How to prepare for disaster

Check these pages to see whether your family is ready in case disaster strikes. In our area, that could be a major earthquake. Be prepared to spend a week without utilities, medical aid or communications.

Before it happens

Gather documents and cash

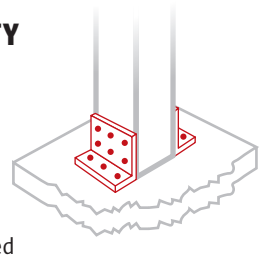
- ☐ **Store important documents** such as insurance policies, deeds, property records and birth certificates in a bank safe-deposit box. Store copies in your disaster-supplies kit.
- ☐ **Keep a stash of cash** or traveler's checks at home where you can quickly get them in case of evacuation.

Make a family emergency plan

- ☐ **Identify a safe place in each room** of your home and practice rapidly getting there. Best locations include under a sturdy desk or table, or beside a sturdy, large piece of furniture such as a sofa or bed. Avoid doorways; doors will bang open and shut in a large earthquake.
- ☐ **Practice home-evacuation drills**. Choose someplace nearby for your family to meet. Expect a lack of transportation.
- ☐ **Educate your children.** Get a copy of your school district's disaster policy regarding transportation and the release of students. Keep photos of family members in your wallet in case someone is missing.
- ☐ **Take a first-aid course**. Learn CPR.
- ☐ **Know where the nearest police and fire stations are**. Know the route to the nearest hospital emergency room. Keep critical phone numbers and your insurance-policy numbers by your phone and in your wallet.
- ☐ **Enter your "ICE" — In Case of Emergency — numbers on your cellphone** so emergency workers will know whom to contact if you're hurt. For example, enter "ICE husband John" and the phone number.
- ☐ **Meet your neighbors** and find out whether they have medical or other expertise. Plan to unite if your neighborhood becomes isolated. Help elderly, disabled or single-parent neighbors create an emergency plan. Get contact information for their relatives.
- ☐ **Fill in the spaces below and keep this page in a handy place.**

Evaluate your home

STRUCTURAL SAFETY

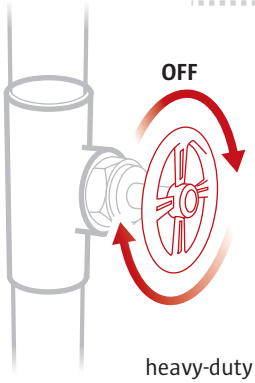


- ☐ **Make sure your home is bolted to the foundation** and the structure is properly reinforced.
- ☐ **Check roof, foundation, chimney and walls** for cracks and overall condition.

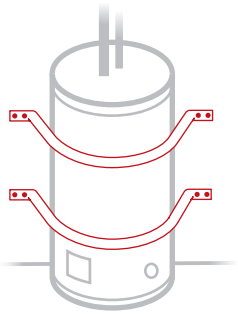
Information on retrofitting, including a list of trained local contractors and contacts, is available from Project Impact, a Federal Emergency Management Agency program. Check the Web site www.seattle.gov/projectimpact or call 877-2-BOLT-IT.

- ☐ **If you live in an apartment**, know where your building's utility controls are and how to use them.

PLUMBING

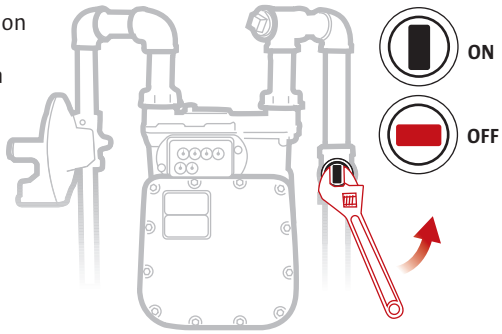


- ☐ **Family members should know how to shut off waterlines** in case of a leak in the house. Label the shut-off valve clearly; it's the first valve in the line after it enters the house.
- ☐ **Strap your water heater** (gas and electric ones) to studs in the wall with heavy-duty metal strips or to the floor to prevent gas leaks and possible fires from broken pipes. Home-improvement stores sell strapping kits.



