



Preparing the Home Activity Guide

Following are some things you can do around your home to make it safer in a disaster. Choose the activities that work for you or your group.

5-Minute Activities

1. Test Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors.

✓ Free/Low-cost ✓ Easy

Take action to keep your household safe and to prevent small fires from growing into large fires.

TO DO NOW:

- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors by pushing the test button on each alarm, or in accordance with the manufacturer recommendations.
- Replace batteries in alarms that are not working, or replace the alarm if necessary.
- See also: <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/campaigns/smokealarms/alarms/index.shtm>



FEMA recommends changing batteries in your detectors twice a year: at the beginning and at the end of Daylight Savings Time. Replace your batteries now if you don't remember the last time the batteries were replaced. If the detectors are more than 4 or 5 years old, now is probably a good time to replace them.

2. Put a flashlight and a pair of shoes where each person sleeps.

✓ Free/Low-cost ✓ Kid-friendly ✓ Easy

There may be a lot of debris and broken glass on the floor after a major earthquake; cut and injured feet are common injuries.

TO DO NOW:

Put a pair of sturdy, closed-toe shoes under or near each person's bed. Put the items together in a container or sack and attach it to the bed so it won't be thrown out of reach in an earthquake.



For children, you can use the last pair of shoes they wore, oversized hand-me-downs, or a thrift store pair and replace it each time they grow out of a new pair. Put a flashlight inside the shoes to make it easy to find if the lights are out.

For adults, you can add useful items such as sturdy work gloves and a crowbar to open jammed doors. If you have a go-bag, this is a great place to store it as well.

3. Post an “OK” or “Need Help” Sign.



Free/Low-
cost



Kid-friendly



Easy

After a disaster you can post an “OK” or “NEED HELP” sign or door hanger in a visible location so responders will know if you need help right away.

TO DO NOW:

- Gather the members of your household to account for everyone.
- Using a thick marker, create a sign reading “OK” and one reading “NEED HELP” in large, clear letters.
- During the exercise, post the sign in a window that is visible from the street, or on your exterior door handle if your window is not visible from the street. You can also post both a window sign and a door hanger.
- Walk out of your unit to verify that the sign is visible and readable.

You can print out a door hanger sign here (created for Los Angeles but can be used here):
http://5steps.la/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/8_5Steps_Toolkit_Emergency_Door_English.pdf

Here are window signs you can print (created for British Columbia but can be used here):
http://www.embc.gov.bc.ca/em/hazard_preparedness/HELP-OK_sign.pdf

30-Minute Activities

4. Check Fire Extinguishers.



Free/Low-
cost



Easy

All homes should have well-maintained fire extinguishers. Portable fire extinguishers are valuable for immediate use on small fires. If you don’t have one for each level of your house, you can find one at a hardware store or big box store. Be sure to get an A, B, and C-rated one to be useful on all classes of fire.



TO DO NOW:

- Locate all of the fire extinguishers in your home or workplace.
- On extinguishers with a pressure gauge, check that the level is in the green zone.
- Ensure that the pin is in place on the handle.
- Look for a tag attached to the extinguisher with an expiration date. If expired or if there is no tag, you can take it to be recharged.
- If your manufacturer recommends it, shake or tap the extinguisher periodically to prevent the dry chemical powder from packing.
- Learn the acronym P.A.S.S.: **P**ull (the pin), **A**im (the nozzle), **S**queeze (the handle), and **S**weep (the base of the fire) with a back and forth motion.
- Never test the extinguisher. If you do, it must be recharged.
- See also: http://www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/home_fire_prev/extinguishers.shtm.



5. Remove Falling Hazards Over Beds and Play Areas.



Free/Low-cost



Kid-friendly

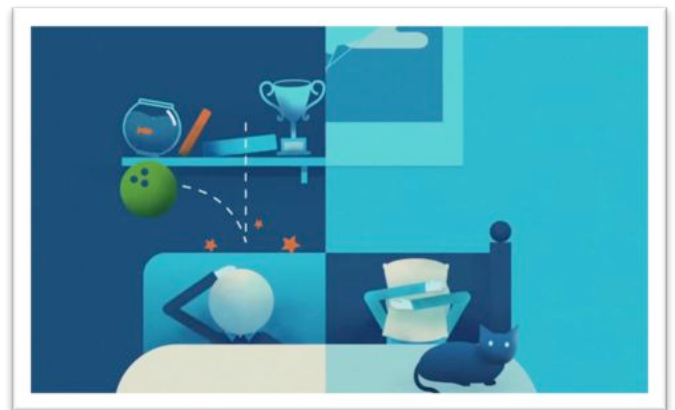


Easy

A simple way to improve the safety in your home is to move anything that can fall on a bed or play area during a quake.

