

Earthquake Safety Tips from Assist America

If you are in a vehicle:

- Stop as quickly as safety permits and stay in the vehicle. Avoid stopping near, or under buildings, trees, overpasses, and utility wires.
- Stay seated in the car and wait until the earthquake is over.
- Stay calm, metal will protect you and your family from most debris and falling objects.
- The only exception to this is when you are in a garage or multi-level parking lot. When you are in a garage, get out of the car immediately, and crouch down next to the car.
- Do not try to rush back to your hotel or home. Most major earthquakes have aftershocks, which should not be underestimated.
- Proceed cautiously once the earthquake has stopped. Avoid roads, bridges, or ramps that might have been damaged by the earthquake.
- Wait for city or municipal relief efforts. You should not have to wait in your car for very long for relief efforts to arrive with food, water, and supplies.

If you are in a building:

- Steady yourself. Hold onto a solid object or get to the floor so that you do not fall. Try to hide under a piece of furniture.
- Quickly move to a safe location in the room such as under a strong desk, a strong table, or along an interior wall. The goal is to protect you from falling objects and be located near the structural strong points of the room. Avoid taking cover near windows, doorways, large mirrors, hanging objects, heavy furniture, heavy appliances, or fireplaces.
- Cover your head and neck. Use your hands and arms to protect these vital areas from falling objects.
- Your upper body should also be covered because that is what is holding your neck which is holding your head.
- If you have any respiratory disease, make sure that you cover your head with a t-shirt or bandana, until all the debris and dust has settled. Inhaled dirty air is not good for your lungs.
- Do not move. If it is safe to do so, stay where you are for a minute or two, until you are sure the shaking has stopped. Slowly and carefully leave the building.
- Remember, aftershocks are possible at any time, and are likely after a big earthquake.

- If you are trapped but can speak – call out for help without screaming so you do not lose all your energy. Also tap on things around you to see what may have the loudest noticeable sound. Try and remain calm. This is your best bet of getting noticed and helped.
- Do not turn electrical devices on or off. Simply switching a light switch could create a spark, which in turn could start a fire. These fires can be more deadly because they are near electrical cords.
- Stay away from structurally damaged areas. Wait until a police officer, a plumber, a firefighter, or relief worker inspects the area and pronounces it safe to enter.
- Do not drink water from the sink since it may be contaminated. The sewage will be damaged in major earthquakes, so do not flush the toilet.

If you are outdoors:

- Stay where you are unless you are somewhere unsafe. Observe your surroundings, especially if you are in an urban area. Keep in mind that even earthquake-proof buildings have a chance of falling. Do not attempt to run or drive away from an earthquake - this only increases your risk of injury.
- Move away from buildings, streetlights, power lines, and anything else that could fall.
- Seek shelter near a hill or in a wide-open area. If you are near objects that could fall on you, head somewhere without overhead hazards. If you can, seek shelter in a place where you are protected from the weather, but make sure that you are not somewhere where rocks and soil can fall on you when aftershocks occur. Do not seek shelter under a bridge, even a sturdy one. Some bridges can be earthquake-proof, but not completely safe as objects like signs or lights can still fall on to you.
- Stay away from buildings, power lines, or anything large or heavy that can fall on you. Also, as in a blizzard, do not walk near power lines, fallen streetlamps, or rubble.
- Wait a moment or two after the first quake before moving to any other place. It is best to do this because aftershocks right after an earthquake are usually the strongest. If you eventually leave, observe the safety rules above.

Sources include, but are not limited to: Redcross, WikiHow, geology.com, ready.gov and USGS.