

# EARTHQUAKES

## Safety PART one

**“Before, During and After PREPAREDNESS”** An important step in earthquake preparedness is to inspect your home and its surroundings for possible hazards and then take action to lessen those hazards. Remember: anything can move, fall, or break during an earthquake or its aftershocks.

**The following is a basic checklist to help you identify and correct possible home hazards:**

**BEFORE EARTHQUAKES.....** The real key to surviving an earthquake and reducing your risk of injury lies in planning, preparing, and practicing what you and your family will do if it happens.

**Practice Drills** By planning and practicing what to do if an earthquake strikes, you and your family can learn to react correctly and automatically when the shaking begins. During an earthquake, most deaths and injuries are caused by collapsing building materials and heavy falling objects, such as bookcases, cabinets, and heating units. Learn the safe spots in each room of your home. If you have children, get the entire family to practice going to these locations. Participating in an earthquake drill will help children understand what to do in case you are not with them during an earthquake.

Make sure you and your child also understand the school's emergency procedures for disasters. This will help you coordinate where, when, and how to reunite with your child after an earthquake.

### **During your earthquake drill:**

(1.) Get under a sturdy table or desk and hold on to it.

(2.) If you're not near a table or desk, cover your face and head with your arms; and stand or crouch in a strongly supported doorway OR brace yourself in an inside corner of the house or building.

(3.) Stay clear of windows or glass that could shatter or objects that could fall on you.

(4.) Remember.

If inside, stay inside. Many people are injured at entrances of buildings by falling debris.

### **EVACUATION:**

If an earthquake occurs, you may need to evacuate a damaged area afterward. By planning and practicing for evacuation, you will be better prepared to respond appropriately and efficiently to signs of danger or to directions by authorities.

- (1.) Take a few minutes with your family to discuss a home evacuation plan. Sketch a floor plan of your home; walk through each room and discuss evacuation details.
- (2.) Plan a second way to exit from each room or area, if possible. If you need special equipment, such as a rope ladder, mark where it is located.
- (3.) Mark where your emergency food, water, first aid kits, and fire extinguishers are located.
- (4.) Mark where the utility switches or valves are located so that they can be turned off, if possible.
- (5.) Indicate the location of your family's emergency outdoor meeting place.

## **Establish Priorities:**

**Take time before an earthquake strikes to write an emergency priority list, including:**

- (1.) Important items to be hand-carried by you.
- (2.) Other items, in order of importance to you and your family.
- (3.) Items to be removed by car or truck if one is available.
- (4.) Things to do if time permits, such as locking doors and

windows, turning off the utilities, etc.

## **Write Down Important Information:**

Make a list of important information and put it in a secure location. Include on your list:

- (1.) Important telephone numbers, such as police, fire, paramedics, and medical centers.
- (2.) The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of your insurance agents, including policy types and numbers.
- (3.) The telephone numbers of the electric, gas, and water companies.
- (4.) The names and telephone numbers of neighbors.
- (5.) The name and telephone number of your landlord or property manager.
- (6.) Important medical information, such as allergies, regular medications, etc.
- (7.) The vehicle identification number, year, model, and license number of your automobile, boat, RV, etc.
- (8.) Your banks or credit union's telephone number, account types, and numbers.

(9.) Radio and television broadcast stations to tune to for emergency broadcast information.

## **Gather and Store Important Documents in a Fire-Proof Safe:**

(1.) Birth certificates.

(2.) Ownership certificates (automobiles, boats, etc.).

(3.) Social Security cards.

(4.) Insurance policies.

(5.) Wills.

(6.) Household inventory.

## **During an Earthquake:**

### **Indoor Safety:**

There are actions you can take, even while an earthquake is happening, that will greatly reduce your chances of being hurt. Lights may be out, and hallways, stairs, and room exits may be blocked by fallen furniture, ceiling tiles, and other debris. Planning for these situations will help you to take action quickly.

(1.) If an earthquake strikes, you may be able to take cover under

a heavy desk or table. It can provide you with air space if the building collapses. If you get under a table and it moves, try to move with it.

(2.) Inner walls or door frames are the least likely to collapse and may also shield against falling objects. If other cover is not available, go to an inner corner or doorway, away from windows or glass panels.

