

# EARTHQUAKE PREPAREDNESS: NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

Earthquakes can strike quickly and without warning. Their potential for loss of life, injury, and extensive property damage, are a concern for most Californians. If a major earthquake strikes, emergency workers will not be able to reach all of us right away. We can minimize the danger, damage and disruption for us, our families and our community. Part of public health preparedness is a community educated about how to be prepared in the event of an emergency.

Your best protection is preparation. Meet with your neighbors. Plan how you can work together after a disaster until help arrives. Know your neighbors' special skills (e.g., medical, technical) and consider how you could help neighbors with special needs (small children, disabled and elderly persons and pets). Create an earthquake disaster plan. The more you have planned ahead of time, the calmer and more assured you, your family and your neighbors will be. The following six steps can help keep you safe:

**#1 TALK:** Talk with your family about why you need to prepare for disasters. Calmly explain the potential dangers and plan to work together to share responsibilities. Make sure every family member knows their particular responsibilities. Designate an alternate in case a person is not there at the time.

**#2 PLAN:** Plan where to meet after a disaster. Choose two places:

- Right outside your home, in case of a sudden emergency (e.g. fire)
- Outside your neighborhood, in case you cannot return home or are asked to evacuate your neighborhood.

After determining your meeting places, you should also:

- Determine the best escape routes from your home. Also, determine the best two escape routes out of your neighborhood/community.
- Ask an out-of-town friend to be your "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Family members should call this person and tell them where they are. Everyone must know the contact's phone number.
- Learn how to care for pets. Many shelters don't allow pets because of health regulations. For more info, visit [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) Click on Animal Safety.

**#3 LEARN:** Each responsible family member should learn how and when to turn off utilities such as electricity, water and gas. Ask the fire department to show you how to use your fire extinguisher.

- Learn about your community's disaster warning signals: what they sound like and what you should do when you hear them.
- Learn where the safe spots are in your home for each type of disaster.
- Learn about the disaster plans at your business, your child's school or daycare center, or other places where you and your family spend time.
- Take a Red Cross first aid or CPR class.

**#4 CHECK SUPPLIES:**

- Review your disaster supplies; replace water & food every six months.
- Check batteries in smoke alarms yearly; install one on each level of your home.
- Check if you have adequate insurance coverage for each disaster.

**#5 TELL:** Tell your children how and when to call 911 or your local Emergency Medical Services number for help. Post emergency contact numbers by phone (fire, police, ambulance, etc.). Make emergency contact cards and make copies for each member of the family to carry with them. Include the name and information for your out-of-town contact.

**#6 PRACTICE:** Practice earthquake drills at home, school and work twice a year. Drive your planned evacuation route and plot alternate routes on a map in case main roads are impassible or gridlocked. Commit a weekend to update phone numbers, disaster supplies and review your plan with everyone.

**YOUR EARTHQUAKE EMERGENCY SUPPLIES SHOULD INCLUDE:**

- A battery powered or wind-up radio
- Flashlights with fresh batteries
- Batteries should be stored separately

- A first aid kit, including emergency medications and important medical records
- A cell phone (make sure it's charged)
- Store water in sealed unbreakable containers; one gallon per person per day for one week.

Water should be replaced every 6 months

- A water purification kit in the event you can't boil water if a "Boil Water Order" is issued by health and safety officials
- A one week supply of food that doesn't need refrigeration, a manual can opener and eating utensils
- Matches in a water tight container
- Trash bags, duct tape, sheets of plastic and disposable gloves
- Fire extinguishers
- Add a shovel, booster cables, fix-a-flat and flares for your car