

# Earthquake Preparedness Guide

## For People with Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs

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How may an earthquake or other disaster impact your daily life? This is an important topic for *everyone* to consider carefully. People with disabilities and others with access and functional needs may have additional issues to consider:

- What can you do independently and where may you need assistance?
- Will your regular sources of assistance be available after a disaster?
- What if power, gas, and phone lines are not working?
- What if roads and sidewalks are impassible or your means of transportation is unavailable?
- How will you maintain supplies of water, food, medications, and other needs?

*Right now:* Make a list of equipment and medication you may need if you had to leave your home. Store extras, labeled with your name and contact information, in your disaster supplies kit. (See Step 3, below)

This guide follows the ***Seven Steps to Earthquake Safety***, described in greater detail at [www.EarthquakeCountry.org/sevensteps](http://www.EarthquakeCountry.org/sevensteps). The content in this document has been specially adapted for people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, as well as for their caregivers. Additional resources, including this guide, are at [www.EarthquakeCountry.org/disability](http://www.EarthquakeCountry.org/disability).

### **STEP 1 – Secure Your Space by identifying hazards and securing moveable items**

When you enter a room, look for safe places to protect yourself (see Step 5):

- Safe spaces are places where heavy or falling objects and breaking glass will not injure you, such as under tables or desks along inside walls.
- The more limitations you have, the more important it is to create safe spaces - especially if you cannot “Drop, Cover, and Hold On” under a desk or table.
- Create safe spaces by securing heavy furniture to wall studs, moving heavy items to low shelves, hanging art to walls with closed hooks, or other measures found at [www.EarthquakeCountry.org/step1](http://www.EarthquakeCountry.org/step1).
- Secure essential equipment such as oxygen tanks or other life support devices, so they will not fall, sustain damage, or cause injury.
- When you are in public places, be aware of your surroundings and identify safe spaces.

## **Step 2 – *Plan to Be Safe* by creating a disaster plan and deciding how you will communicate in an emergency**

- Include your family and Personal Support Team (PST) when creating, reviewing, and practicing your plans:
- Develop your Personal Support Team (PST) at home, work, and every place where you spend a lot of time.
  - A PST is made up of at least three people who are within walking distance and can assist you immediately, such as family, neighbors and co-workers.
  - Team members will need to know how to enter your home in case you cannot answer the door.
  - Make sure your team knows your schedule, how best to assist you, how to operate any necessary equipment, and inform them when you go out of town.
- Help members of your PST develop their individual and family plans.
- Label all your adaptive equipment with your current contact information.
- Identify an out of area contact. Preferably someone who lives out of state and is willing to be your main point of contact for family and friends on your status. Make sure your PST has your contact's information.
- Have an evacuation plan – identify a meeting place just outside your home where you can make sure everyone has gotten out safely. Identify a second meeting place outside of your neighborhood in case you cannot return home. Share this information with your PST and family members.
- If you are near a beach, large lake or in a tsunami evacuation zone, learn what to do at [www.TsunamiZone.org](http://www.TsunamiZone.org).
- Make a care plan for your pets as they most likely will not be allowed in shelters. Only service animals are allowed in shelters. Check with your local animal control or SPCA about pet sheltering in a disaster.
- Learn more about how to Plan to be Safe at [www.EarthquakeCountry.org/step2](http://www.EarthquakeCountry.org/step2).

### **Step 3 – Organize Disaster Supplies in convenient locations**

Organize disaster supplies in your home and workplace, depending on your needs in each location. Keep a smaller set of supplies in your vehicle. Include the following:

- Food (consider your specific dietary needs)
- Water
- Medications (both prescription and over-the-counter medications) and medical supplies
- Medical information and medication list
- Copy of prescriptions
- Emergency contact information
- Communication supplies
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Supplies for your specific needs
  - Examples: Hearing aid batteries, eye glasses, walking stick, oxygen or nebulizer supplies, blood glucose tester, special equipment or hygiene and catheter supplies, feeding equipment, and VNS magnet
- Radio with extra batteries. Consider getting a NOAA weather radio too
- Cash (small denominations: \$1, \$5, \$10 bills. ATMs may not function)
- Set of clothes, appropriate for the season
- Heavy gloves (suitable to clean debris and chemicals)
- Hygiene Supplies
- First Aid Kit
- Face mask to protect from dust and debris
- Copy of photo ID/driver's license and utility bill, for identification and proof of address (may be needed if you must go to a shelter, re-enter an evacuation area or apply for disaster assistance).
- Attach a Go Bag to your bedpost or bed frame with flashlight, batteries, sturdy close-toed shoes, heavy gloves, a whistle or noise maker, and an emergency information list.

