Earthquake Safety Checklist

An earthquake is a sudden, rapid shaking of the earth caused by the breaking and shifting of rock beneath the earth’s surface. Earthquakes strike suddenly, without warning, and they can occur at any time of the year, day or night. Forty-five states and territories in the United States are at moderate to very high risk of earthquakes, and they are located in every region of the country.

Did you know?
Doorways are no stronger than any other part of the structure. During an earthquake, get under a sturdy piece of furniture and hold on. This will provide some protection from falling objects that can injure you during an earthquake.

How can I prepare?
☐ Become aware of fire evacuation and earthquake plans for all of the buildings you occupy regularly.
☐ Pick safe places in each room of your home, workplace and/or school. A safe place could be under a piece of furniture or against an interior wall away from windows, bookcases or tall furniture that could fall on you.
☐ Practice drop, cover and hold on in each safe place. If you do not have sturdy furniture to hold on to, sit on the floor next to an interior wall and cover your head and neck with your arms.
☐ Keep a flashlight and sturdy shoes by your bed.
☐ Learn how to shut off the gas valves in your home and keep a wrench handy for that purpose.
☐ Keep and maintain an emergency supplies kit in an easy-to-access location.

What should I do during an earthquake?
If you are inside when the shaking starts …
☐ Drop, cover and hold on. Move as little as possible.
☐ Stay away from windows to avoid being injured by shattered glass.
☐ Stay indoors until the shaking stops and you are sure it is safe to exit. If you must leave the building after the shaking stops, use stairs rather than an elevator in case there are aftershocks, power outages or other damage.
☐ Be aware that fire alarms and sprinkler systems frequently go off in buildings during an earthquake, even if there is no fire.

If you are outside when the shaking starts …
☐ Find a clear spot and drop to the ground. Stay there until the shaking stops (away from buildings, power lines, trees, streetlights).
☐ If you are in a vehicle, pull over to a clear location and stop. Avoid bridges, overpasses and power lines if possible. Stay inside with your seatbelt fastened until the shaking stops. Then, drive carefully, avoiding bridges and ramps that may have been damaged.
☐ If a power line falls on your vehicle, do not get out. Wait for assistance.

What do I do after an earthquake?
☐ After an earthquake, the disaster may continue. Expect and prepare for potential aftershocks, landslides or even a tsunami. Tsunamis are often generated by earthquakes.
☐ Check yourself for injuries and get first aid, if necessary, before helping injured or trapped persons.
☐ Look quickly for damage in and around your home and get everyone out if your home is unsafe.
☐ Listen to a portable, battery-operated or hand-crank radio for updated emergency information and instructions.
☐ Check the telephones in your home or workplace to see if you can get a dial tone. Make brief calls to report life-threatening emergencies.
☐ Stay out of damaged buildings.

Let Your Family Know You’re Safe
If your community experiences an earthquake, or any disaster, register on the American Red Cross Safe and WellWeb site available through RedCross.org to let your family and friends know about your welfare. If you don’t have Internet access, call 1-866-GET-INFO to register yourself and your family.