

Before, During, and After an Earthquake: Preparedness Steps

Earthquakes can occur in Indiana at any time. Citizens should plan and practice what to do in the event of an earthquake in order to properly respond before, during, and after the shaking begins.

Before an earthquake occurs:

- Prepare for three to seven days of electricity, water, gas, and telephone outages.
- Keep an [earthquake disaster kit](#) on hand, including a well-stocked [first aid kit](#), a supply of medicines required for life-threatening conditions, copies of important documents, extra money, a flashlight, a hand crank or solar-powered radio, extra batteries, blankets, drinking water and nonperishable food, and tools to shut off utilities. Store the kit in a secure, waterproof location that is easily accessible.
- Conduct calm family discussions about earthquakes. Decide upon an outdoor meeting location for your family to reunite after a quake and conduct in-home practice drills. Teach your household members to knock three times repeatedly if they were to become trapped inside your home.
- Conduct a thorough investigation of your home, checking for any defective wiring, leaky gas connections, and deep cracks in the ceiling or foundation that could pose a danger during a quake.
- Install flexible, corrugated pipe fittings to avoid gas and water leaks. Flexible fittings are more resistant to breakage. If recommended by your gas service provider, have an automatic gas shutoff installed that can be triggered by strong vibrations.
- Learn how to shut off all utilities in your home.
- Use bolts or straps to secure heavy items that may topple over, such as a bookcase, china cabinet, or water heater. Store heavy, hazardous, or flammable materials on low shelves or in secure cabinets. If you are a renter, ask your landlord to secure furniture and water heaters to the wall.
- Avoid placing heavy objects, such as shelves and picture frames, on walls where they could fall onto a bed or locations where your family would be sitting. Hang objects from closed hooks and secure corners with earthquake putty.
- Secure cabinet doors with latches to prevent items from falling out during an earthquake.

During an earthquake:

- **Drop, Cover, and Hold on!** Drop to the floor, get under a sturdy table, and hold on until the shaking stops. If your entire body does not fit underneath the furniture, position your body so that at least your head and neck are covered.
- If indoors, stay there; most injuries occur when people inside try to move to a different location or try to leave. Avoid windows, exterior walls, stairwells, elevators, and objects that could fall. Be aware that the electricity may go out and the fire alarm or sprinkler system may turn on.
- If outside, get into an open area. Stay clear of buildings, power lines, streetlights, and anything that can fall on you.

- If driving, move out of traffic as quickly as possible and shut off the engine. Avoid bridges and overpasses, and anything that could fall onto your car, such as trees, light posts, powerlines, and signs.
- If in bed, stay there. Hold on and protect your head with a pillow. Only move to a nearby safe place if you are under a heavy light fixture or something that may fall on you.
- If in a wheelchair, stay in it. Move to a safe location, lock your wheels, and cover your head and neck.

After an earthquake:

- Go to your predetermined outdoor meeting location. Check for injuries to others and provide assistance as needed.
- Check for and extinguish small fires. Clean up any spilled flammable liquids immediately.
- If you smell gas or hear a hissing sound, open a window and quickly leave the building. Shut off the main gas valve only if you suspect a gas leak. Return home only when it is declared safe. Once gas lines are turned off, service should be restored only by your service provider.
- Check appliances and electric lines for damage. Unplug any damaged appliances or light fixtures, and shut off power at the main fuse box if there are sparks, frayed wires, or if you smell something burning.
- Check for sewage and water line damage. If you suspect damage, avoid using the toilet until you call a plumber.
- Watch out for items that may have shifted in cabinets or closets that can cause further damage or injury upon opening the doors.
- If you are trapped under debris, do not light a match or move about. Cover your mouth with clothing and tap on a pipe or wall so rescuers can locate you. Only shout as a last resort, as it can cause you to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.
- If you are driving, watch out for road hazards, including fallen trees, power lines, and damaged bridges and roads. If a power line fell onto your car during the earthquake, stay inside until trained personnel remove the wire.
- Use the telephone only for emergencies. 911 systems will be overloaded after an earthquake. Keep the phone lines clear for emergency calls to get through.
- Listen to the radio for important information.
- Inspect your home for signs of structural damage, particularly to the foundation and chimney. Damage to these areas can pose serious safety hazards in the months after an earthquake. Do not enter a structurally compromised structure. Call a certified home inspector if you are unsure of your home's structural stability.
- Be prepared for aftershocks! Aftershocks can occur minutes, days, or months after an earthquake. Drop, Cover, and Hold on each time shaking occurs.