

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, lamps, glass, bookcases, etc.) than to die 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.org>.**

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 hazard. www.usgs.gov
- Maintain a battery-powered radio, flashlight, fresh batteries, blankets, and first aid kit at a readily-accessible location in your home.
- Know the location of (and how to operate) gas and water shutoff valves and electric fuse or 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 and install straps around water heaters and furnaces and securely attach straps to walls.
- Maintain one gallon of drinking water per person per day for a minimum of seven days.
- 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 in an earthquake is dangerous, as the ground is moving and you can easily fall or be injured by debris or glass.
- DO NOT believe the so-called "triangle of life"! In recent years, an e-mail has circulated which recommends potentially life threatening actions, the source has been discredited by safety experts.

After An Earthquake

- Be prepared for aftershocks. Check for injuries and provide first aid, if necessary.
- Check for fires and gas leaks. Check electric and water lines. Shut off services, as needed.
- Do not touch downed power lines.
- Turn on radio for emergency information. Do not use the telephone unless there is a severe injury.
- Stay calm and reassure others, especially children.