Earthquake Preparedness Guide for Seniors, People with Disabilities, and Others with Access and Functional Needs (AFN)

Earthquake Country Alliance
We're all in this together.

Seniors, People with Disabilities, and others with Access and Functional Needs (AFN) may have additional needs before, during and after an earthquake.

Questions to consider:

- What can you do independently and where may you need assistance?
- Will your regular sources of assistance be available after a disaster?
- What if power, gas, and phone lines are not working?
- What if roads and sidewalks are impassible or your means of transportation is unavailable?
- How will you maintain supplies of water, food, medications, and other needs?

This guide follows the Seven Steps to Earthquake Safety (**EarthquakeCountry.org/sevensteps**) with content adapted for Seniors, People with Disabilities and AFN, as well as their caregivers.

Additional resources, including this guide, are at **EarthquakeCountry.org/disability**.

STEP 1 – SECURE YOUR SPACE

EarthquakeCountry.org/step1

Secure your space by identifying hazards and securing moveable items.

Earthquake shaking can move almost anything, even large or heavy items. Safe spaces are places where heavy or falling objects and breaking glass will not injure you, such as under tables or desks along inside walls. When you enter a room, look for safe spaces to protect yourself and identify emergency exits.

The more limitations you have, the more important it is to create safe spaces - especially if you cannot "Drop, Cover, and Hold On" under a desk or table. To create safe spaces in your home or office:

- Secure essential equipment such as oxygen tanks or other life support devices
- Secure furniture and electronics to wall studs
- Move heavy items to low shelves
- Hang mirrors and pictures with closed hooks
- Consider how to keep exit routes clear

STEP 2 – PLAN TO BE SAFE

EarthquakeCountry.org/step2

Plan to be safe by creating a disaster plan and decide how you will communicate in an emergency. Develop a Personal Support Team (PST) as part of your plan.

Develop a Personal Support Team

A Personal Support Team (PST) is made up of at least three people at home, work, and every place where you spend a lot of time who can assist you immediately. This may be family, neighbors, friends, or co-workers. PST members need to know how to enter your home in case you cannot answer the door. The PST should know your general schedule, how best to assist you, and how to operate any equipment. PST members should also have developed their individual preparedness plan.

Additional Considerations

- Identify an out of area contact. Make sure the PST has this contact's information
- Label all adaptive equipment with your current contact information and out of area contact
- Have an evacuation plan that includes your transportation needs
- Identify a meeting place just outside your home and a secondary meeting place outside the neighborhood
- Make a care plan for your pets and service animals
    - Only service animals are allowed in shelters. Check with your local animal control or SPCA about pet sheltering in a disaster
- Sign up for alert systems in your region to received calls, text messages, or emails directly
- Identify trusted sources of information on social media, such as local government agencies and offices of emergency services

STEP 3 – ORGANIZE DISASTER SUPPLIES

EarthquakeCountry.org/step3

Organize disaster supplies in your home, workplace, and car depending on your needs in each location.

General Supplies

- Food (consider your specific dietary needs)
- Water
- Emergency contact information
- MSHA approved (spark free) flashlight with extra batteries
- Radio with extra batteries. Consider getting a NOAA weather radio too
- Cash (small denominations: $1, $5, $10 bills. ATMs may not function)

General Supplies (continued)

- Set of clothes, appropriate for the season
- Heavy gloves (suitable to clean debris and chemicals)
- First Aid Kit
- Face mask to protect from dust and debris
- Copy of photo ID/driver's license and utility bill

Supplies Specific to AFN:

- Medications (both prescription and over-the-counter medications) and medical supplies
- Medical information and medication list
- Copy of prescriptions
- Communication supplies
- Supplies for your specific needs such as:
    - Hearing aid batteries
    - Eye glasses
    - Walking stick
    - Oxygen or nebulizer supplies
    - Blood glucose tester
    - Special equipment for hygiene and catheter supplies
    - Feeding equipment
    - Hygiene Supplies
- Soothers/calming items

Attach a bag to your bedpost or bed frame with a flashlight (with batteries), sturdy close-toed shoes, heavy gloves, a whistle or noise maker, and an emergency information list. Survival whistles that do not rely on cork inserts/beads last longer and may be easier for those with limited energy or breathing-related disabilities.

Service animal/pet owners need to make a kit containing supplies for these animals. Have your animal chipped and include photos of you with your animal to assist with reuniting if you are separated, For more information about pet/service animal preparedness see **CCADT.org/emergency-kits-for-household-pets.html**.

STEP 4 – MINIMIZE FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

EarthquakeCountry.org/step4

Visit **EarthquakeCountry.org/step4** to learn ways to *minimize financial hardship* (for example: organize important documents, strengthen your property, and consider insurance).

STEP 5 – DROP, COVER, AND HOLD ON

EarthquakeCountry.org/step5

Practice what to do:

- Participate in a Great ShakeOut Earthquake Drill (**ShakeOut.org**) and encourage others, including your personal support team, to participate too!
- Put your plan into action during your drills. Include family members, personal support team members, and caregivers.
- Challenges identified during your drill will provide the opportunity to revise your plan to better accommodate your needs.

During an earthquake:

Do not try to exit a building during an earthquake as you are likely to be injured from falling roof tiles, building façades, glass, etc. Instead, protect yourself from falling objects in the safest place possible near where you are. The greater your limitations, the more critical it is to create safe spaces in advance (See Step 1).

If it helps, count out loud until the shaking stops. Hearing your voice can ground you, help reassure others you are okay and keep them calm and focused.

If possible:

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.

Adapt for your situation:

If you have difficulty getting onto the ground, or cannot get back up again without the help of a caregiver, then follow these recommendations:

- <u>If you are in a recliner or bed:</u>
  Do not try to transfer during the shaking. Cover your head and neck with your arms or a pillow until the shaking stops.

