Emergency Preparedness and Response for Earthquakes

What is an earthquake?

An earthquake is a sudden, rapid shaking of the ground caused by the breaking and shifting of rock beneath the Earth's surface. This shaking can cause buildings and bridges to collapse; disrupt gas, electric, and phone service; and sometimes trigger landslides, avalanches, flash floods, fires, and huge, destructive ocean waves (tsunamis). Buildings with foundations resting on unconsolidated landfill, old waterways, or other unstable soil are most at risk. Buildings or trailers and manufactured homes not tied to a reinforced foundation anchored to the ground are also at risk since they can be shaken off their mountings during an earthquake. Earthquakes can occur at any time of the year.

What hazards are associated with earthquakes?

When an earthquake occurs in a populated area, it may cause deaths and injuries and extensive property damage. Ground movement during an earthquake is seldom the direct cause of death or injury. Most earthquake-related injuries result from collapsing walls, flying glass, and falling objects as a result of the ground shaking, or people trying to move more than a few feet during the shaking. Much of the damage in earthquakes is predictable and preventable.

What are aftershocks?

Aftershocks are smaller earthquakes that follow the main shock and can cause further damage to weakened buildings. After-shocks can occur in the first hours, days, weeks, or even months after the quake. Be aware that some earthquakes are actually foreshocks, and a larger earthquake might occur.

What can I do to prepare before an earthquake occurs?

Pick "safe places". A safe place could be under a sturdy table or desk or against an interior wall away from windows and bookcases, or tall furniture that could fall on you. The shorter the distance to move to safety, the less likely you will be injured. Injury statistics show that people moving as little as 10 feet during an earthquake's shaking are most likely to be injured.

Practice drop, cover, and hold-on in each safe place. Drop under a sturdy desk or table and hold on to one leg of the table or desk. Protect your eyes by keeping your head down. Practice these actions so that they become an automatic response.

Practice drop, cover, and hold-on at least twice a year. Frequent practice will help reinforce safe behavior. When an earthquake or other disaster occurs, many people hesitate, trying to remember what they are supposed to do. Responding quickly and automatically may help protect you from injury.

Wait in your safe place until the shaking stops, then check to see if you are hurt. You will be better able to help others if you take care of yourself first, then check the people around you. Move carefully and watch out for things that have fallen or broken, creating hazards. Be ready for aftershocks.

Be on the lookout for fires. Fire is the most common earthquake-related hazard, due to broken gas lines, damaged electrical lines or appliances, and previously contained fires or sparks being released.

If you must leave a building after the shaking stops, use the stairs, not the elevator. Earthquakes can cause fire alarms and fire sprinklers to go off. You will not be certain whether there is a real threat of fire. As a precaution, use the stairs.

If you're outside in an earthquake, stay outside. Move away from buildings, trees, streetlights, and power lines. Crouch down and cover your head. Many injuries occur within 10 feet of the entrance to buildings. Bricks, roofing, and other materials can fall from buildings, injuring persons nearby. Trees, streetlights, and power lines may also fall, causing damage or injury.

Inform workers of the plan. Everyone in your workplace should know what to do if an earthquake occurs.

Get training. Take a first aid class from your local Red Cross chapter. Get training on how to use a fire extinguisher. Keep your training current. Training will help you to keep calm and know what to do when an earthquake occurs.

Discuss earthquakes with workers. Everyone should know what to do. Discussing earthquakes ahead of time helps reduce fear and anxiety and lets everyone know how to respond.

In *most* situations, you will reduce your chance of injury from falling objects (and even building collapse) if you immediately:

- **DROP down onto your hands and knees** before the earthquake would knock you down. This position protects you from falling but still allows you to move if necessary.
- **COVER** your head and neck (and your entire body if possible) under the shelter of a sturdy table or desk. If there is no shelter nearby, get down near an interior wall or next to low-lying furniture that won't fall on you, and cover your head and neck with your arms and hands. Try to stay clear of windows or glass that could shatter or objects that could fall on you.
- **HOLD ON to your shelter** (or to your head and neck) until the shaking stops. Be prepared to move with your shelter if the shaking shifts it around.

Check for Injuries:

☐ Check your first aid kit or the front pages of your telephone book for detailed instructions on first aid measures.
☐ If a person is bleeding, put direct pressure on the wound. Use clean gauze or cloth, if available.
☐ If a person is not breathing, administer rescue breathing.
☐ If a person's heart has stopped, begin CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).
☐ If a person's clothes catch fire, have them stop, drop, and roll.
☐ do not move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger of further injury.
☐ Cover injured persons with blankets or additional clothing to keep them warm.
☐ Get medical help for serious injuries.
☐ carefully check children or others needing special assistance.

Office First Aid Kit is located: _____

Flashlights are located (highly recommended): _____

Examine the area for fire hazards and call 911 if there is a fire hazard.

Outside meeting place is: _____

Approved by: _____ MD _____

Dated: _____

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SECTION	Approval date:	
Access/Safety	**Approved by:**	
POLICY AND PROCEDURE	**Effective date:**	
Fire Safety and Prevention and Emergency Non-Medical Procedures	**Revision date:**	

POLICY:

Site shall be maintained in a manner that provides a safe environment for all patients, visitors, and personnel. Site shall meet all city, county and state fire safety and prevention ordinances. Site staff shall receive training and information on fire safety & prevention and emergency non-medical procedures.

PROCEDURE:

I. **SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

The provider/designee will ensure the following fire and safety precautions:

- Lighting is adequate in all areas
- Exit doors and aisles are unobstructed and egress (escape) accessible.
- Exit doors are clearly marked with “Exit” signs.
- Clearly diagrammed “Evacuation Routes” for emergencies are posted in visible locations.
- Electrical cords and outlets are in good working condition
- At least one type of firefighting/protection equipment is accessible at all times

Staff will be responsible to correct any “unsafe” situation, and/or report the situation to the provider/designee who will make/arrange for correction.

II. **INFORMATION AND TRAINING**

Fire Safety & Prevention and Non-Medical Emergency information shall be available on site. Staff shall be informed of the location of the information and how to use the information. Staff training on fire safety & prevention and emergency non-medical procedures are verifiable and may be part of staff education documented in:

- Informal or formal in-services
- New staff orientation
- External training courses

Fire Safety & Prevention and Non-Medical Emergency procedure training topics shall include:

- Evacuation routes and exits for the exam rooms, office suites, and building
- Evacuation procedures
- Location of fire alarms, extinguishers, sprinklers, and smoke detectors
- Emergency phone numbers
- Workplace violence procedures *including emergency numbers*