



# Recommended Earthquake Safety Actions

Federal, State, and local emergency management experts and other official preparedness organizations all agree that “**Drop, Cover, and Hold On**” is the appropriate action to reduce injury and death during earthquakes. Great ShakeOut Earthquake Drills ([www.ShakeOut.org](http://www.ShakeOut.org)) are opportunities to practice how to protect ourselves during earthquakes.

You cannot tell from the initial shaking if an earthquake will suddenly become intense...so always Drop, Cover, and Hold On immediately!

In MOST situations, you will reduce your chance of injury if you:

**DROP** where you are, onto your hands and knees. This position protects you from being knocked down and also allows you to stay low and crawl to shelter if nearby.

**COVER** your head and neck with one arm and hand

- If a sturdy table or desk is nearby, crawl underneath it for shelter
- If no shelter is nearby, crawl next to an interior wall (away from windows)
- Stay on your knees; bend over to protect vital organs

**HOLD ON** until the shaking stops.

- Under shelter: hold on to it with one hand; be ready to move with your shelter if it shifts
- No shelter: hold on to your head and neck with both arms and hands.

If there is no table or desk near you, drop to the ground and then if possible move to an inside corner of the room. Be in a crawling position to protect your vital organs and be ready to move if necessary, and cover your head and neck with your hands and arms.

Do not move to another location or outside. Earthquakes occur without any warning and may be so violent that you cannot run or crawl. You are more likely to be injured if you try to move around during strong shaking. Also, you will never know if the initial jolt will turn out to be start of the big one...and that’s why you should always Drop, Cover, and Hold On immediately!

These are guidelines for most situations. Read below to learn how to protect yourself in other situations and locations, or visit [www.earthquakecountry.org/step5](http://www.earthquakecountry.org/step5).



**Indoors:** Drop, Cover, and Hold On. Avoid exterior walls, windows, hanging objects, mirrors, tall furniture, large appliances, and kitchen cabinets with heavy objects or glass. However, do not try to move more than 5-7 feet before getting on the ground. Do not go outside during shaking! The area near the exterior walls of a building is the most dangerous place to be. Windows, facades and architectural details are often the first parts of the building to break away. If seated and unable to drop to the floor: bend forward, Cover your head with your arms, and Hold On to your neck with both hands.

**In a wheelchair:** Lock your wheels and remain seated until the shaking stops. Always protect your head and neck with your arms, a pillow, a book, or whatever is available. See [EarthquakeCountry.org/disability](http://EarthquakeCountry.org/disability) for recommendations for people who use wheelchairs, walkers, or are unable to drop to the ground and get up again without assistance.

**In bed:** Do not get out of bed. Lie face down to protect vital organs, and Cover your head and neck with a pillow, keeping your arms as close to your head as possible, while you Hold On to your head and neck with both hands until shaking stops. You are less likely to be injured by fallen and broken objects by staying where you are.

**In a high-rise:** Drop, Cover, and Hold On. Avoid windows and other hazards. Do not use elevators. Do not be surprised if sprinkler systems or fire alarms activate.

**In a classroom:** Drop, Cover, and Hold On. Laboratories or other settings may require special considerations to ensure safety. Students should also be taught what to do at home or other locations.

**In a stadium or theater:** Drop to the ground in front of your seat or lean over as much as possible, then Cover your head with your arms (as best as possible), and Hold On to your neck with both hands until shaking stops. Then walk out slowly, watching for anything that could fall during aftershocks.

**In a store:** Drop, Cover, and Hold On. Getting next to a shopping cart, beneath clothing racks, or within the first level of warehouse racks may provide extra protection.

**Outdoors:** Move to a clear area if you can safely do so; avoid power lines, trees, signs, buildings, vehicles, and other hazards. Then Drop, Cover, and Hold On. This protects you from any objects that may be thrown from the side, even if nothing is directly above you.

**MYTH – Head for the Doorway:**

An enduring earthquake image of California is a collapsed adobe home with the doorframe as the only standing part. From this came our belief that a doorway is the safest place to be during an earthquake. We now understand that doorways are no stronger than any other part of the house, and do not provide protection from falling or flying objects. You are safer under a table.

**Driving:** Pull over to the side of the road, stop, and set the parking brake. Avoid overpasses, bridges, power lines, signs and other hazards. Stay inside the vehicle until the shaking stops, then proceed carefully by avoiding fallen debris, cracked or shifted pavement, and emergency vehicles. If a power line falls on the car, stay inside until a trained person removes the wire.

**Near the shore:** Follow instructions above for your particular location. Then as soon as shaking reduces such that you are able to stand, walk quickly to high ground or inland as a tsunami may arrive soon. Don't wait for officials to issue a warning. Walk, rather than drive, to avoid traffic, debris, and other hazards.

**Below a dam:** Follow instructions above for your particular location. Dams can fail during a major earthquake. Catastrophic failure is unlikely, but if you live downstream from a dam, you should know flood-zone information and have prepared an evacuation plan for getting to high ground.

### More information:

<http://www.shakeout.org/dropcoverholdon>

[Earthquake Safety Video Series](#) (Great ShakeOut YouTube Channel)

