

Earthquake Preparedness Advice & Checklist

From the Belvedere-Tiburon Joint Disaster Advisory Council

The Bay Area is a beautiful, but dangerous place to live. It is one of the most seismically active areas in the United States. It is not a matter of if an earthquake will occur, but when an earthquake will occur.

If you choose to live in the Bay Area, you must prepare your neighborhood and your family for what may someday occur.

PRE-EARTHQUAKE

- Select an out-of-area telephone contact for family members to call and coordinate messages.
- Develop a family communication, evacuation and reunion plan. Know the school's earthquake plan.
- Locate all utility shut-off valves and know how to shut them off. Tie a shut off wrench to the main gas line.
- Double strap your water heater to wall studs (1/3 from the top and 1/3 from the bottom) to prevent tipping.
- Learn basic first aid.
- Consider taking a CERT (Community Emergency Response Training) class.
- Call a licensed contractor to determine if your foundation is correctly bolted to the house.
- Store heavy shoes and gloves (to protect your hands and feet from broken glass and other debris) under or near your bed.
- Prepare a 72-hour family emergency supply kit (food, water, supplies, first aid). Store in plastic containers and tape shut with duct tape.
- Take photos or a video of your home (interior and exterior) to document its condition and contents. Store it in a bank safety deposit box for future use.
- Check with your insurance carrier to make sure you have the appropriate earthquake coverage.
- Take a safety walk through your home to identify and correct potential hazards.

DURING AN EARTHQUAKE

- If you are indoors, stay clear of windows and fireplaces. DUCK or drop to the floor. Take COVER under a sturdy piece of furniture. HOLD on to it and ride it out.
- If you are outdoors, get into the open, away from power lines and buildings.
- If you are driving, pull over and stop. Turn off your engine. Do not stop under heavy objects or power lines.
- If you are in a crowded public place, do not rush for the exits. Try to stay calm.

POST EARTHQUAKE

- Never re-enter a damaged building unless authorities tell you it is safe to do so.
- Put out any fires that are manageable with an ABC fire extinguisher (recommended by fire departments).
- If not safe to do so, evacuate. Call 911 if phones are operating.
- Check for injured family members and/or neighbors. Provide emergency first aid. Do not move severely injured people unless they are in imminent danger.
- If trapped, make noise so people can hear and find you.
- If you smell gas ("rotten eggs"), open windows to ventilate the area and turn the gas off at the meter. Do not turn on lights, electrical equipment or gas appliances, light matches or use flashlights.
- If possible, report any unsafe conditions to authorities by calling 911. Only use your phone if it is urgent.
- If forced to leave your home, leave a message on your phone answering machine or door as to where you can be reached. This will assist family members to be reunited faster.
- Take photos or a video of your home (interior and exterior) to document the condition of the home and its contents.
- Expect aftershocks.