

EARTHQUAKES

Earthquake damage can extend for miles from the epicenter of these traumatic shifts in the earth's crust, resulting in collapsed buildings, bridges and overpasses; cracked roadways; downed power lines; broken gas lines; fires; explosions; and landslides. Earthquakes at sea can trigger tsunamis that crash into and devastate islands and coastal areas.

Preparing Your Home

- Secure major appliances to both the floor and wall.
- Move large objects and breakable items to lower shelves.
- Fasten pictures and mirrors securely to walls.
- Install flexible pipe fittings to minimize breakage of gas and water lines.

Terms to Know

Aftershock

An earthquake of lesser intensity that occurs after the main earthquake.

Epicenter

The point on the earth's surface directly above the focus of the earthquake.

Fault

A fracture in the earth's crust.

Seismic Waves

Vibrations that travel out from the fault at hundreds of miles per hour. These waves are the leading cause of damage in an earthquake.



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During an Earthquake

- If you are inside a building, stay there.
- Hide under a table or desk, or crouch in a corner or against a wall. Use a doorway for shelter only if you know it is strongly supported.
- Stay away from windows and bookcases.
- If you are outside, stay there, but away from power lines, buildings and anything else that can fall.
- If you are in a vehicle, stay inside it but park in a safe place. Avoid stopping on bridges, near buildings or trees, or under overpasses and power lines.

After an Earthquake

- Be cautious—aftershocks can further damage weakened structures.
- Stay off the streets.
- Tune to radio or TV for the latest emergency information.
- Check your home for structural damage. If in doubt, call a qualified professional to inspect it.
- Inspect water pipes and electrical lines at your home.
- Check appliances and utilities. If you smell gas, open a window and leave, then call the gas company. Shut off the main gas valve.
- Open cabinets carefully.

Surviving a Tsunami

If you are near the shore and you feel an earthquake, or the water recedes noticeably from the shoreline, a tsunami (tidal wave) may be on its way. Do not attempt to watch for a tsunami. By the time the waves are visible, it is too late to escape. Move away from the beach to higher ground as fast as possible. Do not return until authorities say it is safe.