

Prepare now for an earthquake in British Columbia

A guide for B.C. families and
individuals to prepare for surviving
a major earthquake.

Before the earthquake

Seismic experts say we can expect a major destructive earthquake in British Columbia. We don't know when this will happen. But we do live in a region where some of the largest earthquakes in the world occur.

When an earthquake occurs, your first warning may be a swaying sensation if you're in a building, a sudden noise or roar. Next, vibration, quickly followed by rolling up, down, sideways, rotating. It will be scary! It may last a few seconds or go on for a few minutes. The earth won't open up and swallow you. But you could be hurt by breaking glass, falling objects, and heavy things bouncing around. Be prepared for aftershocks.

You can't prevent an earthquake. But you can:

- be prepared to avoid injury
- be prepared to minimize damage to your home
- be prepared to survive afterwards for at least 72 hours without help.

Preparing now could save your life! An earthquake could hit B.C. at any time, so start preparing by developing your family emergency plan.

Your family should prepare and practice what to do during and after an earthquake.

Plan your needs. Delegate tasks. Write down and exercise your plan. If you have no family, make your individual plan with neighbors and friends.

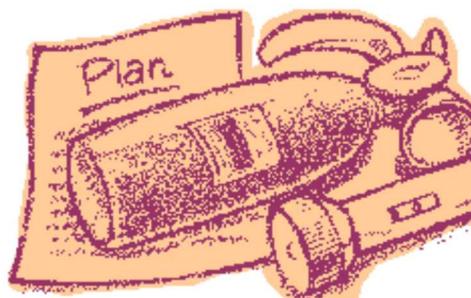
- Know the safe and dangerous places in your home.

Safe: under heavy tables or desks; inside hallways; corners of rooms or archways.

Dangerous: near windows or mirrors; under any objects that can fall; the kitchen... where the stove, refrigerator or contents of cupboards may move violently; doorways, because the shaking may slam the door on you. Practice taking cover.

- Train members of your family to use fire extinguishers.
- Sign up now for a first-aid course, including cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- Make an appointment now with your insurance broker to talk about your earthquake insurance. Check your coverage... it will affect your loss and financial ability to recover after an earthquake.

- Plan and practice evacuation.
- Talk to your children about what to do if they're at home, at school, if the quake separates your family. Become familiar with the school's earthquake plan.



- Arrange an out-of-the-area contact. Each family member should carry the contact phone number and address. Have an alternative family rendezvous if you can't get home.
- Remind your family to rely on emergency authorities for guidance. Broadcast reports on radio and television will have instructions.
- Also remind your family members that emergency phone numbers are in the inside cover of the telephone book. But use them only in an extreme emergency. Your telephone may not work after an earthquake, or it may take a while to get a dial tone.
- Make sure each family member knows how to shut off the utilities gas, electricity and water. (Don't shut off the gas unless there is a leak or a fire. If the gas is turned off, don't turn it on again... that must be done by a qualified technician).
- Your plan should include a list of where emergency supplies and equipment are stored.
- Share your emergency plans with neighbors.

Your emergency supplies

Be prepared to be on your own without help for 72 hours or more--- at home, in your car, at work. Assemble these emergency supplies and keep them in your emergency kit, stored in a secure place, ideally accessible from outside.

- First aid kit and instruction booklet.
- Shelter- a plastic tarp, a small tent, emergency ("space") blankets, or even some large garbage bags.
- Water- at least four litres of water per person, per day, in tight-lidded non-breakable containers. That's at least 12 litres per person for a three-day supply.
- Keep a supply of water purification tablets in your emergency kit. Water also can be made safe to drink by using four drops of liquid household bleach in 4 1/2 litres of clear water or 10 drops in 4 1/2 litres of cloudy water. Replace stored tap water at least every six months.
- If the water is still running, fill a bathtub and other containers. Remember, there's water available too in a hot water tank and toilet reservoir.
- Food- keep a suply of non-perishable food handy, such as canned and dehydrated food, dried fruit and canned juices. Rotate periodically to keep them fresh. Remember a manual can opener.
- Flashlight and spare batteries. Keep the flashlight near your bed. Batteries should be separate in your kit.

