



Step 7: Reconnect and Recover.

Restore daily life by reconnecting with others, repairing damage, and rebuilding community.

In the days and weeks that follow a big earthquake, your family, friends and neighbors can come together to start the process of recovery.

Once you have dealt with urgent and immediate needs after an earthquake, continue to follow the plan you prepared in advance. Aftershocks will continue to happen for several weeks after major earthquakes. Some may be large enough to cause additional damage. Always be ready to drop, cover, and hold on.

Following a major disaster, communication will be an important step in your recovery efforts. Turn on your portable radio for information and safety advisories. If your home is damaged, contact your insurance agent right away to begin your claims process. For most Presidentially declared disasters, resources will also be available from federal, state, and local government agencies.

Your recovery period can take several weeks to months or longer. Take the actions listed below to be safe and to minimize the long-term effects of the earthquake on your life.

The first days after the earthquake...

Use the information you put together in your disaster plan and the supplies you organized in your disaster kits. Until you are sure there are no gas leaks, do not re-enter your home. Also, do not use open flames (lighters, matches, candles, or grills) or operate any electrical or mechanical device that can create a spark (light switches, generators, motor vehicles, etc.). Never use the following indoors: camp stoves, gas lanterns or heaters, gas or charcoal grills, or gas generators. These can release deadly carbon monoxide or be a fire hazard in aftershocks. Following aftershocks, continue to check for gas leaks, chemical spills, damaged electrical wiring and broken water pipes.



- Take pictures of any damage to your property and home.
- Contact your insurance agent or company right away to begin your claims process. Keep records of any repair or cleaning costs.
- Check on the condition of your neighbors, especially those who are seniors or disabled.

Be in communication

- Monitor local radio or television reports about where to get emergency housing, food, first aid, clothing and financial assistance.
- Place all phones back on their cradles.
- Update your out-of-area contact, tell them your status, then stay off the phone. Emergency responders need to use the phone lines for lifesaving communications.

Food and water

- If power is off, plan meals to use up refrigerated and frozen foods first. If you keep the door closed, food in your freezer may be good for a couple of days. Save canned goods for later.
- Listen to your radio for safety advisories.
- If your water is off or unsafe, you can drink from water heaters, melted ice cubes, or canned vegetables. Avoid drinking water from swimming pools or spas.
- Do not eat or drink anything from open containers that are near shattered glass.



Step 7: Reconnect and Recover (Continued).

The first weeks after the earthquake...

This is a time of transition. Although aftershocks may continue, you will now work toward getting your life, your home and family, and your routines back in order. Emotional care and recovery are just as important as healing physical injuries and rebuilding a home. Make sure your home is safe to occupy and not in danger of collapse in aftershocks. If you were able to remain in your home or return to it after a few days, you will have a variety of tasks to accomplish:

- If your gas was turned off, you will need to arrange for the gas company to turn it back on.
- If the electricity went off and then came back on, check your appliances and electronic equipment for damage.
- If water lines broke, look for water damage.
- Locate and/or replace critical documents that may have been misplaced, damaged, or destroyed.
- Contact your insurance agent or company right away to begin your claims process.
- Contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Small Business Administration, or other federal and state agencies to find out about financial assistance for your home, apartment, farm or business. To find out about financial assistance by visiting www.fema.gov/apply-assistance.
- If you need repairs to your home, check with the Contractors State Licensing Board to ensure your contractor is fully licensed. Fraud is common following a disaster.
- Talk with your family about how they are feeling. Children and older adults are of special concern in the aftermath of disasters. Contact local faith-based organizations, voluntary agencies, or professionals for counseling.
- Reach out to neighborhood or community organizations and get involved. Your voice is important in deciding how your community will rebuild in the years to come.

If you cannot stay in your home...

If your home is structurally unsafe or threatened by a fire or other hazard, you need to evacuate. However, shelters may be overcrowded and initially lack basic services, so do not leave home just because utilities are out of service or your home and its contents have suffered moderate damage. If you do evacuate, tell a neighbor and your out-of-area contact where you are going. As soon as possible, set up an alternative mailing address with the post office in person or online with the USPS.

Take the following, if possible, when you evacuate:

- Personal disaster supplies kits
- Medications and eyewear
- Supply of water, food, and snacks
- Blanket/pillow/air mattress or sleeping pad
- Change of clothing and a jacket
- Towel and washcloth
- Diapers, food, and other supplies for infants
- A few family pictures or other comfort items
- Personal identification and copies of household and health insurance information



Do not take to a shelter:

- Pets (Service animals for people with disabilities are allowed; take food for them. Have a plan for your pets in advance.)
- Large quantities of unnecessary clothing or other personal items
- Valuables that might be lost, stolen, or take up needed space

Once a Presidential Declaration has been issued, FEMA may activate the Individuals and Households program www.fema.gov/about/process. This program includes:

- Home-repair cash grants; the maximum Federal grant available (as of 2005) is \$26,200
- Housing Assistance in the form of reimbursement for short-term lodging at a hotel
- Rental assistance for as long as 18 months in the form of cash payment
- If no other housing available, FEMA may provide mobile homes or other temporary housing

