

# Earthquake Checklist

By John F. Smith

- Before an earthquake happens - Prepare
  - Awareness** Become aware of fire evacuation and earthquake plans for all of the buildings you occupy regularly.
  - Pick safe places in each room of your home, workplace and/or school** A safe place could be under a piece of furniture or against an interior wall away from windows, bookcases or tall furniture that could fall on you.
  - Practice drop, cover and hold on in each safe place** If you do not have sturdy furniture to hold on to, sit on the floor next to an interior wall and cover your head and neck with your arms.
  - Keep a flashlight and sturdy shoes by each person's bed.**
  - Make sure your home is securely anchored to its foundation.**
  - Bolt and brace water heaters and gas appliances to wall studs.**
  - Bolt bookcases, china cabinets and other tall furniture to wall studs.**
  - Hang heavy items** Hang pictures and mirrors, away from beds, couches and anywhere people sleep or sit.
  - Brace overhead light fixtures.**
  - Install strong latches or bolts on cabinets.**
  - Large or heavy items should be closest to the floor.**
  - Learn how to shut off the gas valves in your home and keep a wrench handy for that purpose.**
  - Learn about your area seismic building standards and land use codes before you begin new construction.**
  - Keep and maintain an emergency supplies kit in an easy-to-access location.**
- If you are inside when the shaking starts
  - Drop, cover and hold on** Move as little as possible.
  - If you are in bed, stay there, curl up and hold on.**
  - Protect your head with a pillow.**
  - Stay away from windows to avoid being injured by shattered glass.**
  - Stay indoors until the shaking stops and you are sure it is safe to exit** If you must leave the building after the shaking stops, use stairs rather than an elevator in case there are aftershocks, power outages or other damage.
  - Be aware that fire alarms and sprinkler systems frequently go off in buildings during an earthquake, even if there is no fire.**
- If you are outside when the shaking starts

- Find a clear spot and drop to the ground.
- Stay there until the shaking stops (away from buildings, power lines, trees, streetlights).
- If you are in a vehicle, pull over to a clear location and stop. Avoid bridges, overpasses and power lines if possible.
- Stay inside with your seatbelt fastened until the shaking stops. Then, drive carefully, avoiding bridges and ramps that may have been damaged.
- If a power line falls on your vehicle, do not get out. Wait for assistance.
- If you are in a mountainous area or near unstable slopes or cliffs, be alert for falling rocks and other debris. Landslides are often triggered by earthquakes.
- What do I do after an earthquake?
  - After an earthquake, the disaster may continue. Expect and prepare for potential aftershocks, landslides or even a tsunami. Tsunamis are often generated by earthquakes.
  - Each time you feel an aftershock, drop, cover and hold on. Aftershocks frequently occur minutes, days, weeks and even months following an earthquake.
  - Check yourself for injuries and get first aid, if necessary, before helping injured or trapped persons.
  - Put on long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, sturdy shoes and work gloves to protect against injury from broken objects.
  - Look quickly for damage in and around your home and get everyone out if your home is unsafe.
  - Listen to a portable, battery-operated or hand-crank radio for updated emergency information and instructions.
  - Check the telephones in your home or workplace to see if you can get a dial tone.
  - Make brief calls to report life-threatening emergencies.
  - Look for and extinguish small fires. Fire is the most common hazard after an earthquake.
  - Clean up spilled medications, bleach, gasoline or other flammable liquids immediately.
  - Open closet and cabinet doors carefully as contents may have shifted.
  - Help people who require special assistance, such as infants, children and the elderly or disabled.
  - Watch out for fallen power lines or broken gas lines and stay out of damaged areas.
  - Keep animals under your direct control.
  - Stay out of damaged buildings.

- If you were away from home, return only when authorities say it is safe to do so.
- Use extreme caution and examine walls, floors, doors, staircases and windows to check for damage.
- Be careful when driving after an earthquake and anticipate traffic light outages.