wall studs. Install sturdy clips or latches on cabinet doors. Provide strong support and flexible connections for gas appliances. Remove or isolate flammable materials, such as gasoline cans.
- Have family meetings as often as possible to discuss what to do when an earthquake hits and practice simulated earthquake drills. Counsel family members on how to protect themselves during a quake and how to evacuate the house afterward. Check where you have stored supplies and locate utility shutoff valves, as well as your main fuse box. Hold informal refresher classes on CPR techniques and other first aid procedures. Plan designated meeting places in case family members are separated when a quake hits. Select an out-of-town contact and make sure everyone knows the phone number.
- Store family valuables, such as important documents, heirlooms, and photos, in a compact portable container.
- Contact your local insurance agent and determine whether to purchase earthquake coverage.

During: Be Calm

- If you are indoors, stay there. Get under a sturdy table or desk or stand beneath a door sill. Pick a location that

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will give you air if the building collapses around you. Stay away from windows, mirrors, bookcases, china cabinets, and heavy objects. Beware of falling plaster or ceiling tiles.

- If you are cooking when the shaking starts, turn off the oven or stove before taking cover.

- If you are in a crowded store or other indoor public area, do not dash for the exit. Get under a table or any other sturdy object. Stay away from windows.

- If you are in a tall office building, get under a desk. Use the stairs for evacuation. Do not panic if the fire alarms or sprinkler systems go on.

- If you are outside, move to an open area away from power lines, trees, and buildings.

- If you are in a vehicle, pull to the side of the road and stop; stay put until the shaking stops. If power lines have fallen across the vehicle, remain in it, even after the shaking stops. Do not try to cross bridges and do not park near trees, overpasses (on or under them), buildings, or power lines.

After: Be Cautious

- Put on heavy shoes to protect your feet from broken glass or other sharp-edged debris.

- Check for fires and fire hazards. Sniff for gas leaks, starting at the water heater. If you do smell gas, turn off the main valve, open windows, and leave the house. Do not turn off lights or light matches. Do not turn your gas off unless you suspect an emergency. If your neighbors are not home, check their utilities.

- Turn on the radio and listen for advisories.

- Do not go near fallen power lines.

- Clean up potentially harmful materials, such as spilled medicine or flammable liquids.

- Make sure sewage lines are intact before flushing toilets.

- Use the phone only for genuine emergencies.

- Check for damage to the house, roof, and chimney. Patch leaks, board up broken windows, and cover furniture.

- Use outdoor barbecues, camp stoves, hibachis, and the like for cooking. Do not eat or drink anything from open containers. If the power is off, first use up foods that will spoil quickly. If your emergency water supply is lost, use water from your water heater or from canned foods, but boil or purify every drop.

- Be prepared for aftershocks. Be cautious when entering damaged buildings that can be brought down by aftershocks.

- In mountainous areas, be alert for falling rocks that could have been loosened by the quake. Be alert for landslides, snowslides, and mudslides.

- Don't go sightseeing to examine the extent of damage. Obey any public safety officials.

- If you must evacuate, post a message telling where you are going. Take as much emergency gear as you can carry, including medicines, flashlights, radios, important papers, cash, food, sleeping bags, and extra clothes.