



*Photo description: Road buckled and damaged by earthquake.*

# PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY FROM **EARTHQUAKES**



**FEMA**





*Photo description: Single-story home with covered porch.*

Owning a property is one of the most important investments most people make in their lives, and renting is a similarly large expense for many households. We work hard to provide a home and a future for ourselves and our loved ones. When you live in an area where earthquakes are possible, why not take the time to protect yourself, your family, and your belongings?

Earthquakes can make the ground we walk on feel unstable and can damage homes, upend business, destroy infrastructure, and slow transportation to a halt.

While you can't prevent earthquakes from happening, there are some ways to secure your property to minimize damage and keep your home and those that live there safe.

Here's how you can help protect your home from earthquakes.



Photo description: Family talking at the kitchen table.

## INSIDE YOUR HOME

**HAVE A PLAN** Create an earthquake plan for you and your family and practice it regularly. In the event your home is unsafe, know where to meet outside and have enough supplies to last for several days.

Looking to build your plan? Check out FEMA's [Earthquake Safety Checklist](#).



**KEEP A CLEAR PATH** Make sure there are at least two accessible exits in your home to help you safely leave during an earthquake. There should be a clear path for you to get safely outside when shaking has stopped. If there is damage, be very careful how you exit the building.

**ANCHOR OR RELOCATE TOP-HEAVY OR LARGE OBJECTS** Take the time to anchor top-heavy or large furniture, like bookshelves or wardrobes, to prevent them from falling over during an earthquake. If they can't be anchored, move them to areas of the home where they are less likely to cause injuries if they fall. Anchor objects to wall studs where possible.

**SECURE FIXTURES AND ELECTRONICS THROUGHOUT THE HOME** There are many smaller objects and appliances throughout the home that can cause damage if they fall, such as ceiling fans, picture frames, televisions, or other electronics. Provide secure anchoring for these so that they are less likely to move, break, or cause other damage or injury during an earthquake. Anchor objects to wall studs where possible.

**RELOCATE HEAVY ITEMS LOCATED HIGH OVERHEAD** Unsecured objects are at risk of shaking off shelves and out of cabinets during an earthquake. Relocate heavy or large items located over 4 feet above the ground to lower shelves or to the floor.

**SECURE  
WATER HEATERS**

Water heaters are connected to both water and gas lines, making them potential sources of both indoor flooding and potential fires. Fasten these with additional reinforcement such as straps so that they don't move.

**STORE FLAMMABLE  
AND TOXIC  
SUBSTANCES**

Some household products are flammable and toxic. If you have any in your home, make sure they are stored somewhere secure.

**BRACE  
SUSPENDED  
CEILINGS**

Suspended ceilings are rare, but if you have one, it may be held by only a few points. Providing additional bracing and reinforcement can help to ensure that these won't fall.

**LATCH  
YOUR CABINETS**

Childproof locks aren't just for the young ones. Installing these locks on drawers and cabinets can help to prevent content from falling out during an earthquake, which could prevent injuries and help keep a clear path to an exit.

**CONSIDER  
EARTHQUAKE  
INSURANCE**

Most homeowners and renters insurance policies don't cover earthquake damage. Standard policies only cover losses from fire after an earthquake. Protect your investment and talk to your insurance agent about purchasing earthquake coverage or a separate policy, especially if you live in a high-risk area.

**PREPARE OR UPDATE  
A LIST OF YOUR  
HOME'S CONTENTS**

Documenting your belongings will give you peace of mind and help with the insurance claims process. Consider documenting your contents visually, either by taking photos of high-value items or walking through your home and videotaping your belongings for reference.

**IN CASE OF A  
TSUNAMI WARNING,  
KNOW WHAT'S  
HIGHER GROUND**

If you live near the coast, have an evacuation plan and know where accessible higher ground is located during a tsunami warning.

For more information on what to do during an earthquake, visit the [Great Shakeout, shakeout.org](https://www.greatshakeout.org) and [FEMA's P-530, Earthquake Safety at Home](https://www.fema.gov/p-530).

**PRACTICE HOW  
TO PROTECT  
YOURSELF**

In the event of an earthquake, do not run outside and do not panic. When the earth begins to shake, most people should Drop, Cover, and Hold On. Stay where you are until the shaking has stopped.





Photo description: House overlooking landscape.

## OUTSIDE OF YOUR HOME

### KEEP CONNECTIONS FLEXIBLE

Have flexible connections installed where gas lines connect to your home to help prevent leaks and fires. This can also be done inside the home, where gas lines connect to water heaters, overhead unit heaters, air conditioners, or fireplaces.

### SECURE DECKS, PORCHES, CARPORTS, AND CANOPIES

External parts of the home like decks, porches, carports, or canopies are often only minimally attached to the main building. Anchoring these more securely to the house, providing diagonal and horizontal bracing, and reinforcing the base can help to keep them from falling and causing more damage or injury.

### ANCHOR HILLSIDE HOMES

During an earthquake, some homes can pull away from their foundation, resulting in major damage or collapse. Installing additional support and anchoring can help reduce the movement during earthquakes.

### REINFORCE GARAGES WITH LIVING SPACE

Attached garages that have living space over them often have less bracing, particularly at the vehicle entrance. Adding additional reinforcement in the garage can reduce swaying and possible collapse.



#### DID YOU KNOW?

In addition to reducing damage, anchoring can prevent these parts of the home from failing and blocking your exit.

Anchoring hillside homes and garages are large projects. You may need a contractor or professional design help.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### EARTHQUAKE SAFETY AT HOME (FEMA P-530)

Find detailed information on how to prepare, protect, survive, respond, recover, and repair after an earthquake, including illustrations of mitigation options.

[https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/fema\\_earthquakes\\_fema-p-530-earthquake-safety-at-home-march-2020.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/fema_earthquakes_fema-p-530-earthquake-safety-at-home-march-2020.pdf)

### FEMA'S EARTHQUAKE SAFETY CHECKLIST

View instructions on how individuals and families can prepare for and prevent earthquake-related damage to their homes.

[https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema\\_earthquake\\_earthquake-safety-checklist\\_110217.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_earthquake_earthquake-safety-checklist_110217.pdf)

### HOME AND BUSINESS EARTHQUAKE SAFETY AND MITIGATION

Learn about structural and non-structural earthquake mitigation in this training.

[https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/fema\\_home-business-earthquake-safety-mitigation\\_p-909.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/fema_home-business-earthquake-safety-mitigation_p-909.pdf)

### FEMA'S EARTHQUAKE RISK PAGE

Find more information about earthquake risks and resources in this central location.

<https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/risk-management/earthquake>

### NATIONAL EARTHQUAKE HAZARDS REDUCTION PROGRAM

Learn more about the federal government's efforts to reduce the damage caused by earthquakes.

<https://www.nehrp.gov>

## REMEMBER:

Some of these tips may work better together than others. Mitigation measures need to be tailored to your property.



Always consult professionals such as your insurance agent, architects, engineers, contractors, or other experts in design and construction before making changes to your home. Your local planning and zoning office or building department is a good place to start for advice.



FEMA