



# 6 things every family needs to prepare for a major earthquake

## 1) Make Your Family's Plan

- Map out an evacuation plan for your home, and decide where and when to reunite your family should you be apart when an earthquake happens. Pick a place that is accessible from everyone's daytime routine (school and work), and that is relatively open. This is very important, as communication might not be possible.
- Choose a person outside the immediate area to contact if family members are separated. Long distance phone service will probably be restored sooner than local service.
- Create a list of emergency local and personal contacts, and have each member of your family carry a copy of the list. It should have phone numbers for local emergency agencies, your agreed-upon contact person out of the area, your reunion plan if you are separated when an earthquake happens, and any other critical information your family may need.
- Know the policies of the school or daycare center your children attend. Make plans to have someone pick them up if you are unable to get to them.
- If you have a family member who does not speak English, prepare an emergency card written in English indicating that person's identification, address and any special needs such as medication or allergies. Tell that person to keep the card with him/her at all times.

## 2) Stash an Earthquake Bag

Stock up on earthquake supplies and have them in a ready-to-go place, like under the bed or by the door. Make sure everyone knows where to find your bag. Your bag should have at least the following:

- Three-day supply of food and water and a manual can opener.
- First aid and hygiene supplies.
- Waterproof matches and/or flint and steel.
- Communication devices- radio, walkie-talkie, HAM radio, whistle, etc.
- Shelter, blankets or sleeping bags, extra clothing and rain gear.
- Tools- knife, scissors, plastic sheeting, duct tape, local map, etc.
- Protection- goggles, gloves, hard hat, sturdy shoes, dust mask, etc.
- Light- flashlight with extra batteries, light sticks, headlamp, solar light, etc.
- Personal items- glasses, contact lenses, medications, baby supplies, pet food and supplies, towels, etc.
- Items to keep you busy or entertained- deck of cards, games and activities for children, etc.

### 3) Be Resourceful with Water

Oftentimes the first things to go are electricity and water. Staying hydrated is the most basic and urgent of human needs. You should have water for everyone in the family for 72 hours in your earthquake bag, but there are other places you can find water in a pinch. Know them:

- The bathtub- after an earthquake, turn on your bathtub and fill it up. Having that much water at your disposal is key in a crisis.
- Ice cubes- a great source of water.
- Toilet tank- no one's first choice, but it is clean water.
- Hot water heater- you can drain and use for drinking water.

### 4) Utility Shutoff

Many times it's the fires that stem from earthquakes that wreak the most havoc - look up San Francisco's 1906 earthquake for proof! Oftentimes gas lines burst or leak, giving a flame plenty of fuel to spread into a devastating fire. Turning off gas lines after a significant earthquake is important!

- Locate the shutoff valves for water, gas and electricity. Learn how to shut off the valves before a quake happens. If you have any questions, call your utility company. If a special tool is required to turn off your utility, get one and secure it near the shutoff valve.

### 5) Make Copies

- Make copies of vital records and keep them in a safe deposit box in another city or state. Make sure your originals are stored safely. Keep copies of important documents (like ID, passport, insurance cards) in your Earthquake Bag.
- Keep extra cash and change. If electricity is out, you will not be able to use an ATM.
- Take photos and/or videos of your valuables. Make copies and keep them in another city or state.

### 6) Practice Makes Perfect

- Conduct earthquake drills every six months with your family to make sure you are ready.
- Know the safest place in each room because it will be difficult to move from one room to another during a quake.
- Establish all the possible ways to exit your house. Keep those areas clear, and practice evacuation.

Living in the Pacific Northwest means we need to take precautions to prepare ourselves and our families for the potential of a major earthquake. Having food and water, supplies, and a plan in place is crucial. Encourage your neighbors to do the same; we survive best as a community when each household is prepared individually!

**To view more emergency preparedness tips, visit us at: [www.bifd.org](http://www.bifd.org)**

**To learn about the Map Your Neighborhood program, email us with your request at: [contact@bifd.org](mailto:contact@bifd.org)**