

How to Survive an Earthquake at Work: 25 Top Tips

A little knowledge and a few precautions will ease the trauma of a major earthquake, empower you to respond, and help you survive when The Big One strikes. These tips can prepare you for an earthquake on campus; for details about home planning, visit the Web site for the Red Cross at www.redcross.org, and choose “preparedness.”

Before the Earthquake

1. Be prepared to react

Know how to react so your response to a quake is automatic. If an earthquake struck right now, how would you protect yourself?

2. Know your location

Safety: Identify safe spaces in the office -- under a desk, along interior walls, away from windows, bookcases, and picture frames. Plan your response: know how to exit the building after an earthquake (not during) — even if the lights are off.

3. Stock up on your emergency supplies

The basics: flashlight, bottled water, and food for 72 hours; first-aid kit, gloves, hard hat, goggles, blankets, and closed-toe shoes.

4. Arrange your office for safety

Make sure that bookcases, large file cabinets, and artwork on walls are anchored according to university specifications. Store heavy objects on low shelves. Put breakable objects in cabinets with latches.

5. Know the campus evacuation points

Be familiar with the established gathering points on campus for major emergencies (www.ucla.edu/about/evacuation_2007.pdf).

6. Share your knowledge

Make sure colleagues are informed about earthquake safety, and are as prepared as you are.

During an Earthquake

7. Remain calm as the quake occurs — others will respond to your actions

Staying calm in groups is crucial in classrooms, meetings, or large groups of people. A cool head can prevent panic.

8. If you are indoors during an earthquake, stay there

- Move away from windows, bookcases, and large objects.
- Go to a safe location — under a desk, a table, or along an interior wall.
- If you have no protection: drop to the floor, and cover your head and face.
- Stay under cover until after the shaking stops, and you are sure that debris is no longer falling.
- Do not stand in a doorway, as some previous safety guidelines recommended. A swinging door can cause injuries.
- In a crowded place, do not rush to the exit. More injuries are caused by panic than by earthquakes themselves.

9. If you are outdoors. . .

Move to an open area, away from falling objects, and drop to the ground. Stay away from buildings, power lines and trees.

10. If you are in a wheelchair. . .

Stay in it. Move to a place under cover if possible, lock your wheels, and protect your head with your arms.

After the Earthquake

11. You may be on your own for three days — or more

Keep in mind that in an emergency, vital supplies and aid may not be available for days. Assume you will be on your own for at least three days.

12. Check yourself and others for injuries

Give first aid for serious injuries. DO NOT move injured people unless they are in danger.

13. Remain calm and reassure others.

14. Expect aftershocks

There will be large aftershocks after a major earthquake — be on alert for them.

15. Be ready to respond without electricity or lights

Know where your flashlight is. Know how to find stairs in the dark.

16. Get to your emergency supplies

Put on your helmet, gloves, and closed-toe shoes.

17. Extinguish small fires

18. Beware of objects that moved during the earthquake

They may fall long after a quake ends.

19. If you must leave a building after a quake, use EXTREME caution

A large number of injuries in an earthquake occur when people leave a building after a quake and are struck by falling debris. Check your exit. If you have to leave a building, be sure the exit is safe.

20. Do not re-enter a damaged building once you leave it until an all-clear is given

21. In laboratories, turn off flames. Shut off gas. Beware of hazardous chemicals.

22. In class, faculty should keep students inside until shaking has stopped, unless hazards exist

23. Use telephones only to report a life-threatening emergency

Using cell phones or land lines during an emergency will jam telephone systems, preventing emergency calls from going through.

Information and Assistance

24. Information sources

If campus systems are operating after an emergency, you will be notified of developments through e-mail or text messaging. Other campus information sources include:

- Radio messages issued on AM 1630.
- Recorded emergency messages on 1-800-900-UCLA.
- Messages on the UCLA Home Page, www.ucla.edu.

25. If campus technology is not operating. . .

Messages will be distributed on loudspeakers mounted on campus buildings or in police cars.