

Thurston County Development Services Earthquake Preparedness



Earthquake Preparedness

Imagine what would happen if you're home had wheels and was speeding down a twisting, bumpy road. A major earthquake will have a similar effect.

Home Inspection Checklist

Take 30 minutes to walk through your home. Identify potential hazards by using this handy worksheet.

1. Check your water heater and forced air unit to see if they are securely fastened to wall studs with straps? Secure your water heater with metal straps available at most hardware stores.
2. Identify top-heavy, freestanding furniture that could topple in an earthquake, such as bookcases and china cabinets. Secure these items by installing appropriate anchoring materials.
3. Identify heavy or breakable objects on high shelves or in cabinets. Securely fasten or move these objects to lower locations.
4. Identify electronic equipment (stereos, computers, etc.) and appliances (microwaves, toaster, etc.) which may slide off their cabinets. Secure these by using double-stick tape or Velcro-like fasteners, or provide a restraining edge on the cabinet or shelf.
5. Identify hanging plants, especially those in heavy baskets and hanging lights, which are near windows. Move these to a safer location or securely fasten them.
6. Identify mirrors, heavily framed pictures, etc. which are placed over beds, couches, and chairs. Relocate these, or securely mount them.
7. Identify appliances that could move enough to rupture gas or electrical lines. Securely fasten these objects.
8. Check all appliances and the water heater to make sure they are connected to the fuel source with flexible lines. Install flexible connectors on all gas appliances and the water heater.
9. Identify latches on kitchen and bathroom cabinets that will not hold the doors closed during heavy shaking. Install more secure latches or hooks.
10. Inspect four-poster beds, enclosed bed frames, and water beds that may come apart or pieces that may fall onto the bed.
11. Identify poisons, toxins, or solvents especially those in breakable containers, which are located in high or dangerous locations. Move these containers to a safe, well-ventilated storage area. Store ammonia and bleach in different locations. If these liquids mix, they create toxic fumes. Place pesticides, gasoline, paint thinners, etc. on the floor, on a low shelf, or in a locked cabinet that is securely fastened to the wall. If placed on a shelf, install a guardrail to prevent the bottles or containers from slipping off the shelf and breaking or spilling onto the floor. Store gasoline in vapor-proof containers. Keep them

out of the reach of children and pets.

12 Inspect the foundation of your home. Is your house securely bolted to it?

13 Remove or replace any loose tiles or bricks from your chimney and roof.

14 Check cabinets and closets for loose items that may fall, break or block your exit.

15 Store items in the overhead of your garage to prevent them from falling to prevent breakage and damage to your automobile. The overhead storage area of your garage is a good location to store large bulky items and seasonal/holiday decoration. Small, heavy items (i.e. bowling balls and items that can break) are best stored on the floor or storage cabinet.

16 Whether you have a manual or electric garage door, keep the area clear in front of your garage door and ensure that large items cannot fall and block the garage door from the inside.

17 Locate your gas, water, and electric utilities. Know how to turn the utilities off. Teach family members how to shut off all utilities and when to do so. Identify the shut-off valve by painting it a bright color. Attach an adjustable wrench to the gas meter. (You will not want to take time to find one after an earthquake.) If you do shut off the gas, NEVER turn it back on. The structure will need to be checked for leaks and all of the pilot lights must be relit. Puget Sound Energy should be contacted to restore service.

18 If you live in a mobile home check the foundation to make sure that it has been reinforced and that the undercarriage has been securely tied to the foundation. Without this, the mobile home may be thrown off its foundation even during small tremors. Tie doublewide mobile homes together. The two units are generally of different weights. When an earthquake strikes, they tend to react differently and pull apart. Structural support bracing systems are commercially available. Designs and costs vary, but a good bracing system can be a very worthwhile investment. If you are interested in a seismic bracing system, contact your mobile home owner's association, local mobile home dealer or look in the Yellow Pages.

Before an Earthquake

1. Prepare an emergency kit of food, water and supplies including a flashlight, portable battery operated radio, batteries, medicines, first aid kit, money and clothing.
2. Know the safe spots in each room - under sturdy tables, desks or against interior walls.
3. Know the danger spots in each room - near windows, mirrors, hanging objects, fireplaces and tall, unsecured furniture.
4. Conduct practice drills so you and your family know the safest locations in your home.
5. Decide how and where your family will reunite if separated during a quake.
6. Choose an out-of-state friend or relative who family members can call after the quake to report their whereabouts and conditions.
7. Learn first aid and CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).
8. Learn how to shut off gas, water and electricity in case the lines are damaged. (SAFETY NOTE: do not attempt to relight the gas pilot. Call Puget Sound Energy to assist you.)
9. Check chimneys, roofs, walls and foundations for stability. Make sure your house is

bolted to its foundation.

10. Secure your water heater and major appliances as well as tall, heavy furniture, hanging plants, mirrors and picture frames (especially those over beds).
11. Keep breakables, heavy objects, flammable or hazardous liquids (paints, pest sprays and cleaning products) in secure cabinets or on lower shelves.
12. Organize your neighborhood to be self-sufficient after a quake.

During an Earthquake

1. If indoors, stay there. Get under a solid piece of furniture, or stand in the corner of two inside walls away from any windows or other hazards. Most injuries in earthquakes occur from falling debris or people running and falling.
2. If outdoors, get to an open area away from any trees, buildings, walls and power lines.
3. If in a high-rise or office building, stay away from windows and outside walls. Get under a table. Do not use elevators.
4. If driving, pull over to the side of the road and stop. Avoid overpasses and power lines. Stay inside your car until the shaking is over.
5. If in a crowded public place, do not rush for the doors. Crouch and cover your head and neck with your hands and arms.

After an Earthquake

1. Unless there is an immediate life-threatening emergency, do not attempt to use the telephone.
2. Check for gas and water leaks, broken electrical wiring or sewage lines. If there is damage, turn the utility off at the source. Immediately report gas leaks to Puget Sound Energy. Check for downed power lines; warn others to stay away.
3. Check your building for cracks and damage, including the roof, chimneys and foundation.
4. Turn on your portable radio for instructions and news reports. For your own safety, cooperate with public safety officials and follow instructions.
5. Do not use your vehicle unless there is an emergency. Keep the streets clear for emergency vehicles.
6. Be prepared for aftershocks.
7. Stay calm and lend a hand to others.
8. If you evacuate, leave a message at your home telling family members and others where you can be found.