

BE READY FOR AN EARTHQUAKE



WE LIVE IN an earthquake zone where over 1200 small earthquakes are recorded each year. There is a real risk that one of these could be “the big one.” It could happen at any time of the day or night; on the weekend or a workday, in any season and in any weather.

May 6-12 is Emergency Preparedness Week in B.C. and nationally. Use this week to take action to prepare you and your family for any emergency.

How will you and your family fare?

To help test your earthquake readiness, see if you can answer “yes” to the following six questions:

Do I know what an earthquake might be like?

- Knowing what to expect can reduce panic and ensure you think clearly and act quickly.
- The first sign of an earthquake may be a loud bang or roar. The ground may start to pitch and roll like a ship for several seconds to several minutes.
- Over the following hours or days, aftershocks – smaller earthquake movements – can follow.

Do I know how to protect myself during an earthquake?

- Know in advance where the safest spots are at home, at work or at school, so you can go to one of these places as soon as you feel a quake.
- Indoors, the safest places are beneath sturdy furniture, beside a solid inside wall, or inside an inner hallway.
- Avoid windows. Stay away from heavy objects that can fall from ceilings, shelves and cupboards, or top-heavy furniture that could tip over. Never use an elevator.
- If you’re outdoors, stay in the open, away from trees, buildings and power lines.
- You could be driving when a quake hits. Stop your car away from overpasses, bridges and power lines and stay inside your vehicle.
- Once you’re in a safe place protect your head and hold on until all motion stops. Lock your wheels if in a wheelchair.
- All members of the family – especially children – should know what to do when an earthquake hits. A practice drill once a year is an excellent safety measure.

Do I know what to do when the motion stops?

- You or others may be injured. Treat yourself first, then assist others.
- If you smell gas, turn it off. Check for any small fires. Turn off the main water tap if necessary. Be aware of other possible hazards, such as broken glass or weakened walls.
- Check your phone and hang up the receiver if it is off the hook. Don't use your phone unless it is an emergency. Phone lines need to be open for emergency responders.
- If you and your family are OK, check on your neighbours to see if you can offer assistance. You can also put a large "OK" sign in your window to let emergency workers know that they can concentrate on other houses.
- A battery-operated radio or your car radio will link you to the instructions of _emergency workers and news in your community.
- Gather your emergency supplies together (see over). Keep everyone warm, fed and rested.

Do I know how I'll contact family members if we're separated when the earthquake strikes?

- Part of your earthquake preparedness should be to decide in advance on a meeting place. It could be your home – or a place that's more central to the places you and your family work or go to school in case the earthquake strikes during a workday.
- Agree on one out-of-area person that everyone will phone to report they are safe. Get every family member in the habit of carrying identification, medical alert information and emergency phone money and numbers at all times.
- If you live alone or need extra assistance because of a disability, make arrangements in advance for someone living nearby to check in with you if there is an earthquake. Keep a whistle on hand for signalling.

Do I have emergency survival kits in my home, car and work place?

- Everyone should be prepared to be self-sufficient for 72 hours following an _emergency like an earthquake.
- Important items to have in emergency kits include: three days of food and water per person, money, a battery-powered radio, flashlight, extra batteries, candles, waterproof matches, first-aid supplies, extra prescription medications, personal toiletries, cooking utensils, blankets or sleeping bags and extra clothing.

Have I taken measures to make my home safer and protect my property from a possible earthquake?

- There are a number of ways to prevent or reduce injuries and damage.
- Install latches on cupboards, and secure water tanks, top-heavy furniture, appliances or computers and other items against movement. Refer to emergency preparedness manuals that are available in bookstores and libraries.

Further Information:

For detailed information on preparing for an earthquake, visit the Provincial Emergency Program (PEP) Web site at: <http://www.pep.bc.ca>

Become involved in community emergency planning or contact your local government.

“HELP/OK” signs to display in your home or vehicle in an emergency situation are available from:

Provincial Emergency Program
P.O. Box 9201, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9J1
Phone: (250) 952-4913 Fax: (250) 952-4888

PEP offices are located in Kamloops, Nelson, Prince George, Surrey, Terrace, and Victoria.