- Battery AM/FM radio and spare batteries, stored separately in waterproof bags.
- Essential medication and supplies for infants, elderly persons and those with special needs. Keep at least a one-week supply in your emergency kit. Include copies of prescriptions for your medicine and glasses.
- Personal toiletry items- toilet tissue, soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, etc.
- Class ABC fire extinguisher. Keep it in a handy location in your home, after testing according to directions.
- Wrench (crescent or pipe) to turn off natural gas. Keep it in a handy place or in your emergency kit.
- Shoes- heavy enough to protect from broken glass and other debris. Keep them handy, wherever you are.

Other items you may wish to include:

- gloves, outdoor/winter clothing
- waterproof matches and candles- but don't use them if there are gas leaks or spilled flammable liquids
- money, including coins (25 cents) for telephones, because banks and credit cards may not be usable
- a sleeping bag for each member of your family
- garbage bags
- a portable toilet
- rope, heavy tape
- a crowbar or prybar
- a gasoline generator and a rated extension cord
- earthquake buddies for children (eg: stuffed animal, doll game)
- evacuation pack for each person (see below)
- vehicle pack for each vehicle (see below)
- office pack (see below)

Evacuation pack

The items in this list are in addition to the supplies in your home emergency kit. They should be kept in a separate pack (eg., in a tote bag) which each person would take individually if you have to evacuate.

Remember packs for small children, the elderly, the handicapped in your home. The evacuation pack should be stored in a secure place with your other emergency supplies.

- food- dehydrated, dried fruit, high-energy bars, etc- enough for 72 hours
- first aid kit and booklets

- survival manual
- flashlight and batteries
- money, including coins
- photographs of your family, friends
- gloves and other warm clothing



Supplement those with items from your emergency supplies stored at home, including:

- bottled water- (ideally) 12 litres for 72 hours
- cooking utensils
- portable radio and batteries
- medications and toiletry items

Vehicle pack

The items in this list are in addition to the supplies in your home emergency kit. Keep them in a separate pack (eg: a tote bag) in your vehicle. There should be a pack for each vehicle in your household.

- booster cables, tools
- bottled water- at least four litres
- canned food, dried fruit, nuts and a manual can opener
- outdoor clothing and a backpack
- sleeping bag(s), "space" blankets
- first aid kit, medication
- flashlight and spare batteries
- waterproof matches, candles
- toilet tissue, towelettes, "baggies"
- money, especially coins

- map of the region in which you live
- pen/pencil and paper

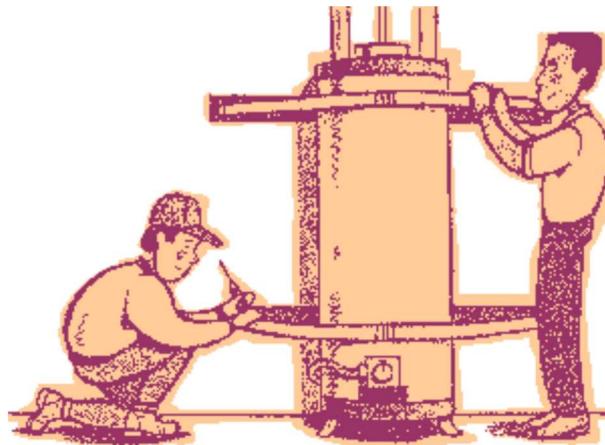
Also, keep your vehicle's gas tank at least 1/4 full.

Office pack

The items in this list are in addition to the supplies in your home emergency kit. Keep them in a separate pack (eg: in a tote bag) stored in a convenient place in your office, handy to walk home or to safety.

- gloves, heavy shoes, outdoor clothing
- emergency ("space") blankets
- flashlight, radio and batteries (stored separately in waterproof bags)
- a whistle
- dried fruit, nuts, high-energy food bars
- small photos of your family, friends
- piece of paper with your name, address and medical information

Preparing your Home



Go through your home, imagining what could happen to each part of it if it were shaken violently.

