Earthquake Home Hazard Hunt

Recommendations for reducing earthquake hazards in your home are presented on the other side of this poster.

- Strap down computers
- Strap bookcases and shelves to walls to prevent tipping
- Securely fasten or relocate heavy pictures and mirrors over beds
- Strengthen garages that have living space above them
- Brace or replace masonry chimneys
- Secure ceiling fans and hanging light fixtures
- Know how and when to shut off utilities
- Brace water heaters
- Upgrade unbraced crawl space walls (or other foundation problems)
- Ensure that gas appliances have flexible connections
- Secure cabinets to wall studs; use latches to keep cabinet doors from flying open during an earthquake
- Prevent rolling or tilting of refrigerators
- Strap down televisions and other expensive or hazardous electrical components
This poster has information for you and your family to help you find and fix areas of your home that might be damaged during an earthquake and that might injure family members during an earthquake. Information is also provided on planning for an earthquake before it occurs and what to do during and after an earthquake.

Your earthquake home hazard hunt should begin with all family members participating. For insight, imagination, and common sense are all that are needed as you go from room to room and imagine what would happen if the earth and house started shaking. Anything that can move, break, or fall when your house starts to shake is a potential hazard.

What would happen to heavy furniture, fixtures, and appliances?

- Look at tall bookcases and shelves. How much would fall off the shelves? Would the whole bookcase topple, or is it anchored to the wall?

- Look at picture frames. How much would fall off the wall?

- Are your mirrors above your piano or even on the wall too loose?

- Look at your bookshelves. How much would fall off the shelves?

- Are your microwave, refrigerators, and water heater anchored to the wall?

- Is your water heater secured? Metal straps can be used to fasten your water heater to the wood studs of the nearest wall.

- Are there any wood stud walls in your garage or outside storage area? Be sure these items are secured on their shelves.

- Are your water pipes beginning to rust or are they leaking? Consider replacing them with plastic pipes. These are safer than metal pipes and there is no need to cut the gas or water supply when they are replaced.

- Check for possible flying glass.

- Replace glass bottles in the medicine cabinet and around the bathtub and shower with plastic containers.

- What kind of labels are on your kitchen cabinets? Consider replacing magnetic; “Your labels with ones that will hold the cabinet doors shut during an earthquake.”

- Are your ceiling fans secured? They can come loose as a result of vibrations or other causes.

- Are your water heater straps once a year. They may not always be tight.

- Is your water heater located above a sink? If so, consider putting it back on its foundation, while upgrading before an earthquake will be much cheaper.

- Do you have any露出 (showing) fixtures where the water enters the house? Also the main electrical switch box?

- Are your family’s documents, such as insurance policies, deeds, property records, birth certificates, and other important papers, in a safe place away from your home (e.g., safe deposit box)? Make copies of important documents for your local supplier. Consider saving money in an emergency savings account that could be used in emergency situations. Back up critical files on your computer and keep a copy in a safe place away from your home.

Create Your Disaster Supplies Kit

Because you don’t know where you and your family will be when an earthquake occurs, prepare a Disaster Supplies Kit for your home, workplace, and car. For detailed information about the items that should be included in your disaster supplies kit, refer to FEMA 526, Earthquake Safety Checklist.

Family Earthquake Drill

It is important to begin at home where you should go for protection when your house starts to shake. By planning and practicing what to do before an earthquake occurs, you can condition yourself and your family to react correctly and spontaneously when the first jolt is shaking. An earthquake can be unsettling to many people but it does not have to do much damage.

- Each family member should know safe spots in each room.

- Safe spots: The best places to be are under heavy pieces of furniture, such as a table or desk, near an inside wall, under an inside stairway, or near an inside wall.

- Danger spots: Stay away from windows, hanging objects, mirrors, fireplaces, and tall, unsecured pieces of furniture.

- Reinforce this knowledge by physically placing yourself in the safe locations. This is especially important for children. In the days or weeks after this exercise, hold surprise drills.

- Be prepared to deal with what you may experience after an earthquake—both physically and emotionally.

- Follow these tips: drugs, cover, and hold procedure is the best way to be safe during an earthquake.

- Tai take cover under a sturdy desk, table, or bench and hold on to the desk or table or leg of it. Hold on until the earthquake shaking stops.

- Family members should practice drop, cover, and hold in the safe spots that you and your family have identified.

Further Information

For more information about earthquake preparedness and safety, refer to the following publications of the FEMA Distribution Facility at 1-800-480-2520. As noted, some are available for download from the FEMA website.

After Disaster Strikes: How to recover financially from a natural disaster. FEMA 292, available in both English and Spanish.


How to Prepare for an Emergency, FEMA 471, August 2004. Available online in both English and Spanish at http://fema.g0v/preparedness/prepared_guides_links.shtm.

Preparing for Disaster for People with Disabilities and Special Needs, FEMA 476, August 2004. Available online in both English and Spanish at http://fema.g0v/preparedness/prepared_guides_links.shtm.

Visit the FEMA website at http://www.fema.gov/hazards/earthquakes/ for information about the National Earthquake Home Improvement Program (NEHIP), and more ways to address earthquake risks.