



# Earthquake

See a [map of the earthquakes that happened this past week](#)

## How can I prepare?

- Become aware of fire evacuation and earthquake plans for all of the buildings you occupy regularly.
- Pick safe places in each room of your home, workplace and/or school. A safe place could be under a piece of furniture or against an interior wall away from windows, bookcases or tall furniture that could fall on you.

### **Did you know?**

**Doorways are no stronger than any other part of the structure. During an earthquake, get under a sturdy piece of furniture and hold on. This will provide some protection from falling objects that can injure you during an earthquake.**

- Practice drop, cover and hold on in each safe place. If you do not have sturdy furniture to hold on to, sit on the floor next to an interior wall and cover your head and neck with your arms.
- Keep a flashlight and sturdy shoes by each person's bed.
- Make sure your home is securely anchored to its foundation.
- Bolt and brace water heaters and gas appliances to wall studs.
- Bolt bookcases, china cabinets and other tall furniture to wall studs.
- Hang heavy items, such as pictures and mirrors, away from beds, couches and anywhere people sleep or sit.
- Brace overhead light fixtures.
- Install strong latches or bolts on cabinets. Large or heavy items should be closest to the floor.
- Learn how to shut off the gas valves in your home and keep a wrench handy for that purpose.
- Learn about your area's seismic building standards and land use codes before you begin new construction.
- Keep and maintain an emergency supplies kit in an easy to access location.

## What should I do during an earthquake?

### If you are inside when the shaking starts...

- Drop, cover and hold on. Move as little as possible.
- If you are in bed, stay there, curl up and hold on. Protect your head with a pillow.
- Stay away from windows to avoid being injured by shattered glass.
- Stay indoors until the shaking stops and you are sure it is safe to exit. If you must leave the building after the shaking stops, use stairs rather than an elevator in case there are aftershocks, power outages or other damage.
- Be aware that fire alarms and sprinkler systems frequently go off in buildings during an earthquake, even if there is no fire.

### If you are outside when the shaking starts...

- Find a clear spot and drop to the ground. Stay there until the shaking stops (away from buildings, power lines, trees, streetlights).
- If you are in a vehicle, pull over to a clear location and stop. Avoid bridges, overpasses and power lines if possible. Stay inside with your seatbelt fastened until the shaking stops. Then, drive carefully, avoiding bridges and ramps that may have been damaged.
- If a power line falls on your vehicle, do not get out. Wait for assistance.
- If you are in a mountainous area or near unstable slopes or cliffs, be alert for falling rocks and other debris. Landslides are often triggered by earthquakes.

## What do I do after an earthquake?

- After an earthquake, the disaster may continue. Expect and prepare for potential aftershocks, landslides or even a tsunami. Tsunamis are often generated by earthquakes.
- Each time you feel an aftershock, drop, cover and hold on. Aftershocks frequently occur minutes, days, weeks and even months following an earthquake.
- Check yourself for injuries and get first aid, if necessary, before helping injured or trapped persons.
- Put on long pants, a long sleeved shirt, sturdy shoes and work gloves to protect against injury from broken objects.
- Look quickly for damage in and around your home and get everyone out if your home is unsafe.
- Listen to a [portable, battery operated or hand crank radio](#) for updated emergency information and instructions.
- Check the telephones in your home or workplace to see if you can get a dial tone. Make brief calls to report life threatening emergencies.
- Look for and extinguish small fires. Fire is the most common hazard after an earthquake.
- Clean up spilled medications, bleach, gasoline or other flammable liquids immediately.
- Open closet and cabinet doors carefully as contents may have shifted.
- Help people who require special assistance, such as infants, children and the elderly or disabled.
- Watch out for fallen power lines or broken gas lines and stay out of damaged areas.

- Keep animals under your direct control.
- Stay out of damaged buildings.
- If you were away from home, return only when authorities say it is safe to do so. Use extreme caution and examine walls, floors, doors, staircases and windows to check for damage.
- Be careful when driving after an earthquake and anticipate traffic light outages.

## **Recovery**

### **As you rebuild**

- Install strong latches or bolts on cabinets.
- Place large and heavy objects and breakable items (bottled foods, glass or china) on lower shelves.
- Anchor overhead lighting fixtures to joists.
- Anchor top-heavy and freestanding furniture such as bookcases, china cabinets and other tall furniture to wall studs to keep these from toppling over in an earthquake.
- Secure gas appliances to the floor to prevent them from tipping over in an earthquake.
- Use heavy gauge metal strapping, sometimes called "strap iron" or "plumber's tape," to anchor the water heater to wall studs to keep it from moving or tipping. Find out if there are local building codes that describe the type of metal strapping that may be required in your area.

### **Ask a professional to**

- Install flexible fittings to avoid gas or water leaks.
- Bolt the frame of the house to the foundation.
- Repair deep cracks in ceilings and foundations and make sure they are not indications of structural damage.
- Provide structural engineering design advice. Ask about home repair and strengthening tips for exterior features, such as porches, decks, sliding glass doors, canopies, carports and garage doors.

### **For additional information:**

- [State Civil Defense](#)
- [Hawaii County Civil Defense](#)
- [USGS](#)
- [FEMA](#)