

Earthquakes

Earthquakes are caused by the moment of the tectonic plates that form the crust of our planet earth. If you live in an area that is close to a point on the earth where two plates meet you are more likely to experience earthquakes. There are many different types of plate movement and the strength of the resulting quakes varies widely.

The small quakes are never a wide scale problem. It's the big ones that many people fear and with good reason. When a large earthquake hits a highly built up and populated area it can often rival our worst natural disasters.

If you live in an area where earthquakes are a threat, it's important to know how to secure your home, what to do during a quake to minimize your chance of injury and what to expect and do afterwards.

Preparing for an Earthquake:

- Make certain that everyone in your household old enough to do it knows how to turn off the water, gas and electricity.
- Keep a working flashlight any tool needed to turn off utilities securely hung or taped, close at hand and label the on-off positions for every utility to help during an emergency.
- Secure heavy appliances, particularly any appliances connected to gas or water. In the event of a quake they could move around and rupture the connections, so you're avoiding two potential danger sources.
- Check the roof of your home for any loose shingles or ceiling tiles and repair them.
- Be certain that any large pieces of top heavy furniture, heavy mirrors or pictures and any ceiling fixtures are completely secured so as not to either fall over in the event of a quake or shake themselves loose from the fixtures.
- Keep your beds away from windows and chimneys and don't hang heavy pictures close to your beds.
- Use safety latches on cupboards so that the contents don't fall out. Child proof latches work well.
- Store anything that is flammable or any chemicals away from potential heat sources (this makes good sense under any circumstances).
- Keep a supply of flashlights and ensure that they are in working order and people know where to find them in an emergency.
- Pack your family emergency kit and keep it where you can reach it in the event that you need to evacuate your home. Be sure that it includes some basic first aid supplies and drinking water.

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During an Earthquake

- If an earthquake strikes stay calm and stay put. If you're outside – don't go indoors and if you're indoors don't go out.
- If you're inside DROP under a table or something solid to protect yourself from falling objects.
- COVER your head and as much of your body as possible.
- HOLD ON so that you won't be jolted out from under cover and left exposed to falling and collapsing objects.
- If there is nothing close by – squat, lie or otherwise flatten yourself against an interior wall and away from anything heavy that could fall on you.
- In a mall, look for a store where you can seek immediate shelter.
- If you are in an elevator – get out- push the button for every floor and exit at the first possible opportunity.
- Stay away from windows, doorways or heavy objects.
- If you are in a downtown area you are safer indoors – the danger from falling glass is not restricted to the area under a building. The wind can carry broken glass a long way.
- Stay out from underneath skylights or light fixture
- Turn your back to the window.
- If you're outside already, try and get into an open area away from objects – like broken windows than can easily fall on you from a building.
- If you can, get out of any crowd to avoid being trampled in the panic.
- If you're in a car you need to get to the roadside, stop the car and stay inside.
- Avoid bridges, overpasses, underpasses or anything that could collapse.
- Turn on your radio and listen for emergency messages.
- Keep an emergency kit in your car that includes some water and at least basic first aid supplies.
- Have a place where you know you can take your pets in the event that you need to seek shelter away from your own home.
- Have a family emergency plan.

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