Earthquake Home Hazard Hunt

Recommendations for reducing earthquake hazards in your home are presented on the other side of this poster.

- Strap down computers
- Securely fasten or relocate heavy pictures and mirrors over beds
- Brace or replace masonry chimneys
- Strengthen garages that have living space above them
- Secure ceiling fans and hanging light fixtures
- Know how and when to shut off utilities
- Strap bookcases and shelves to walls to prevent tipping
- Brace water heaters
- Upgrade unbraced crawl space walls (or other foundation problems)
- Ensure that gas appliances have flexible connections
- Secure cabinets to wall studs; use latches to keep cabinet doors from flying open during an earthquake
- Prevent rolling or tilting of refrigerators
- Strap down televisions and other expensive or hazardous electrical components

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This poster has information for you and your family to help you find and fix areas of your home that might be damaged in an earthquake and that might injure family members during an earthquake. Information is also provided on planning for an earthquake and taking action afterward.

Your earthquake home hazard hunt should begin with all family members participating. Forethought, imagination, and common sense are all that are needed as you go from room to room imagining what would happen if the earth and house started shaking. Anything that can move, break, or fall when your house starts to shake is a potential hazard.

What would happen to heavy furniture, fixtures, and appliances?

Look at tall bookcases and shelves. How much would fall off the shelves? Would the whole bookcase topple, or is it anchored to the wall?

Think about fire safety.

Are there all flammable liquids, such as painting and cleaning products, in the garage or outside storage area? Be sure these items are secured on their shelves or stored away from heat sources and appliances, particularly your water heater and furnace.

Are your water heater secured? Metal studs can be used to fasten your water heater to the wood studs of the nearest wall.

What would happen to the house itself?

Look at the outside of your home. What about your chimney? Masonry chimneys are susceptible to cracking and falling in an earthquake. Be sure your chimney is anchored securely to the roof and foundation. Do you have a chimney on each level of your house?

Bracing Connections

Correcting Problems

To teach responsible members of your family how to turn off electricity, gas, and water at main switch or valves if gas or electric line is damaged or exposed.

Not do turn on gas unless an emergency exists. If gas is ever turned off, a professional must restore service. Contact your local utilities for more information.

Label the water shutoff valve, found where water enters the house. Also mark the main water shutoff valve, found with the meter in a concrete box in the sidewalk or yard.

Utilities

Wired wooden and steel walls are sometimes built up to the corner of the exterior foundation to support the house and create a sense of spaciousness. These walls carry the weight of the roof. During an earthquake, these walls can collapse if they are not braced or not braced properly for horizontal movement. If the walls fall, the house may shift or fall.

You can look under your house in the crawlspace to see whether there are roof and wall studs supporting the first floor. Check to see whether the studs are braced with plywood panels or diagonal wood sheathing. If your house has neither of these, the stool wood sheathing is probably insufficiently braced or not braced at all. Strengthen connections between posts and beams with bracing.

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Strengthen connections between posts and beams with bracing.

Walls are often the most vulnerable area in your home. Bracing and/or reinforcing the walls can protect your family and your home.

Bracing helps keep the house together, reducing the movement of the house during an earthquake and allowing it to remain safe.

Strengthen connections between posts and beams with bracing.

With your power of perception more finely tuned, you may wish to extend these suggestions to your workplace. Check to determine whether your company has an earthquake safety plan.

Children can share their new awareness in the classroom. Determine whether your school has a practical earthquake plan, whether earthquake drills are held, and what the policy is if an earthquake occurs while school is in session.

There are many sources—all relatively inexpensive.

Purchase and install a strap kit or bracing kit from your local Building Department or a licensed architect or engineer for recommendations on how to determine whether your foundation and walls are likely to be damaged in an earthquake and what upgrades may be needed. Check with local officials for permit requirements before starting work.

It is important to teach your family what to do in an earthquake. Because you don’t know where you and your family will be when an earthquake occurs, you can condition yourself and your family to react correctly and spontaneously when the first jolt or shaking is felt. An earthquake can happen anytime and anywhere.

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