



Step 2: Plan to Be Safe

Plan to be safe by creating a disaster plan and deciding how you will communicate in an emergency.

Will everyone in your household do the right thing during the violent shaking of a major earthquake? Before the next earthquake, get together with your family or housemates to plan now what each person will do before, during and after.

Once the earthquake is over, we will have to live with the risk of fire, the potential lack of utilities and basic services, and the certainty of aftershocks. By planning now, you will be ready. This plan will also be useful for other emergencies.

Planning for an earthquake, terrorist attack, or other emergency is not much different from planning for a party or vacation. Make sure that your emergency plan includes evacuation and reunion plans; your out-of-state contact person's name and number; the location of your emergency supplies and other pertinent information. By planning now, you will be ready for the next emergency.

Plan NOW to be safe during an earthquake:

Practice "drop, cover, and hold on." (See [Step 5](#))
Identify safe spots in every room, such as under sturdy desks and tables.
Learn how to protect yourself no matter where you are when an earthquake strikes.

Plan NOW to respond after an earthquake:

Keep shoes and a working flashlight next to each bed.
Get a fire extinguisher for your home. Your local fire department can train you and your family to use it properly.
Teach everyone in your household to use emergency whistles and/or to knock three times repeatedly if trapped.
Rescuers searching collapsed buildings will be listening for sounds.

Identify the needs of household members and neighbors with special requirements or situations, such as use of a wheelchair, walking aids, special diets, or medication.

Take a Red Cross first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training course. Learn who else in your neighborhood is trained in first aid and CPR.

Know the location of utility shutoffs and keep needed tools nearby. Make sure you know how to turn off the gas, water, and electricity to your home. Only turn off the gas if you smell or hear leaking gas.

Install smoke alarms and test them monthly. Change the battery once a year, or when the alarm emits a "chirping" sound (low-battery signal).

Work with your neighbors to identify who has skills and resources that will be useful in an emergency, and who may need special attention (children, elderly, disabled, etc).

Check with your city or county to see if there is a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) in your area. If not, ask how to start one.

Plan NOW to communicate and recover after an earthquake:

Select a safe place outside of your home to meet your family or housemates after the shaking stops.
Designate an out-of-area contact person who can be called by everyone in the household to relay information.
Provide all family members with a list of important contact phone numbers.

Determine where you might live if your home cannot be occupied after an earthquake or other disaster.
Know about the earthquake plan developed by your children's school or day care. Keep your children's school emergency release card current.

Keep copies of essential documents, such as identification, insurance policies, and financial records, in a secure, waterproof container, and keep with your disaster supplies kits. Include a household inventory (a list and photos or video of your belongings).

