

Earthquake Preparedness

Earthquakes are common in BC and more than 1,200 are recorded each year across the province.

The coast of BC is considered to be a high-risk earthquake zone. In this region, tectonic plates are moving apart, sliding past one another and colliding. It is the movement of these plates that causes small earthquakes (daily), potentially damaging earthquakes (decades apart), and some of the world's largest earthquakes (centuries apart).

Earthquakes strike without warning, so it is important to act now to get prepared.

Before the Shaking Starts

Prepare Your Family

- Know the safe spots in each room— against inside walls, under sturdy tables, desks or archways.
- Know the danger spots— windows, mirrors, hanging objects, fireplaces and tall, unsecured furniture.
- Practice family drills. Physically place yourself in safe locations. This is especially important for children.
- Learn first aid and CPR.
- Keep a listing of emergency numbers.
- Prepare a family emergency kit with supplies for at least 72 hours.

Prepare Your Home

- Learn how to shut off gas, water and electricity.
- Keep breakables or heavy objects on bottom shelves.
- Secure tall heavy furniture which could topple, such as bookcases, china cabinets or wall units.
- Secure the water heater and appliances.
- Secure hanging plants and heavy picture frames or mirrors (especially over beds).
- Put latches on cabinet doors to hold closed during shaking.
- Keep flammable or hazardous liquids such as paints, pest sprays or cleaning products in the garage or outside shed.
- Check chimneys, roofs, walls, foundations for structural condition.
- Maintain emergency food, water and other supplies, including flashlight, a portable battery-operated radio, extra batteries, medicines, first aid kit and clothing.

During the Shaking

- If indoors, stay there. **Drop, cover and hold.** Get under a desk or table and hang on. Alternately, you can stand in an archway or corner.
- If outdoors, get into an open area away from trees, buildings, walls and power lines.
- If in a high-rise building, stay away from windows and outside walls. Get under a table. Do not use the elevators.
- If driving, pull your car to the side of the road and stop. Avoid overpasses or power lines. Remain inside until the shaking is over.
- If in a crowded public place, do not rush for the doors. Move away from display shelves containing objects that may fall.
- In all instances, drop, cover and hold; protect your head as much as possible.

After the Shaking Stops

- Stay calm and check for injuries. Apply first aid if qualified. Do not move any seriously injured individuals unless they are in immediate danger.
- Check for fires, gas and water leaks and damaged electrical wiring or sewer lines.
- If you smell gas, do not use matches, candles, etc. and do not operate electrical switches.
- Check building for cracks and damage, including roof, chimneys and foundation. If you suspect there is serious damage, turn off all utilities and leave the building.
- Check food and water supplies. Emergency water may be obtained from water heaters, melted ice cubes, toilet tanks and canned vegetables.
- Seek sources of uncontaminated water. In an emergency, purify water by straining through a paper towel or several layers of clean cloth and by boiling vigorously for at least six minutes.
- Do not use BBQ's, camp stoves or unvented heaters indoors.
- Do not flush toilet if sewer line is damaged.
- Do not use the telephone unless there is a severe injury or fire to report.
- Turn on your portable radio for instructions and news reports, and cooperate fully with public safety officials.
- Keep Disaster Response Routes clear for emergency vehicles.
- Be prepared for aftershocks.

Movement of the ground is seldom the actual cause of death or injury. Most casualties result from partial building collapse, falling objects and debris, like toppling chimneys, ceiling plaster and light fixtures.

Remember –

Stay calm and lend a hand to others in need.