TO DO NOW:

- Walk into each room of your home.
- Imagine the room is picked up by a giant and given a **huge** shake.
- What could fall on the bed or a play area? Heavy furniture, chimneys, vases & mirrors, shelves of books or toys, & art, big picture frames, or light fixtures? Move these items or reposition the beds for safety



6. Do a Home Earthquake Hazard Hunt.



Free/Low-cost



Kid-friendly



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Heavy items that can fall, shift or break in an earthquake can be dangerous for your family. A “Hazard Hunt” helps you find hazards and remove them if possible. In many cases, reducing a hazard can be as simple as moving a heavy item from a higher shelf to a lower shelf.

TO DO NOW:

Walk through each room of your home and look for safety hazards. Ask yourself these questions:

- Look for heavy items such as water heaters, tall bookshelves, televisions, heavy furniture, and wall hangings that need to be secured.
- Check and see if your cabinet doors have latches that will help prevent the doors from opening in an earthquake and the contents falling on the floor. Many items in the cabinets are glass that can end up broken on the floor creating a hazard.
- Look above beds and play areas for anything heavy that could fall in a quake, including heavy books, glass items, or brick chimneys.
- Are there heavy items that could block exit doors if they fall?
- Renters: To learn more about getting permission to brace heavy furniture, read the Renters’ and Apartment Dwellers’ Activity Guide.

For more info see these resources:

<http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=1666>

<http://www.shakeout.org/downloads/HomeHazardHunt.pdf>

Reduced-cost help is available to Berkeley households from the Community Energy Services Corporation (CESC). See information here <http://ebenergy.org/residential-services/seismic-safety-services/> or call (510) 981-7752.

Children can join adults in walking room by room and reviewing each room for hazards. Ask your children to imagine that each room is picked up by a giant and shaken – what would happen to the items inside?

Children may be particularly interested in checking their own rooms and the areas over their beds for falling hazards. Your kids could notice a hazard you never thought of!

2-Hour Activities

7. Inspect your water heater.

An unstrapped water heater could fall over in an earthquake, possibly breaking a gas line or causing flooding. Also, an intact water heater can be a good source of water if broken water lines cut off normal water service.

TO DO NOW:



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- Check to make sure your water heater is adequately tied back and braced to help prevent tipping over and/or sliding and breaking the gas and water lines.
- If you are not sure the water heater is adequately braced, you can contact a licensed plumber to inspect for proper bracing. Also have the plumber install flexible gas and water lines connecting to the hot water heater, if not already in place.
- Renters: Learn more about how to address an unstrapped water heater in the Renters' and Apartment Dwellers Activity Guide.

Kits are available for do-it-yourselfers with the skills to strap a water heater. Learn more here: <http://www.earthquakecountry.org/step1/waterheater.html>

Reduced-cost help with hot water heater strapping is available to Berkeley households from the Community Energy Services Corporation (CESC). See information here <http://ebenergy.org/residential-services/seismic-safety-services/> or call (510) 981-7752.

To learn how to get emergency drinking water from your water heater, visit: <http://www.wikihow.com/Get-Emergency-Drinking-Water-from-a-Water-Heater>.

8. Start a Disaster Kit.

Starting a disaster kit can be as simple as gathering supplies that you already have on hand in your home.

Do you have any of the following items already? You can start your disaster kit now by collecting them together in one box, plastic bin or duffle bag:

- Copies of important documents such as birth certificates, adoption papers, and insurance papers
- Vaccination and microchip records for pets; extra pet food
- Photocopies of written prescriptions, and if possible, a supply of prescription medications for all family members and pets (3-day minimum, 14-day recommended). Do not put prescription medications in your car or anywhere they can get hot. Keep them in a cool location.
- An extra pair of eye glasses or contact lenses and cleaning solution if you use them
- Solar-powered, hand-crank, or battery operated radio
- Flashlights and/or lamps and batteries
- Something to keep you from getting bored: cards, books, or games
- First Aid Kit
- At least three-days-worth of nonperishable food and water in bottles, cans, or pouches (read the Food and Water Activity Guide for more info)



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- Plastic bags for trash and sanitary needs
 - Work gloves
- Keep some cash readily available. In a major earthquake the ATM's may be out of service for a while and cash may be the only usable currency. Credit and debit cards may also be out of service for some time.

Place the kit in a location that is accessible to everyone in the house.

A more complete list of disaster kit items can be found here: <http://ncdisaster.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/handbook.pdf>

TO DO NOW:

If you already have any of the above items, put them in your kit. Congratulations, you've just made one huge leap toward disaster preparedness!