GAS

- ☐ **All occupants should also know how and when to turn off the gas.** If you smell gas after an earthquake or other emergency, shut off the meter valve found at the first fitting on the supply pipe coming out of the ground. Use a wrench to turn the valve either way until it is perpendicular to the pipe. Keep a wrench attached to the gas meter with a wire. Call the gas company to get service restored.



FAMILY

Emergency meeting place:

Out-of-state contact, phone number:

Insurance company and phone numbers:

Insurance policy numbers:

Driver's license numbers:

NEIGHBORHOOD

Neighbor's names, phone numbers:

UTILITY COMPANIES

Electricity:

Water:

Natural gas:

Phone:

EMERGENCY

Call 911 in life-or-death situation

Doctor's phones:

Pharmacy phone:

Police nonemergency phone:

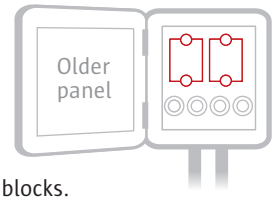
Fire nonemergency phone:

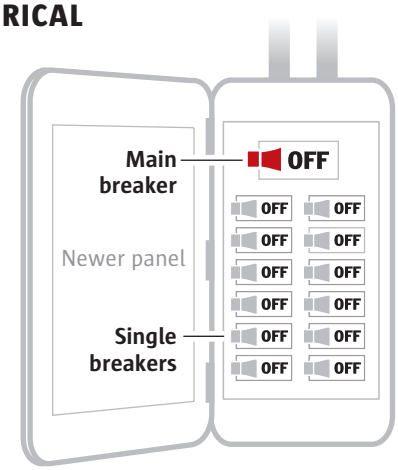
Closest emergency room, address:

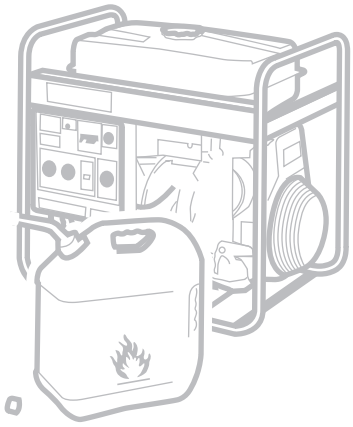
OTHER

ELECTRICAL

☐ **Learn how to shut off the electricity:** Turn off single breakers first, then switch off the main breaker. To turn back on, switch the main breaker first, then the single breakers. On older panels, pull the main fuse blocks.







☐ **Buy a portable, gas-powered generator** for emergency electricity. Only appliances that can use extension cords should be attached to a generator. A 2200-watt unit can power a refrigerator and several lamps. Keep fuel in a safe, protected container.

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

☐ **Place flashlights in hallways**, bathrooms and bedrooms. Keep a flashlight, spare batteries and sturdy shoes under the bed. (Shoes will protect you from broken glass and other debris on the floor.)

☐ **Evaluate each room**. Ask yourself: If the home began shaking, what would fall?

☐ **Secure appliances**, bookshelves and hutches to wall studs. Mirrors should be hung on double hooks; do not lean them against the wall.

☐ **Place heavy objects and electronic equipment on lower shelves**. Use large Velcro patches or nonskid rubber shelf liner to help keep items from moving around too much. Place a beanbag of sand or shot in the bottom of vases and other breakable items to help hold them down.

☐ **Use plastic**, not porcelain hanging planters.

☐ **Store household chemicals safely**, preferably on or near the floor.

Resources

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):
www.fema.gov/areyouready/

Washington Emergency Management Division:
http://emd.wa.gov/

Seattle Emergency Management:
www.seattle.gov/emergency_mgt/

Supplies you need

Experts suggest having three emergency kits: one at home, a small one at work, and a few basic supplies in the car, especially for winter. Pick up a few items on the list every time you go shopping.