Service animal/pet owners need to make a kit containing supplies for these animals. For more information about pet/service animal preparedness see [www.ccad.org/emergency-kits-for-household-pets.html](http://www.ccad.org/emergency-kits-for-household-pets.html).

Learn more about organizing supplies at [www.EarthquakeCountry.org/step3](http://www.EarthquakeCountry.org/step3).

### **STEP 4 – Minimize Financial Hardship by organizing important documents, strengthening your property, and considering insurance**

Learn how to Minimize Financial Hardship at [www.EarthquakeCountry.org/step4](http://www.EarthquakeCountry.org/step4).

## Step 5 – *Drop, Cover, and Hold On* when the ground shakes

### Practice what to do:

- Participate in a *Great ShakeOut Earthquake Drill* ([www.ShakeOut.org](http://www.ShakeOut.org)) and encourage others, including your personal support team, to participate too!
- Put your plan into action during your drills. Include family members, personal support team members, and caregivers.
- Challenges identified during your drill will provide the opportunity to revise your plan to better accommodate your needs.

### During an earthquake:

Do NOT try to exit a building during an earthquake as you are likely to be injured from falling roof tiles, building façades, glass, etc. Instead, protect yourself from falling objects in the safest place possible near where you are. The greater your limitations, the more critical it is to create safe spaces in advance (See Step 1).

If it helps, count out loud until the shaking stops. Hearing your voice can ground you, help reassure others you are okay and keep them calm and focused.

### If possible:

**DROP** where you are, onto your hands and knees. This position protects you from being knocked down and also allows you to stay low and crawl to shelter if nearby.

**COVER** your head and neck with one arm and hand

- If a sturdy table or desk is nearby, crawl underneath it for shelter
- If no shelter is nearby, crawl next to an interior wall (away from windows)
- Stay on your knees; bend over to protect vital organs

**HOLD ON** until the shaking stops.

- Under shelter: hold on to it with one hand; be ready to move with your shelter if it shifts
- No shelter: hold on to your head and neck with both arms and hands.

### Adapt for your situation:

- If you have difficulty getting onto the ground, or cannot get back up again without the help of a caregiver, then follow these recommendations:
- *If you are in a recliner or bed:* do not try to transfer during the shaking. Cover your head and neck with your arms or a pillow until the shaking stops.
- *If you use a cane:* follow the Drop, Cover, and Hold On instructions on the previous page, or sit on a chair, bed, etc. and cover your head and neck with both hands. Either way, keep your cane near you so it can be used when the shaking stops.
- *If you use a walker:* **lock** your wheels (if applicable) and carefully get as low as possible. If your walker has a seat, sit and **cover** your head/neck with your arms, a book, or a pillow. If no seat, try to get down with your head lower than the top of the walker. Bend over, then **hold on** until shaking stops.
- *If you use a wheelchair:* **lock** your wheels and **cover** your head and neck with your arms, a book, or a pillow. Bend over, then **hold on** until the shaking stops.

Learn more about how to protect yourself in various situations, including at the store, in a theater, in a car, and outdoors at [www.EarthquakeCountry.org/step5](http://www.EarthquakeCountry.org/step5).

## **STEP 6 – Improve Safety after earthquakes by evacuating if necessary, helping the injured, and preventing further injuries or damage.**

Once shaking stops:

- Check yourself for injury, paying extra attention to areas where you have reduced sensations.
- If you are near the shore and feel strong shaking, first protect yourself as in Step 5 until shaking reduces such that you can move inland or to a higher location. Do not wait for an official warning.
- Be prepared for aftershocks. Stay close to and aware of the safe spaces in your environment.
- Look around for hazards such as broken glass and objects in your way.
- Furniture may have shifted and sound cues may not be available to individuals with visual disabilities.
- Evacuate only if necessary, otherwise stay where you are.
- If the authorities advise an evacuation for your area, follow their directions immediately.
- Learn more at [www.EarthquakeCountry.org/step6](http://www.EarthquakeCountry.org/step6).

