

ELEC - BETTER TOGETHER

ELIZABETH LOFTS EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Preparing For and Surviving an Earthquake

Know the signs of an earthquake.

During an earthquake, you may hear a roaring or rumbling sound that gradually gets louder. You may also feel a rolling sensation that starts out gently and, within a second or two, grows violent.

OR

You may first be jarred by a violent jolt. A second or two later, you may feel shaking and find it difficult to stand up or move from one room to another.

Learn the safe spots.

During an earthquake, most deaths and injuries are caused by collapsing building materials and heavy falling objects, such as bookcases, cabinets, and heating units.

- Learn the safe spots in each room of your home. A safe spot may be underneath a sturdy table away from walls or underneath your covers with a pillow over your head if you are already in bed.

Plan and practice what to do if an earthquake strikes.

By planning and practicing what to do if an earthquake strikes, you and your loved ones can learn to react correctly and automatically when the shaking begins.

- Get the entire family to practice an earthquake drill, especially if you have [children](#). Participating in an earthquake drill will help you and your loved ones understand what to do in case you are not with them during an earthquake.
- Make sure you and your children also understand the school's emergency procedures for disasters. This will help you coordinate where, when, and how to reunite with your children after an earthquake.

Drop, cover, and hold on during your earthquake drill.

- **DROP** down onto your hands and knees immediately. This position protects you from falling but still allows you to move if necessary.
- **COVER** your head and neck (and your entire body if possible) underneath a sturdy table or desk. If there is no shelter nearby, get down near an interior wall or next to low-lying

furniture that won't fall on you, and cover your head and neck with your arms and hands. Try to stay clear of windows or glass that could shatter or objects that could fall on you.

- **HOLD** on to your shelter (or to your head and neck) until the shaking stops. Be prepared to move with your shelter if the shaking shifts it around.

Create an evacuation plan.

If an earthquake happens, you and your loved ones may need to evacuate a damaged area afterward. By planning and practicing for evacuation, you will be better prepared to respond appropriately and efficiently to signs of danger or to directions by civil authorities.

- Take a few minutes with your family to discuss a home evacuation plan. Sketch a floor plan of your home, walk through each room, and discuss evacuation details.
- Mark where your emergency supply kit (including food, water, first aid, medicine) and fire extinguishers are located.
- Locate where utility switches or valves are located so that they can be turned off, if possible.
- Indicate the location of your family's emergency outdoor meeting place. The current ELEC plan has people assembling in the North Park blocks between Flanders and Glisan.

You should make a list of important information (emergency contacts numbers, insurance information, and important medical information) and [gather any important documents](#) (like medical documents, birth certificates, and passports). Store these items in a secure location like a fireproof or waterproof safe.

Items for your home

Assemble an [emergency supply kit](#) for your home. In addition to your standard emergency supply kit, some additional items that may help after an earthquake include the following:

- Sturdy shoes that can provide protection from broken glass, nails, and other debris
- Gloves (heavy and durable for cleaning up debris)
- Fire extinguisher (multipurpose, dry chemical type)
- A whistle or other signaling device carried in your purse or backpack

Prepare your home for earthquakes

To keep items from falling off open shelves, attach a wooden or metal guardrail to each shelf. You can also use fishing line for a less visible alternative.

You should also make sure to place heavy or large objects on lower shelves. Use Velcro®-type fastenings to secure some items to their shelves.

Make sure to inspect your home and its surrounding for any possible hazards and secure them if you can. Remember: anything can move, fall, or break during an earthquake or its aftershocks. Also some modifications may require approval by the Architectural Review Committee.

- Identify potential hazards in each room, including windows and other glass items, unanchored bookcases, furniture that can topple, items on shelves, and areas that could be blocked by falling debris. Secure them, where possible, with “L” brackets, corner brackets, aluminum molding, or eyebolts.
- Secure cabinet doors by installing sliding bolts or childproof latches.
- Secure your large appliances (like refrigerators, water heaters, and stoves) with flexible cable, braided wire, or metal strapping. Wrap your water heater and attach it to wall studs.
- Move heavy mirrors and pictures hanging above beds, chairs, and other places where you sit or sleep. Otherwise, anchor these items with wire through eye screws bolted into wall studs. Or place screws on both sides, top, and bottom of the frame and screw these into the studs.
- Replace heavy ceramic or glass hanging planters with light-weight plastic or wicker baskets.
- Identify poisons, solvents, or toxic materials in breakable containers and move these containers to a safe, well-ventilated storage area. Keep them away from your water storage and out of reach of children and pets.

After the earthquake, remember that there could be after-shocks, and even though they may not be as severe, it is important that you follow the same emergency survival tips as during an earthquake.

- Check for injuries and apply first aid. Do not move the seriously injured unless they are in danger. To avoid congestion, do not use the telephone unless there is a serious injury or fire. Text instead if possible.
- Turn off the electricity, gas and water. Check for gas and fuel leaks before lighting matches. Check for water or sewer leaks and broken electrical wiring. Do not touch any wiring.
- Listen to the local radio, heed warnings and follow advice on staying safe.
- Avoid travelling unless for emergency (keep the streets clear for emergency vehicles). Stay calm and help others if possible.