FOOD, WATER

- [ ] **One gallon of water per person per day** (Try to store a week's supply. Do not use milk jugs; 2-liter pop bottles can be used if they are thoroughly cleaned and filled to the top.)
- [ ] **A backcountry water-filtering device or a bottle of unscented liquid chlorine bleach to purify water** (16 drops per gallon or 8 drops per 2-liter bottle right before you use it, NOT before you store it)
- [ ] **Nonperishable food**
- [ ] **Can opener**
- [ ] **Pet food**

FIRST AID, HYGIENE

- [ ] **First-aid handbook**
- [ ] **Bandages** in a variety of sizes, gauze, bandaging tape, surgical gloves
- [ ] **Portable supply of prescription drugs** and copies of prescriptions
- [ ] **Backup of special supplies** you regularly use, such as oxygen tanks or hearing-aid batteries
- [ ] **Moist towelettes**
- [ ] **Toilet paper**
- [ ] **Baby and feminine-hygiene items**

SHELTER/CLOTHING

- [ ] **Camp stove and fuel** (Never use them indoors.)
- [ ] **Sleeping bags or blankets**
- [ ] **Sturdy shoes**
- [ ] **Hat**
- [ ] **Boy Scout Handbook** for basic "how-to" instructions

TOOLS

- [ ] **Flashlight**
- [ ] **Portable radio**
- [ ] **Extra batteries**
- [ ] **Multipurpose pocketknife**
- [ ] **Crowbar**
- [ ] **Handsaw**
- [ ] **Sledgehammer**
- [ ] **Work gloves, goggles, dust masks**
- [ ] **Rope**
- [ ] **Plastic sheeting or tarps**
- [ ] **Duct tape**
- [ ] **Fire extinguisher** with ABC rating (Keep instructions on the canister.)
- [ ] **Candles**
- [ ] **Waterproof matches**
- [ ] **A loud whistle** (one for each family member) to signal for help
- [ ] **Documents**
- [ ] **Photocopies of credit cards**, driver's licenses, birth certificates, bank information and account numbers, other official identification

UPKEEP

Store the items in plastic boxes that are waterproof and pest-proof. Stash emergency supplies near your front door or in your bedroom, somewhere you can easily grab them on your way out in an emergency. Don't keep supplies in the basement or other areas not easily accessible.

Replenish kits annually when you reset your clocks at daylight-saving time. Toss outdated food and cans that are dented, rusty or swollen. Restock as family's needs change.

How to survive a disaster

Personal safety should be your first concern. Review these survival tips with family, friends and neighbors, and make sure you're prepared to spend a week without outside help.

During

Indoors

- **In case of an earthquake, get under a sturdy table or desk.** Cover your head and face to help prevent injury from glass and debris. Hold onto a leg of the furniture piece and be prepared to move with it if the shaking is severe.
- **If there is no suitable table or desk, move away from windows** and lie down beside a sturdy piece of furniture, such as a sofa or bed, and cover your head and face. Avoid objects that could fall.
- **Don't go outside or use stairs or elevators** until the shaking stops. Falling debris is a major cause of quake-related injuries.
- **In a crowded public place such as a store or stadium,** do not rush to the exit. Stay inside until the shaking stops. If you're sitting, get down on the floor next to your seat. If standing, move away from objects that could fall, such as shelves.

Outdoors

- **Move to an open area**, away from cliffs and steep embankments where there might be falling debris or a landslide. Get away from riverbeds; a major quake could send large amounts of water and mud downstream.
- **If you are near a body of water**, move to high ground to escape a potential tsunami, a wave caused by water displaced from the quake. If the epicenter is nearby, you could have only a few minutes before such a wave would hit.
- **If you are on foot near tall buildings**, duck into a doorway to avoid falling glass and debris.

In transit

- **If you are driving**, stop your vehicle away from buildings, bridges and utility lines and stay inside until the shaking stops. Turn on your car radio to find out what routes are open before proceeding, and beware of hazards such as potentially weakened bridges and downed power lines.

