

Earthquake safety awareness will contribute to family safety

The following is a summary of survival points to consider for your own safety and survival plans:

- Be ready to be on your own after a significant earthquake. Local emergency responders and support services will be overwhelmed. Have a 72 hour emergency kit or plan for work and home.
- When outside during an earthquake, check your surroundings. Avoid power lines. Try not to stay on, or be under, bridges or docks. When around buildings, take cover from falling debris and glass. The overwhelming hazard is falling objects or debris. If driving, pull over to a safe area and ride it out.
- Know about the structure you are in. A basic review of the structure you work and live in will give clues to earthquake hazards and your survivability. Examples: older structures made of brick have a tendency to break apart due to the lack of reinforcement. Many wood-framed residential homes withstand earthquakes very well (the principle hazard is falling objects). If possible, have a building inspector check your structure for earthquake safety.
- After a significant earthquake do not turn electricity on or use candles until the lack of flammable gasses is confirmed. Use flashlights for illumination and as a fire safety measure.
- The number one cause of injury is falling debris. The less likely event is to be trapped, injured or killed by falling structural members. In either case, the "Duck, Cover and Hold" procedure has validity. Points to consider include: Choose sturdy objects (close to bearing walls if possible), non-rolling, away from windows if possible to "duck and cover" under.
- Once an earthquake ends there will be aftershocks. Some will be significant and weaken structures. Displaced objects and debris are susceptible to falling. After the initial earthquake and after each aftershock, re-evaluate your surroundings for safety and survivability.
- Have an emergency communication plan for your family and workplace. In this age of wireless communication, sudden collapse of normally reliable communication systems will occur. It is a good idea to have one hard-wired phone; outgoing long distance service may still work when local calls are unavailable. Having an out of state contact for emergencies can provide invaluable reassurance to separated family members during major emergencies.