If you live in a condo or apartment building, you may experience more sway and less vibration than in a single-storey building.

Work with your building or strata corporation manager to help quake-proof your home. Seek advice from professionals (insurance, engineers, architects) if you are unsure what to do.

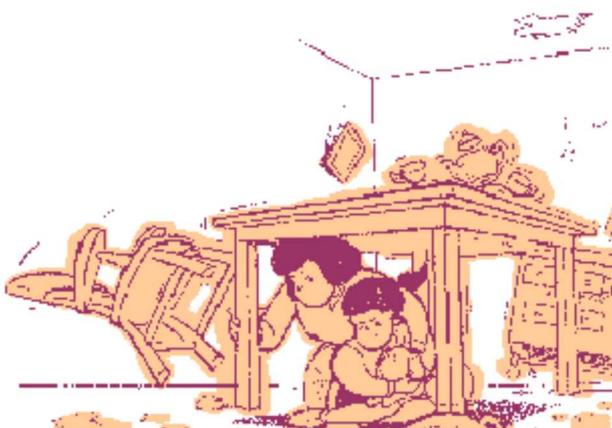
Previous earthquakes have proven that these items need attention:

- Check for home hazards: Is the house bolted to its foundations? Are the walls braced? Chimneys weak? Are roof tiles loose? Make necessary repairs now!
- Tie down your water heater and other appliances that could break gas or water lines if they topple.

- Secure top-heavy furniture (eg: shelving units) to prevent tipping. Keep heavy items on lower shelves.
- Fix mirrors and other hanging objects so they won't fall off hooks.
- Locate beds away from chimneys, windows, heavy pictures, etc. Closed curtains will help keep broken window glass off nearby occupied beds.
- Put anti-skid pads (eg: Velcro) under TVs, VCRs, computers and small appliances.
- Store valuable documents and special small keepsakes in a fire-resistant place.
- Keep sturdy shoes and outdoor clothing handy.
- Use child-proof or safety latches on cupboards to stop contents from spilling out.
- Keep flammable items and household chemicals away from heat and where they can't spill. Keep them in a safe cupboard if they can't be stored in an outside shed.
- Put plywood up in the attic on joists around each chimney to help prevent bricks and mortar from coming through a ceiling.

During the earthquake

Preparations for an earthquake include knowing what to do while it is happening. By learning and practicing what you should try to do, you will be more able to remain calm enough to protect yourself and help others. Even if you have a plan for your home, you may be away. Know what to do, wherever you are. In summary, you should take cover and stay there.



- If you're inside your home, stay there. Get out of the kitchen... safer places are inside halls, in corners, in archways. Take cover under a heavy table, desk or any solid furniture that you can get under and hold onto. Protect your head and face. Doors may slam on your fingers if you're in a doorway. Avoid areas near windows.
- If you're in a yard outside your home, stay there and get clear of buildings and wires that could fall on you.
- Don't go outside where you may be hit by falling debris... sidewalks next to tall buildings are particularly dangerous.
- Avoid elevators... if you're in an elevator when an earthquake happens, hit all floor buttons and get out when you can. High rise residents will hear fire alarms go off and electricity may fail.
- If you're in a vehicle, pull over to the side (leave the road clear), away from bridges, overpasses and buildings. Stay in your vehicle.
- If you're in a crowded public place, take cover and watch that you don't get trampled. In shopping

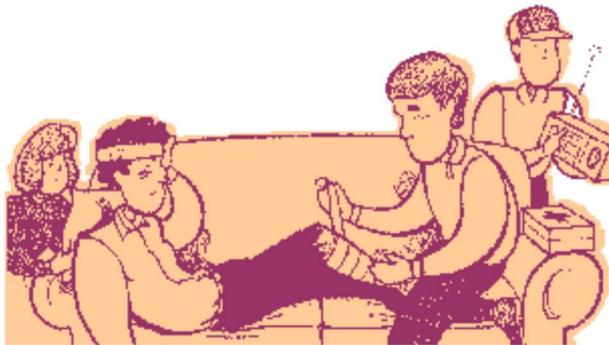
centres, take cover in the nearest store and keep away from windows, skylights and display shelves of heavy objects.

