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Earthquake Planning Checklist

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EARTHQUAKE PLANNING CHECKLIST

Scientists warn that a major earthquake could occur at any time along the New Madrid Fault. At the present time they believe there is sufficient energy stored in the fault for a major earthquake of 7.6 magnitude on the Richter Scale. However, these sources estimate that the most probable occurrence will be a smaller earthquake in the 6.0 to 6.5 size range. The chances of such an earthquake occurring before the end of the century is 40-60% and 97% for one occurring in the next 50 years. An earthquake of this size would cause damage over a large area.

The actual damage in your area will depend upon the size and location of the earthquake, how far you are from the center of the quake, the geological conditions in your area and the type and design of the structures. In fact, the extent of the damage from an earthquake may vary greatly between locations within the same community.

Thus, it is not a matter of if, but when and where, a major earthquake will strike along the New Madrid Fault. If it would strike today, would you and your family be prepared and know how to react?

The first signs of a quake maybe gentle shaking, swaying of hanging plants and light fixtures and rattling of objects on shelves. In a major earthquake the shaking will become severe making walking or standing difficult. As the shaking becomes stronger so does the danger. Cabinets start to topple, wall mounted clocks and pictures may fly across the room, suspended ceilings may pop out and light fixtures fall, glass windows shatter, doors bang and walls crack.

WHAT TO DO IN A EARTHQUAKE?

In the case of a serious earthquake the shaking will make movement from room to room difficult, if not impossible. Protect yourself by taking the following precautions.

1. If your are indoors, stay there. Find protection under a desk or heavy table, or brace yourself in a doorway. Stay in halls, against inside walls and away

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from windows. Protect yourself from falling and flying debris. Do not try to run outside.

2. If outside, get in the open, away from buildings, trees, walls and power lines that could fall.
3. If in a car, stop in the open away from trees, power lines, and overpasses and stay inside until the shaking stops. If a quake is severe, do not attempt to cross bridges that may be damaged.
4. If in a public store or building get under a desk or heavy table or in a doorway. Avoid stopping under display racks or anything that could fall or topple. Do not rush for an exit or use the elevator.

AFTER THE GROUND STOPS SHAKING:

The following are the things you may need to deal with immediately after the quake:

1. Protect your feet from broken glass and debris by wearing heavy shoes.
2. Locate others in the home, check for injuries, and give first aid as needed. Do not move the seriously injured unless they are in danger of further injury.
3. Check for fire, or potential fire hazards. If you smell or suspect a gas leak, turn off the gas at the outside valve or tank and evacuate the building. Do not use light switches, open flames or anything that causes a spark.
4. Check for electrical hazards. Unplug damaged appliances and switch off the power at the main fuse box or circuit breaker if damage to the electrical system is suspected. Stay away from any downed power lines and anything they are touching.
5. If water leaks are suspected, shut off the water at the main valve.
6. Do not use telephones except in case of severe injuries. (Replace any phone that may have come off the hook.)
7. Check with others in your neighbor for serious injuries.
8. Use battery or car radios for damage reports.
9. Clean up any potentially harmful materials such as medicine, chemicals, or flammable liquids.
10. Check to see that sewer lines are intact before using toilets. Plug tub and sink drains to prevent sewage backup.
11. Check the building for cracks or damage, particularly chimneys and masonry walls.
12. Open closet and cupboard doors carefully and watch for objects tumbling off shelves.
13. Be prepared for after shocks. These are usually smaller but may do damage to previously weakened buildings.

EMERGENCY FOOD, WATER AND SHELTER:

In a serious earthquake outside emergency assistance may not be available for the first 72 hours. Utilities may be disrupted and roads made impassable because of fallen trees, utility lines, building debris and damaged bridges. Thus, emergency supplies of food, water and medical supplies will be required for 3 days and a 2 weeks supply is better. Also consider the need for shelter from cold and inclement weather. The following will assist in planning for these:

1. Two quarts to one gallon of water per person per day will be required as a minimum. Emergency water sources include water heaters, ice cubes and toilet tanks (not the bowl). If you suspect drinking water is contaminated by broken lines, boil it for 5 to 10 minutes or add 4-6% liquid chlorine bleach (common household laundry bleach). Add 2 drops per quart for clear water or 4 drops for cloudy water and let it stand for 30 minutes.
2. Food should include canned or dehydrated items that have been precooked and/or require minimum heat or water. Remember special diet needs of infants and others.
3. Have a 2 week supply of all prescription and non-prescription medications.
4. Since an earthquake can strike at any time of the year, have warm clothes, blankets or sleeping bags available for all family members.
5. Shelter and heat may be required. Before using any vented heating system, check the chimney or vent pipe to insure it is still safe to use. Unvented heaters should only be used in open well ventilated areas. Never use charcoal indoors as a heat source.
6. Only use vehicles if there is an emergency. Do not go sight seeing.

PREPARING FOR AN EARTHQUAKE:

Because earthquakes occur without warning it is important to take steps now to prepare your family and home for an earthquake. The following is a partial listing of emergency supplies and equipment to use as a guideline to help you prepare.

List of Emergency Supplies and Equipment:

Survival

Emergency food and water
 First aid kit and book
 Warm blankets and clothing
 Radio, battery operated
 Medications
 Flashlight
 Watch

Sanitation Supplies

Large plastic trash bags
 Hand soap and shampoo
 Liquid detergent
 Toothpaste and toothbrush
 Premoistened towelettes
 Feminine supplies
 Infant supplies
 Toilet paper
 Powdered chlorinated lime
 (add to sewage to deodorize
 and disinfect)

Safety

Heavy shoes and gloves
 Matches and candles
 Warm, dry clothes
 Knife
 Garden hose

Cooking

Charcoal and lighter or sterno stove
 Sealable plastic bags
 Pots, at least 2
 Paper plates and towels
 Plastic knives, forks, spoons
 Can opener

Tools

Axe, shovel, broom
 Crescent wrench
 Hammer, screwdriver, pliers
 Wire, 1/2" rope, tape
 Pen and paper

Training for Family Members:

1. Practice family earthquake drills to train family members how to seek protection when the house starts to shake. Check each room for potential hazards and areas for the best protection.
2. Provide first aid training for family members.
3. Teach family members how to shut off utilities.
4. Identify places to meet after the quake both at home and in the community if all family members are not at home.
5. Discuss emergency conditions that the family may face until assistance arrives after an earthquake.

Identifying Potential Hazards:

1. Secure tall heavy furniture which could topple over.
2. Move heavy breakable items on upper shelves to lower shelves.
3. Secure water heaters and heavy appliances to wall studs to prevent movement and rupture of gas and electric lines.
4. Remove heavy hanging items from areas where you sit and sleep. Move beds away from windows which could shatter.
5. Add positive latches to cabinets or place low barriers across shelves.
6. Add plywood sheathing to ceiling joists around interior chimneys where bricks could fall through ceilings.

For further information on how to prepare for an earthquake, contact your local coordinator for Disaster and Emergency Services or the American Red Cross.

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