## **STEP 7 – *Reconnect and Restore*: Restore daily life by reconnecting with others, repairing damage, and rebuilding community**

- Follow your disaster plan.
- Notify your out of area contact of your status, then keep phone lines clear. Text messaging may be more reliable than phone calls, so “Text First, Call Second.”
- Expect aftershocks and remain aware of your surroundings. Aftershocks may create new hazards so continue to be ready to protect yourself.
- Repair or replace damaged items as needed.
- Review and revise your disaster plan based on what you learned.
- Learn more about how to Reconnect and Restore after an earthquake at [www.EarthquakeCountry.org/step7](http://www.EarthquakeCountry.org/step7).

### **Considerations for refrigerated medications:**

- When there is a loss of power, keep medications in the refrigerator until it becomes warm, at which point they can be moved into the freezer. When the freezer becomes too warm, transfer medication to a small, insulated container and use chemical cold packs.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist how long your medications will last unrefrigerated.
- If you evacuate to a shelter, tell shelter staff that you have refrigerated medication.

## **Disability-Specific Tips**

### **People with developmental/cognitive/intellectual disabilities:**

- Have a written or visual checklist with short, easy steps.
- Include communication tools in your kit that you know how to use. People who are nonverbal can include pictures, written phrases, or Kwik Points for easier communication.
- Store extra batteries for portable communication devices.
- Practice Drop, Cover, and Hold On and your plan. Regular practice will help you to remember what to do and to remain calmer when a disaster occurs.
- Practice telling care assistants and responders how to communicate with you, such as using simple, short, and clear language for instructions.

### **People who are deaf or hard of hearing:**

- Have more than one method to receive warnings and evacuation information.
- Store extra batteries in your disaster kits for hearing or communication devices.
- Keep pen and paper in your kits for receiving and communicating information.
- Prior to an earthquake, identify and test multiple ways to receive warnings and evacuation information. Ask a PST member to keep you up to date on emergency information as it is released.

### **People who are blind or visually impaired:**

- Earthquakes can cause items to fall and furniture to shift making navigating the room more difficult.
- Sound clues may not be available.
- While evacuating move slowly and check for obstacles in the way. Shuffling your feet when there is a lot of debris on the ground will reduce your likelihood of falling.
- Store extra canes, batteries and supplies for your communication devices.
- Label emergency supplies using large print, fluorescent tape, Braille, or other preferred methods.

### **Service Animals**

- Keep license and ID tags on service animals at all times.
- Keep copies of any service animal certification or documentation including immunization records, medications, and veterinarian's contact information in your service animal's disaster kit.
- Store extra animal food, water, and feeding bowls.
- Keep an extra harness and/or leash with your disaster supplies.
- Your service animal may be frightened or injured and may not be able to work after the earthquake. There is increased risk of injury to their paws from broken glass or debris on the ground.
- Be prepared to use alternate equipment if your animal cannot provide its normal services.
- Arrange for your PST to check on you and your animal.
- Service animals are allowed in shelters, pets are not. Be prepared to explain what services your animal performs for you.

## Highlights from this guide

- Create safe spaces for yourself.
- Develop your Personal Support Team (PST) and include them in all phases of your planning.
- Help members of your PST develop their individual and family plans.
- Organize disaster supplies in your home, car, and office and for your service animal.
- Update your plan, contacts, and supplies at least annually so they are current.
- Practice Drop, Cover, and Hold On and your disaster plan.
- Advocate for yourself! Make sure you are included in practice drills at home, work and in your community.
- Volunteer with your local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) or other community-based emergency response organization.

## Additional Resources

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

[www.ready.gov/individuals-access-functional-needs](http://www.ready.gov/individuals-access-functional-needs)

Earthquake Country Alliance

[www.EarthquakeCountry.org/disability](http://www.EarthquakeCountry.org/disability)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

[www.cdc.gov/Features/EmergencyPreparedness](http://www.cdc.gov/Features/EmergencyPreparedness)

Preparing Together – Salvation Army

[www.preparingtogether.org/](http://www.preparingtogether.org/)

Resources for people with disabilities and others with access & functional needs

[www.JIK.com/disaster.html](http://www.JIK.com/disaster.html)

California Office of Emergency Services

[www.caloes.ca.gov/cal-oes-divisions/access-functional-needs](http://www.caloes.ca.gov/cal-oes-divisions/access-functional-needs)

Preparedness for Pets and Service Animals

[www.ccadts.org/be-prepared.html](http://www.ccadts.org/be-prepared.html)