- Remain in a protected place until the shaking stops. Anticipate aftershocks... they may occur soon after the first quake.
- Try to remain calm and help others.

After the earthquake

*Preparations for an earthquake also include knowing what to do, and not to do, after the shaking stops... when there is danger from after shocks, fires, falling building materials, debris, etc. **Remain calm.** You may have to take charge of others. Take care of life-threatening situations first. Remember, you may be on your own for 72 hours or more.*

- Check your home for structural damage and other hazards.
- Check yourself and others nearby for injuries... administer first aid quickly and carefully.
- If you are evacuating, locate and take your pack of emergency supplies with you.



- Check utilities but do not shut them off unless damaged. Leaking gas will smell. Don't light matches or turn on light switches... until you are sure there are no gas leaks or flammable liquids.
- Wear sturdy shoes, gloves and protective clothing if it's winter and/or if there's debris, particularly broken glass.
- Check your neighbors after looking after your own family. Your first help after an earthquake usually will come from family and friends.
- Place a HELP sign in windows if you need extra assistance.
- Confine frightened pets.
- Don't flush toilets if you suspect nearby sewer lines are broken.
- Secure your home against intruders.
- Turn on your battery-powered radio (or car radio) and listen for broadcast emergency instructions.
- Don't use your telephone, except in an extreme (life-threatening) emergency.
- Stay at least ten metres from downed power lines.
- Avoid waterfront areas because of the threat of large waves (tsunamis).

Want to do more?

Now that you've taken care of the basics, you may want to take additional steps to protect yourself and others. Remember- you may be on your own for 72 hours or more. What you do will depend on your particular situation. You could:

- Check with your insurance broker to learn if you have adequate earthquake insurance. Learn what your policy covers and determine if you are sufficiently protected to minimize your financial loss from an earthquake.
- Volunteer any special skills you have to your Municipal Emergency Program Co-ordinator.
- Involve your neighborhood in earthquake preparedness... by helping elderly neighbors to prepare their homes, by agreeing to check on each other after an earthquake and to care for pets.
- Plan for special needs for infants, the elderly and the handicapped, in case pharmacies and other stores are closed for several days. If your family includes people with impaired mobility, hearing or sight, see the list of useful contacts at the end of this document to get special preparedness details for them. If you depend on electric power for life support or a wheelchair, you may wish to have a small generator with extra fuel handy.
- Review the supplies that you would need to be self-sufficient and comfortable for at least 72 hours. In addition to basics, there are many items such as plastic sheets or dust masks that you may want to acquire, or perhaps games and comfort items for children. Sources of advice are shown below.

Planning for earthquakes will also help prepare you for many other emergencies.

Be prepared, not scared.



Want to find out more?

After you have followed the advice in this booklet, more local information on how to prepare for an earthquake should be available from your Municipal Emergency Program Coordinator. Call your City Hall, Municipal Hall, or District Office.

Assistance also may be available from officials at your local school board office, hospital, police and fire stations. Other sources for additional information include:

- Emergency Management BC
Victoria
(250) 952-4913
or an [EMBC Regional Office](#)
- Emergency Preparedness Canada
Victoria
(250) 363-3621
- Insurance Bureau of Canada
Vancouver
(604) 684-3635

Still need more information?

Every effort has been made, within the limited space available, to provide you with useful information to prepare effectively for an earthquake in B.C. However, some detailed information is available from technical sources, including a brochure for businesses in B.C.

If you require more information, please note your request on a piece of paper with your name, address and telephone number, then mail it to:

B.C. Earthquake Information
c/o Insurance Bureau of Canada
510 Burrard Street, Suite 1010
Vancouver, B.C V6C 3A8
Fax: (604) 294-1524

**For further information contact:
Your Local Emergency Program**



[Go to the Emergency Management Home Page](#)