



Government of South Australia

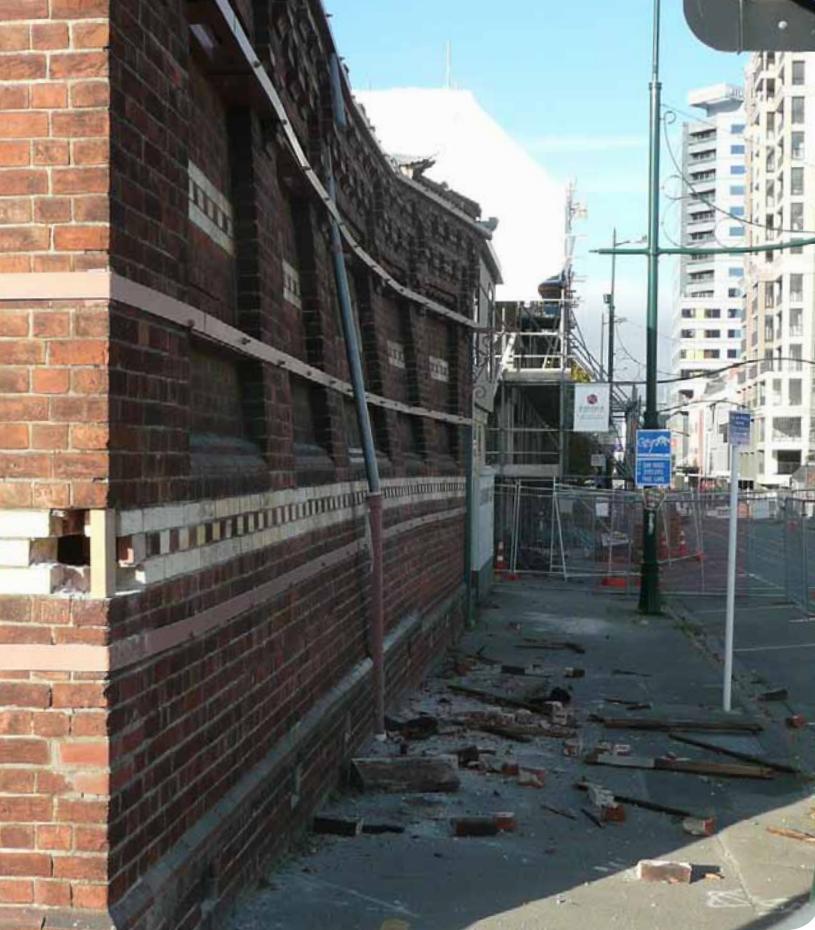
EARTHQUAKE GUIDE



DROP COVER HOLD



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Introduction

This booklet is designed to help you and your family prepare for, respond to and recover from a damaging earthquake. By knowing what to do before, during and after an earthquake you can lessen the effects on your family, your home and yourself. The actions recommended in this booklet are simple and inexpensive and will assist not only in an earthquake disaster but in your preparedness for disasters generally. Preparedness for earthquakes is especially important as unlike some other disasters there is no warning

and no way yet of predicting when, where or how big an earthquake might be.

After a damaging earthquake emergency services will be very busy attending to critical emergency situations. By being able to look after your family and yourself for a few days after an earthquake you will help ensure those most in need receive the priority assistance they require.

For further information go to www.sa.gov.au/emergency/earthquake.



Before an earthquake

1) Identify safe places

- » Do a walk-through of your home to locate safe places to **DROP, COVER, HOLD**.
- » Look for strong tables or desks that can provide shelter from flying debris.
- » Alternatively, look for places next to an interior wall, away from: windows that can shatter; tall furniture and hanging objects that can tip, fall or drop on you; and fireplaces with chimneys that can topple over and fall through the roof.
- » Note any furniture and other items that can be moved or secured to keep them from falling on you in your safe place.
- » Decide how and when your family will reunite if separated during an earthquake.
- » Discuss what kind of help would be needed by any household members who have a mobility impairment.
- » Conduct a drill which practices **DROP, COVER, HOLD**, evacuation and reuniting of the family at the agreed meeting point.





DROP!

DROP

DROP to the floor somewhere close to you – no more than a few steps or less than two metres away – where you can avoid injury from flying debris.



COVER!

COVER

Seek **COVER** under a strong table or desk.



HOLD!

HOLD

HOLD on to a table leg to keep your cover from moving away from you.

If you can't get under a strong surface:

DROP down low next to an interior wall and next to a chair, couch or anything stable. Stay clear of windows, tall furniture, hanging objects and fireplaces with chimneys.

COVER your head and neck with your arms. If you have a chair, put your head under it if possible.

HOLD on to the chair, couch, etc or brace yourself against the internal wall.