After

Check on everyone

- **Provide first** aid and a safe place for anyone who is injured or very upset. Check on and help neighbors.
- **Call 911** or other emergency phone numbers only if injuries are serious or the situation is life-threatening. Phone lines will be jammed, and unnecessary calls can hamper rescue efforts.

Assess your surroundings

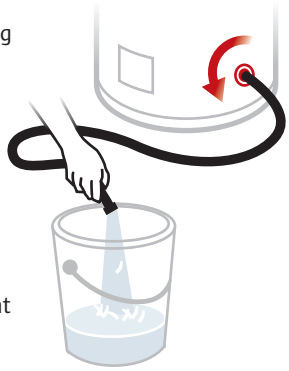
- **Check for hazards** such as fire, leaks, chemical spills and precarious structures. Natural-gas companies ask customers not to turn off their gas service at the meter unless they smell or hear a leak. If you smell gas coming from inside your home, call your gas company from a phone outside. It's important not to touch electric switches or use the telephone until the situation is corrected. Only the gas company can restore service.
- **Plug appliances into a generator directly** or with extension cords. Never plug a generator into a household outlet because power can flow back to the utility's main system and injure utility workers trying to restore power. Always run generators outdoors to prevent buildup of toxic fumes.
- **Turn on the radio**. In the case of an emergency that displaces many people, shelter locations will be announced.

Stay warm in cold weather

- **If the chimney is intact**, use your fireplace, burning seasoned wood with the damper open. Do not use the oven as a heat source. Never use a barbecue or hibachi indoors; charcoal produces toxic fumes that can quickly kill.
- **Close off rooms that aren't being used**. Close drapes and doors to prevent drafts.
- **Fill portable heaters outdoors** and store fuel outside in a proper container. Ventilate kerosene heaters. Keep heaters away from curtains, blankets and clothing, and always turn off space heaters before going to bed.
- **Dress children and the elderly warmly**, in layers, with their heads covered.
- **Give pets food**, water and dry shelter. Keep them away from antifreeze.
- **Turn off all appliances** except the refrigerator and one light. This prevents a power surge when power is restored.

Gather water

- **Be prepared to treat, filter or boil contaminated water.**
- **Use hot water sparingly.** Most water heaters can retain heat for three days.
- **If the water supply is cut off**, drinking water is still available in your home in water heaters, in-house plumbing and melted ice cubes.
- **Use a hose to get drinking water** from your water heater's drain valve in an emergency. It will be cloudy at first but will clear up after a few gallons.
- **If pipes break or leak**, turn off water at the shut-off valve inside your home.



Call for help

If phone service is available, give your out-of-state contact an update on your situation. If service is spotty, ask your contact to call your insurance company if necessary, and to call your family and friends who may be worried about you.

Prepare food

- **If you have a wood stove with a flat top** and an undamaged chimney, you can cook on it.
- **If the electricity is out**, open the refrigerator and freezer doors only when necessary. Eat refrigerated food first, frozen food next and dried or canned food last.
- **Refrigerated foods** should be OK for about eight hours, holding a temperature of 40 degrees, unless the door is opened often. If the power comes on within the eight hours, anything with an "off" odor should be thrown out.
- **Food in a freezer** of 12 cubic feet or more should stay frozen for 48 hours if the freezer is full and the door kept closed; that food will keep safely cold for up to 72 hours. Frozen food that has completely thawed — especially vegetables and dishes containing meat, fish, eggs, cheese and cream sauce — should be tossed out because of possible bacteria growth. If the freezer temperature is higher than 40 degrees, throw out all food.

KRISS CHAUMONT / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Emergency contact card

Clip this contact card, fill it out and distribute copies to your family

Cut along dotted line

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Other important phone numbers and information:

Fold here

Family communications plan

CONTACT NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

_____

OUT-OF-STATE CONTACT NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

_____

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING PLACE: _____

MEETING-PLACE TELEPHONE: _____

DIAL 911 FOR EMERGENCIES

Cut along dotted line

Cut along dotted line

Cut along dotted line

THE SEATTLE TIMES