

Drop, Cover, and Hold On when the earth shakes.

Taking the proper actions, such as “Drop, Cover, and Hold On”, can save lives and reduce the risk of injury. Everyone, everywhere, should learn and [practice](#) what to do during an earthquake, whether at home, work, school or traveling.

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 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.

Specific situations...

It is important to think about what you will do to protect yourself, wherever you are, when the earth begins to shake. What if you are driving, in a theater, in bed, at the beach, etc.?



Persons with Disabilities: See 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.

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 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 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. For more details, download a simple PDF fact sheet about [Earthquake Safety in Stores](#).

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.

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.

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.

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.