(3.) Stay away from glass and hanging objects, and bookcases, china cabinets, or other large furniture that could fall. Watch for falling objects, such as bricks from fireplaces and chimneys, light fixtures, wall hangings, high shelves, and cabinets with doors that could swing open.

(4.) Grab something to shield your head and face from falling debris and broken glass.

(5.) If the lights go out, use a battery-operated flashlight. Don't use candles, matches, or lighters during or after the earthquake. If there is a gas leak, an explosion could result.

(6.) If you are in the kitchen, quickly turn off the stove and take cover at the first sign of shaking.

## **High-Rise Buildings:**

Get under a desk and stay away from windows and outside walls. Stay in the building. The electricity may go out, and the

sprinkler systems may come on. **DO NOT** use the elevators.

### **Crowded Indoor Public Places:**

If you are in a crowded public place, do not rush for the doorways. Others will have the same idea. Move away from display shelves containing objects that may fall. If you can, take cover and grab something to shield your head and face from falling debris and glass.

### **Outdoor Safety:**

If outdoors, move away from buildings and utility wires. The greatest danger from falling debris is just outside doorways and close to outer walls. Once in the open, stay there until the shaking stops.

### **Automobiles:**

If you are in a moving automobile, stop as quickly and safely as possible and move over to the shoulder or curb, away from utility poles, overhead wires, and under- or overpasses. Stay in the vehicle, set the parking brake, and turn on the radio for emergency broadcast information. A car may jiggle violently on its springs, but it is a good place to stay until the shaking stops. If you are in a life-threatening situation, you may be able to reach someone with either a cellular or an emergency roadside assistance phone. When you drive on, watch for hazards created by the earthquake, such as breaks in the pavement, downed

utility poles and wires, a fallen overpasses and bridges.

## **After an Earthquake:**

Be prepared for additional earth movements called “aftershocks.” Although most of these are smaller than the main earthquake, some may be large enough to cause additional damage or bring down weakened structures. Because other aftereffects can include fires, chemical spills, landslides, and dam breaks, be sure to monitor your battery-operated radio or TV for additional emergency information.

## **Injuries:**

Check for injuries. Do not attempt to move injured or unconscious people unless they are in immediate danger from live electrical wires, flooding, or other hazards. Internal injuries may not be evident, but may be serious or life-threatening. If someone has stopped breathing, call for medical or first aid assistance immediately and begin CPR if you are trained to do so. Stop a bleeding injury by applying direct pressure to the wound. If you are trapped, try to attract attention to your location.

## **Checking Utilities:**

**An earthquake may break gas, electrical, and water lines. If you smell gas:**

- (1) Open windows.
- (2) Shut off the main gas valve.
- (3) Do not turn any electrical appliances or lights on or off.
- (4) Go outside.
- (5) Report the leak to authorities; and
- (6) Do not reenter the building until a utility official says it is safe to do so.

### **Other Precautions:**

- (1.) Have chimneys inspected for cracks and damage. Do not use the fireplace if the chimney has any damage.
- (2.) Check to see if sewage lines are intact before using bathrooms or plumbing.
- (3.) Do not touch downed power lines or objects in contact with downed lines. Report electrical hazards to the authorities.
- (4.) Immediately clean up spilled medicines, drugs, flammable liquids, and other potentially hazardous materials.
- (5.) Stay off all telephones except to report an emergency. Replace telephone receivers that may have been knocked off by the earthquake.

(6.) Stay away from damaged areas. Your presence could hamper relief efforts, and you could endanger yourself.

(7.) Cooperate fully with public safety officials. Respond to requests for volunteer assistance from police, fire fighters, emergency management officials, and relief organizations, but do not go into damaged areas unless assistance has been requested.

## **Evacuating Your Home:**

### **if you must evacuate you home:**

(1.) Post a message, in a prearranged location known only to family members, indicating where you have gone.

(2.) Confine pets to the safest location possible and make sure they have plenty of food and water. Pets will not be allowed in designated public shelters.

(3.) Take vital documents (wills, insurance policies, etc.), emergency supplies, and extra medications with you.