PLATE TECTONICS · PART 7 OF 9 · AGES 11–16

Staying Safe in an Earthquake

What emergency experts around the world advise you to do before, during and after the shaking. Always follow your local emergency services.

1. Drop

As soon as you feel shaking, drop onto your hands and knees. Get down before the earthquake knocks you down.

2. Cover

Cover your head and neck with your arm. Crawl under a sturdy table if one is close; if not, get next to an inside wall away from windows.

3. Hold On

Hold on until the shaking stops. Under a table, grip it and be ready to move with it if it shifts.

In bed? Outside? In a car?

In bed: stay there and cover your head with a pillow. Outside: move into the open, away from buildings and power lines. In a car: pull over and stay inside.

Don't run or use a doorway

Running outside is dangerous: glass and bricks fall next to walls. In modern homes a doorway is no stronger than anywhere else.

Near the coast? Think tsunami

After strong shaking, if the sea drains away, rises fast or roars, go to high ground or inland at once. Don't wait for an official warning.

Prepare a kit and a plan

Water and food for several days, torch, first-aid kit, whistle, charger and sturdy shoes. Agree a meeting place with your family.

After: expect aftershocks

Drop, Cover and Hold On again in every aftershock. Leave damaged buildings, text rather than call, and listen for official alerts.

Practise until it is automatic

Shaking can be so strong that you cannot walk. People who have practised Drop, Cover and Hold On react in the first second instead of freezing or running.

NEXT IN THE SERIES
8. Earthquake and Volcano Myths and the Real Science

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