



How to Protect Yourself During an Earthquake

Advice for People With Disabilities or Access and Functional Needs

During a significant earthquake, you could experience sudden and intense back and forth motions of up to six feet per second. The floor or the ground would jerk sideways out from under you. Every unsecured object around you would likely topple, fall, and become airborne, potentially causing serious injury. Strong shaking might not end for you until a minute and a half after you first felt the earthquake. That's why federal, state, and local emergency management experts and other official preparedness organizations all agree that "**Drop, Cover, and Hold On**" is the appropriate action to reduce injury and death during earthquakes.

If you cannot Drop, Cover, and Hold On, there are modified actions you should immediately take to protect your head and neck.

Drop, Cover, and Hold On... and its modifications

The main point is to not try to move, but **immediately** protect yourself as best possible right where you are. Earthquakes occur without any warning and may be so violent that you cannot walk, crawl or steer a wheelchair; you therefore could likely be knocked to the ground where you happen to be. You will never know if the initial jolt will turn out to be start of the big one.

The reverse side of this page explains how to protect yourself in various locations, depending on your situation.

Drop, Cover, and Hold On: Modifications for people with disabilities or access and functional needs

INDOORS: If you are able, “DROP to the ground immediately; take COVER by getting under a sturdy desk or table; HOLD ON to it until the shaking stops. If you use a wheelchair or have other mobility impairments and cannot Drop, Cover, and Hold On, protect your head and neck with a pillow or your arms, and bend over to protect yourself if you are able.

IN BED: Stay there and hold on; protect your head with a pillow.

HIGH-RISE OR A PUBLIC BUILDING: Drop, Cover, and Hold On or protect your head and neck as best possible. Do not use elevators. When the shaking subsides move to the designated zones for evacuation and wait for assistance by first responders.

OUTDOORS: Move to a clear area away from wires, buildings, and anything else that could fall and hurt you, *but only if you can safely do so*. Otherwise stay where you are and Drop Cover and Hold On or protect your head and neck as best possible.

STADIUM OR THEATER: Drop Cover and Hold On or protect your head and neck. Protect your head and neck with your arms as best possible. Don't try to leave until the shaking is over.

DRIVING: Pull over to the side of the road, stop, and set the parking brake. Avoid bridges and overhead hazards. Stay inside the vehicle until the shaking is over.

WHAT NOT TO DO: If your mobility is limited, it is particularly important that you DO NOT try to get to a “safer place” or get outside. Movement will be very difficult, and studies of injuries and deaths caused by earthquakes in the U.S. over the last several decades indicate that you are much more likely to be injured by falling or flying objects (TVs, lamps, glass, bookcases, etc.) than to die in a collapsed building.

GET READY BY SECURING YOUR SPACE: There are simple actions you and your support team can take today that will protect you in your home if an earthquake happens tomorrow. START NOW by moving furniture such as bookcases away from beds, sofas, or other places where you sit or sleep. Move heavy objects to lower shelves. Then begin to look for other items in your home that may be hazardous in an earthquake. Some actions may take a bit longer to complete, but all are relatively simple. Most hardware stores and home centers now carry earthquake safety straps, fasteners, and adhesives. Additional information, including how-to instructions, is available at www.earthquakecountry.org.