- <u>If you use a cane:</u>
  Follow the **Drop, Cover, and Hold On** instructions on the previous page, OR sit on a chair, bed, etc. and cover your head and neck with both hands. Either way, keep your cane near you so it can be used when the shaking stops.

- <u>If you use a walker:</u>
  LOCK your wheels (if applicable) and carefully get as low as possible. If your walker has a seat, sit and **COVER** your head/neck with your arms, a book, or a pillow. If no seat, try to get down with your head lower than the top of the walker. Bend over, then **HOLD ON** until shaking stops.

- <u>If you use a wheelchair:</u>
  LOCK your wheels. **COVER** your head and neck with your arms, a book, or a pillow. Bend over and **HOLD ON** until the shaking stops.

STEP 6 – IMPROVE SAFETY

Improve safety after earthquakes by evacuating if necessary, helping the injured, and preventing further injuries or damage.

EarthquakeCountry.org/step6

Once shaking stops:

- Check yourself for injury, paying extra attention to areas where you have reduced sensations.
- If you are near the shore and feel strong shaking, first protect yourself as in Step 5 until shaking reduces such that you can move inland or to a higher location. Do not wait for an official warning.
- Be prepared for aftershocks. Stay close to and aware of the safe spaces in your environment.
- Look around for hazards such as broken glass and objects in your way.
- Furniture may have shifted and sound cues may not be available to individuals with visual disabilities.
- Evacuate only if necessary, otherwise stay where you are.
- If the authorities advise an evacuation for your area, follow their directions immediately.

STEP 7 – RECONNECT AND RESTORE

Restore daily life by reconnecting with others, repairing damage, and rebuilding community

EarthquakeCountry.org/step7

Follow your disaster plan:

- Notify your out of area contact of your status, then keep phone lines clear. Text messaging may be more reliable than phone calls, so "Text First, Call Second."
- Expect aftershocks and remain aware of your surroundings. Aftershocks may create new hazards so continue to be ready to protect yourself.
- Repair or replace damaged items as needed.
- Review and revise your disaster plan based on what you learned.

Considerations for refrigerated medications:

- When there is a loss of power, keep medications in the refrigerator until it becomes warm, at which point they can be moved into the freezer. When the freezer becomes too warm, transfer medication to a small, insulated container and use chemical cold packs. Wrapping an emergency blanket around the ice chest or cooler will help contents stay cold much longer.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist how long your medications will last unrefrigerated.
- If you evacuate to a shelter, tell shelter staff that you have refrigerated medication.

DISABILITY-SPECIFIC TIPS

People with developmental/cognitive/intellectual disabilities:

- Have a written or visual checklist with short, easy steps.
- Include communication tools in your kit that you know how to use. People who are nonverbal can include pictures, written phrases, or Kwik Points for easier communication.
- Store extra batteries for portable communication devices.
- Practice Drop, Cover, and Hold On and your plan. Regular practice will help you to remember what to do and to remain calmer when a disaster occurs.
- Practice telling care assistants and responders how to communicate with you, such as using simple, short, and clear language for instructions.

People who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- Have more than one method to receive warnings and evacuation information.
- Store extra batteries in your disaster kits for hearing or communication devices.
- Keep pen and paper in your kits for receiving and communicating information.
- Prior to an earthquake, identify and test multiple ways to receive warnings and evacuation information. Ask a PST member to keep you up to date on emergency information as it is released.

People who are blind or visually impaired:

- Earthquakes can cause items to fall and furniture to shift making navigating the room more difficult.
- Sound clues may not be available.
- While evacuating move slowly and check for obstacles in the way. Shuffling your feet when there is a lot of debris on the ground will reduce your likelihood of falling.
- Store extra canes, batteries and supplies for your communication devices.
- Label emergency supplies using large print, fluorescent tape, Braille, or other preferred methods.

SERVICE ANIMALS

- Keep license and ID tags on service animals at all times.
- Keep copies of any service animal certification or documentation including immunization records, medications, and veterinarian's contact information in your service animal's disaster kit.
- Have your animal chipped and include photos of you with your animal to assist with reuniting if you are separated,
- Store extra animal food, water, and feeding bowls.
- Keep an extra harness and/or leash with your disaster supplies.
- Your service animal may be frightened or injured and may not be able to work after the earthquake. There is increased risk of injury to their paws from broken glass or debris on the ground.

SERVICE ANIMALS (continued)

- Purchase and practice using booties to protect paws.
- Be prepared to use alternate equipment if your animal cannot provide its normal services.
- Arrange for your PST to check on you and your animal.
- Service animals are allowed in shelters, pets are not. Be prepared to explain what services your animal performs for you.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS GUIDE

- Create safe spaces for yourself.
- Develop your Personal Support Team (PST) and include them in all of your planning.
- Help members of your PST develop their individual and family plans.
- Organize disaster supplies in your home, car, and office and for your service animal.
- Update your plan, contacts, and supplies at least annually so they are current.
- Practice Drop, Cover, and Hold On and your disaster plan.
- Advocate for yourself! Make sure you are included in practice drills at home, work and in your community.
- Volunteer with your local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) or other community-based emergency response organization.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Earthquake Country Alliance
  EarthquakeCountry.org/disability
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
  Ready.gov/individuals-access-functional-needs
- California Office of Emergency Services
  CalOES.ca.gov/cal-oes-divisions/access-functional-needs
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
  CDC.gov/Features/EmergencyPreparedness
- Preparing Together – Salvation Army
  PreparingTogether.org/
- Preparedness for Pets and Service Animals
  CCADT.org/be-prepared.html