



Step 1: Secure Your Space

Secure your space by identifying hazards and securing moveable items.

Earthquake shaking can move almost anything, even large or heavy items. Imagine your home or workplace being picked up and shaken sideways – what would be thrown around? How can you prevent it?

START NOW by moving furniture such as bookcases away from beds, sofas, or other places where people sit, sleep, or spend a lot of time. Move heavy objects to lower shelves.

Then continue your “hazard hunt” to help identify and fix things such as unsecured [televisions](#), [computers](#), [bookcases](#), furniture, unstrapped [water heaters](#), etc. A comprehensive list of typical items at home or in commercial buildings, with recommendations for how to secure each, is on the menu at right.

Why is this important? Several people died and thousands were injured in the 1994 Northridge earthquake because of unsecured items such as toppling bookcases. According to a study from the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA), 55% of the injuries during this earthquake were caused by falling furniture or objects. Only one percent of injuries were caused by building damage. Other injuries were due to people falling or behaving dangerously. In addition, many billions of dollars were lost due to this type of damage (yes, Billions). Much of this damage and injury could have been prevented in advance through simple actions to secure these contents. This is why we recommend starting this step first.

Securing Your Space may also reduce injury or damage in other situations. For example, an NBC Today Show [report](#) showed that unsecured TVs that fall are injuring children across the country every day! So even if earthquakes are not common where you live or work, these suggestions are worthwhile to consider.

Basic “Get Started” List

Try securing at least one item every weekend until you get everything done. Start with what you can do for free. You may need to ask others for help or to borrow tools. Perhaps you might help them in return, or help others in your community. We’re all in this together!

No cost:

- Move heavy or large items to the floor or low shelves.
- Move things that can fall on you away from where you spend a lot of time.
- Move heavy or unstable objects away from doors and escape routes.

Low cost:

- Secure a [water heater](#) to wall studs with two metal straps.
- Secure top-heavy [furniture](#) and [appliances](#) to wall studs.
- Hang [mirrors and pictures](#) on closed hooks
- Secure [computers and TVs](#) with special straps.
- Prevent [small objects](#) from falling by using museum putty or wax.
- Install latches on kitchen [cabinets](#).



Many of these items may be available at your local hardware store, or from ShakeOut partner [ReadyAmerica](#).

A bit more work or cost:

- Use flexible connections where [gas lines](#) meet appliances (such as water heaters, ovens, and clothes dryers).
- Secure [overhead light fixtures](#).
- Secure free-standing wood stoves or fireplace inserts.