



Earthquake Preparedness



Introduction

One of the most frightening and destructive phenomena of nature within the region is a severe earthquake and its terrible aftereffects. An earthquake is a sudden movement of the earth, caused by the abrupt release of strain that has accumulated over a long time. Sometimes, the movement is gradual. At other times, the plates are locked together, unable to release the accumulating energy. When the accumulated energy grows strong enough, the plates break free. Many times, when they occur in rural areas there is little or no damage, but if an earthquake occurs in a populated area, it may cause many deaths and injuries, as well as extensive property damage.

Individual/Family Preparedness Measures

As part of the United States Marine Corps family, whether on active duty, reserves, civilian employee or family member, everyone plays an important role in ensuring the welfare of our homeland. It is also important that individual Marines, as well as their families, prepare for all types of emergencies, which will result in an increase of peace of mind as well as personal security. An important point to remember is that proper preparation can be the difference between dealing with an emergency, or dealing with a catastrophe.

Everyone has a responsibility to themselves, and their families, to properly prepare themselves for emergencies. Below are recommendations on some preparedness measures one may take before a disaster occurs. Further tips and advice may also be found at FEMA's web site: <http://www.fema.gov/>

Considerations for all Military Personnel and Families

- Every time you relocate, learn the types of emergencies likely to affect the area and update your emergency kit and plan with new materials if necessary.
- Be aware that mass warning systems differ at different locations. It could be a "Giant Voice" outside speaker, siren, telephone alert, or some other system or procedures. Most MCIWEST installations encourage residence to participate, and register, into their [emergency notification data base](#).
- You may not have extended family nearby, so a rendezvous point or call-in contact after an emergency may require more ingenuity. Establish an emergency plan with an out-of-town contact you can all reach. Keep in mind that one or more family members may be deployed when disaster strikes.
- If you live off base, threat levels or other circumstances may keep you from getting back on base for day-to-day activities following an emergency. Know alternative places to shop or obtain things you normally get on base.
- Collecting and recording important personal and financial documents is already a part of preparing for deployment. Be sure to include these documents in your family's emergency kit.
- During or after an emergency, you need to report to your command. Learn and follow the established procedures.

Earthquake Supply Kit Recommendations/Planning Thoughts

You may need to survive on your own after an emergency. This means having your own food, water, and other supplies in sufficient quantity to last for at least three days. Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone immediately. You could get help in hours, or it might take days. In addition, basic services such as electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment, and telephones may be cut off for days, or even a week or longer.

Recommended Items to Include in a Basic Emergency Supply Kit:

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)
- Local maps
- Cell phone with chargers, inverter or solar charger

Additional Items to Consider Adding to an Emergency Supply Kit:

- Prescription medications and glasses
- Infant formula and diapers
- Pet food and extra water for your pet
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container
- Cash or traveler's checks and change
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container.
- Emergency reference material such as a first aid book or information.
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person. Consider additional bedding if you live in a cold-weather climate.
- Complete change of clothing including a long sleeved shirt, long pants and sturdy shoes. Consider additional clothing if you live in a cold-weather climate.
- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper – When diluted nine parts water to one part bleach, bleach can be used as a disinfectant. Or in an emergency, you can use it to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use scented, color safe or bleaches with added cleaners.
- Fire Extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, paper towels
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children
-

Seven Steps to Earthquake Safety

Marines worldwide all understand the philosophy of a hardened target. With proper preparation everyone in the MCIWEST community can mitigate the effects of an earthquake by taking steps to “harden” themselves and families. The information below is from materials created by the Emergency Survival Program (ESP) in 2006, and based on "The Seven Steps to Earthquake Safety" in the handbook, “Putting Down Roots in Earthquake Country”.

Step 1: Secure it now!

Reducing and/or eliminating hazards throughout your home, neighborhood, workplace and school can greatly reduce your risk of injury or death following the next earthquake or other disaster. Conduct a "hazard hunt" to help identify and fix things such as unsecured televisions, computers, bookcases, furniture, unstrapped water heaters, etc. Securing these items now will help to protect you tomorrow.

Step 2: Make a plan

Planning for an earthquake, terrorist attack, or other emergency is not much different from planning for a party or vacation. Make sure that your emergency plan includes evacuation and reunion plans; your out-of-state contact person's name and number; the location of your emergency supplies and other pertinent information. By planning now, you will be ready for the next emergency.

Step 3: Make disaster kits

Everyone should have disaster supplies kits stored in accessible locations at home, at work and in your vehicle. Having emergency supplies readily available can reduce the impact of an earthquake, a terrorist incident or other emergency on you and your family. Your disaster supplies kits should include food, water, flashlights, portable radios, batteries, a first aid kit, cash, extra medications, a whistle, fire extinguisher, etc.

Step 4: Is your place safe?

Most houses are not as safe as they could be. Whether you are a homeowner or a renter, there are things that you can do to improve the structural integrity of your home. Some of the things that you might consider checking include inadequate foundations, unbraced cripple walls, soft first stories, unreinforced masonry and vulnerable pipes. Consult a contractor or engineer to help you identify your building's weaknesses and begin to fix them now.

Step 5: DROP, COVER, and HOLD ON!

Learn what to do during an earthquake, whether you're at home, at work, at school or just out and about. Taking the proper actions, such as "Drop, Cover, and Hold On", can save lives and reduce your risk of death or injury. During earthquakes, drop to the floor; take cover under a sturdy desk or table, and hold on to it firmly. Be prepared to move with it until the shaking stops.

Step 6: Check it out!

One of the first things you should do following a major disaster is to check for injuries and damages that need immediate attention. Make sure you are trained in first aid and in damage assessment techniques. You should be able to administer

first aid and to identify hazards such as damaged gas, water, sewage and electrical lines. Be prepared to report damage to city or county government.

Step 7: Communicate and recover!

Following a major disaster, communication will be an important step in your recovery efforts. Turn on your portable radio for information and safety advisories. If your home is damaged, contact your insurance agent right away to begin your claims process. For most presidentially declared disasters, resources will also be available from federal, state, and local government agencies.

For further information contact MCIWEST Emergency Manager at 760-763-7399.