

Safety Note #6

General Earthquake Safety



Natural and man-made disasters can happen suddenly and without warning. Are you and your family prepared? Studies of injuries and deaths caused by earthquakes in the U.S. over the last several decades indicate that you are much more likely to be injured by falling or flying objects (TVs, glass, bookcases, etc.) than to be stuck in a collapsed building. Federal, State, and local emergency management experts as well as other preparedness organizations all agree that “**Drop, Cover, and Hold On**” is the appropriate action to reduce injury and death during earthquakes.

Videos E039 and S039 Earthquake Safety are available from the ANR Environmental Health and Safety Library at <http://safety.ucanr.edu>.

Earthquake Preparedness

- Identify your risk by determining if you’re located in an earthquake hazard area. The United States Geological Survey website provides useful information about your area’s hazards. www.usgs.gov
- Maintain an emergency supply kit of safety items such as a battery-powered radio, flashlight, fresh batteries, blankets, and first aid kit at a readily-accessible location in your home.
- Know the location of (& how to operate) gas & water shutoff valves & electric fuse/circuit breaker boxes.
- Refrain from putting heavy objects on high shelves and keep flammable or hazardous liquids (i.e., paints, pest sprays, cleaning products, or grill lighter fluids) on lower shelves.
- Anchor bookcases to walls. Install straps around water heaters & furnaces. Securely attach straps.
- Maintain one gallon of drinking water per person per day for a minimum of seven days. Include pets.
- Identify areas to *take cover* in your home or workplace, such as beneath a sturdy table or desk.
- Identify *dangerous areas* in your home or workplace, such as next to windows, beneath ceiling light fixtures, or adjacent to large appliances.

During An Earthquake – DROP, COVER AND HOLD ON

- DROP to the ground (before the earthquake drops you),
- Take COVER by getting under a sturdy desk or table, and
- HOLD ON to it until the shaking stops.
- If there isn’t a table or desk near you, drop to the ground in an inside corner of the building and cover your head and neck with your hands and arms. Do not run to another room just to get under a table.
- Stay away from windows, hanging/heavy objects, mirrors, tall furniture, large appliances and cabinets.
- If you’re outdoors, move to a clear area away from trees, buildings, and overhead electrical wires and poles. If you’re driving, pull to the side of the road and stop. Avoid stopping under overhead hazards.



What NOT To Do

- DO NOT get in a doorway! In modern houses and buildings, doorways are no safer, and they do not protect you from flying or falling objects. Get under a table instead!
- DO NOT run outside! Trying to run during an earthquake is dangerous, you can easily fall or be injured by debris or glass.

After An Earthquake

- Be prepared for aftershocks. Check for injuries and provide first aid, if necessary.
- After larger quakes, Facilities units may check for gas leaks, electric and water lines. Shut off services, as needed, only if qualified. Only activate the Fire Alarm if there is a fire in your building.
- Turn on radio, news or social media for emergency information. Do not make telephone calls unless there is a severe injury. Free up phone lines by texting first, talking/calling only when necessary.
- Take your emergency supplies, car keys, cell phone, purse and/or wallet, with you. You may not be able to re-enter the building. Do not loiter, act decisively. DO NOT USE ELEVATORS.
- Evacuate after the shaking stops to the designated Emergency Assembly Point (EAP) if:
 - ✓ You see/smell smoke, fire, gas
 - ✓ Fire or sprinkler alarm activated
 - ✓ Other life-threatening hazards
 - ✓ Significant # of fallen objects
 - ✓ Glass breakage
 - ✓ Cracks in walls