

Earthquakes

An earthquake is the sudden, rapid shaking of the earth, caused by the breaking and shifting of subterranean rock. While earthquakes are sometimes believed to be a West Coast phenomenon, there are actually 45 states and territories throughout the United States that are at moderate to high risk for earthquakes including the New Madrid fault line in Central U.S. Since it is impossible to predict when an earthquake will occur, it is important that you and your family are prepared ahead of time.

Step 1: Get a Kit

Get an [Emergency Supply Kit](#), which includes items like non-perishable food, water, a battery-powered or hand-crank radio, extra flashlights and batteries. You may want to prepare a portable kit and keep it in your car. This kit should include:

- Copies of prescription medications and medical supplies;
- Bedding and clothing, including sleeping bags and pillows;
- Bottled water, a battery-operated radio and extra batteries, a first aid kit, a flashlight;
- Copies of important documents: driver's license, Social Security card, proof of residence, insurance policies, wills, deeds, birth and marriage certificates, tax records, etc.

Step 2: Make a Plan

Prepare Your Family

- Make a [Family Emergency Plan](#). Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to know how you will contact one another, how you will get back together and what you will do in case of an emergency.
- Plan places where your family will meet, both within and outside of your immediate neighborhood.
- It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, so an out-of-town contact may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members.
- You may also want to inquire about emergency plans at places where your family spends time: work, daycare and school. If no plans exist, consider volunteering to help create one.
- Be sure to consider the specific needs of your family members
 - Notify caregivers and babysitters about your plan.
 - Make plans for your pets

- Take a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) class from your local [Citizen Corps chapter](#). Keep your training current.

Step 3: Be Informed

Prepare Your Home

- Fasten shelves securely to walls.
- Place large or heavy objects on lower shelves.
- Store breakable items such as bottled foods, glass, and china in low, closed cabinets with latches.
- Hang heavy items such as pictures and mirrors away from beds, couches, and anywhere people sit.
- Brace overhead light fixtures.
- Repair defective electrical wiring and leaky gas connections. These are potential fire risks.
- Secure a water heater by strapping it to the wall studs and bolting it to the floor.
- Repair any deep cracks in ceilings or foundations. Get expert advice if there are signs of structural defects.
- Store weed killers, pesticides, and flammable products securely in closed cabinets with latches and on bottom shelves.
- Identify Safe Places indoors and outdoors like under sturdy furniture or against an inside wall away from where glass could shatter around windows, mirrors, pictures or where heavy bookcases or other heavy furniture could fall over.