- » In an earthquake the area near external walls of a building is the most dangerous place to be.
 - » Windows, facades and architectural details are often the first parts of a building to collapse. If inside DO NOT run outside and DO NOT run to the other rooms, **DROP, COVER, HOLD**.
 - » Keep in mind that in modern homes doors are no stronger than other parts of the house.
- Doorways usually have a door that can swing and injure you during an earthquake. Doorways do not protect you from flying glass or falling objects. Bracing yourself in a doorway during a strong shaking may be difficult.

Before an earthquake

continued

2) Make an emergency plan and an emergency kit

After an earthquake, emergency services will be busy attending to life threatening emergencies and other crises. Electricity, water, gas and telephones may not be working. Be prepared to look after yourself and the members of your family for at least three days.

- » Get your family or household together and write down what you will do in an emergency.
- » The Australian Red Cross provides advice on preparing an emergency plan which includes a plan template – go to www.redcross.org.au/files/REDiPlan_booklet.pdf
- » Make sure everyone in your household knows the contents of the emergency plan and where it is kept.



- » Put together an emergency kit with all of the critical items you may need such as a torch, battery operated radio and spare batteries, medicines, food, water and clothing.
The Australian Red Cross offers advice on preparing an emergency kit – go to www.redcross.org.au/images/Step_3_fact_sheet.pdf
- » Assemble or purchase a first aid kit and attend a first aid course.
St John Ambulance Australia offers first aid kits, supplies and training
– go to www.stjohnsa.com.au
- » Know where and how to shut off gas, electricity and water services in case they are damaged. (*Always obtain professional advice before reconnecting the gas supply*).
- » Check your household insurance policy and ensure that you have adequate coverage.
- » If you own pets, make an emergency pet plan and emergency pet kit.

Emergency plans, kits and first aid

The Australian Red Cross REDiPlan includes four easy steps to prepare for an emergency as well as a section to record your plan.

The Australian Red Cross emergency planning booklet:
www.redcross.org.au/files/REDiPlan_booklet.pdf

An emergency kit will help if you have to evacuate your home in an emergency or if you need to stay in your home when essential services have been cut off.

The Australian Red Cross advice on how to prepare an emergency kit: www.redcross.org.au/images/Step_3_fact_sheet.pdf

Knowing first aid and having a first aid kit could help you save a life in an emergency.

St John Ambulance Australia first aid kits and supplies for purchase: www.stjohnsa.com.au

St John Ambulance Australia first aid training:
www.stjohnsa.com.au

Before an earthquake continued

3) Reduce risks at home

When looking for safe places to DROP, COVER, HOLD did you find anything that might fall on you in an earthquake? Consider whether you should now:

- » Move furniture such as bookshelves away from beds, sofas or anywhere you sit or sleep.
- » Move heavy items such as pictures and mirrors away from beds, sofas or anywhere you sit or sleep.
- » Alternatively fasten bookshelves and other such furniture securely to walls.
- » Secure storage tank type water heaters by strapping them to the wall and bolting to the floor.
- » Check the condition of brick chimneys. If a chimney is not used, consider taking it down. If it is used, consider replacing it with a metal flue above the roof.
- » Store weed killers, pesticides and flammable products securely in closed cabinets with latches.
- » Place large and heavy household objects on lower shelves.
- » Ensure overhead lighting is well fixed in place.
- » Repair defective electrical wiring and leaky gas connections as these are potential fire risks.
- » Repair cracks in walls and get expert advice if there are signs of structural defects in your home.



During an earthquake



DROP

DROP to the floor somewhere close to you – no more than a few steps or less than two metres away – where you can avoid injury from flying debris.



COVER

Seek **COVER** under a strong table or desk.



HOLD

HOLD on to a table leg to keep your cover from moving away from you.

If you can't get under a strong surface:

DROP down low next to an interior wall and next to a chair, couch or anything stable. Stay clear of windows, tall furniture, hanging objects and fireplaces with chimneys.

COVER your head and neck with your arms. If you have a chair, put your head under it if possible.

HOLD on to the chair, couch, etc or brace yourself against the internal wall.

- » If you are at home or inside a building move no more than a few steps and **DROP, COVER, HOLD**.
- » If you are already in a **lift** when the earthquake strikes, **DROP, COVER, HOLD** covering your head and neck with your arms. When the shaking stops, get out at the nearest floor, if you can do so safely.
- » If you are in a **theatre** or **stadium**, stay at your seat, **DROP** to the floor and **COVER** your head and neck with your arms. Do not leave until the shaking stops and you are sure it is safe to exit, then walk out slowly, watching for anything that has fallen or could fall.
- » If you are **outside**, move away from buildings, trees, streetlights and power lines, then **DROP, COVER, HOLD**, covering your head and neck with your arms.
- » If you are **driving**, pull over to a safe place away from buildings, trees, service poles and bridges. Stay in the car with your seatbelt fastened until the shaking stops, then proceed with extreme caution.

EMERGENCY ONLY



After an earthquake

1) Immediate actions

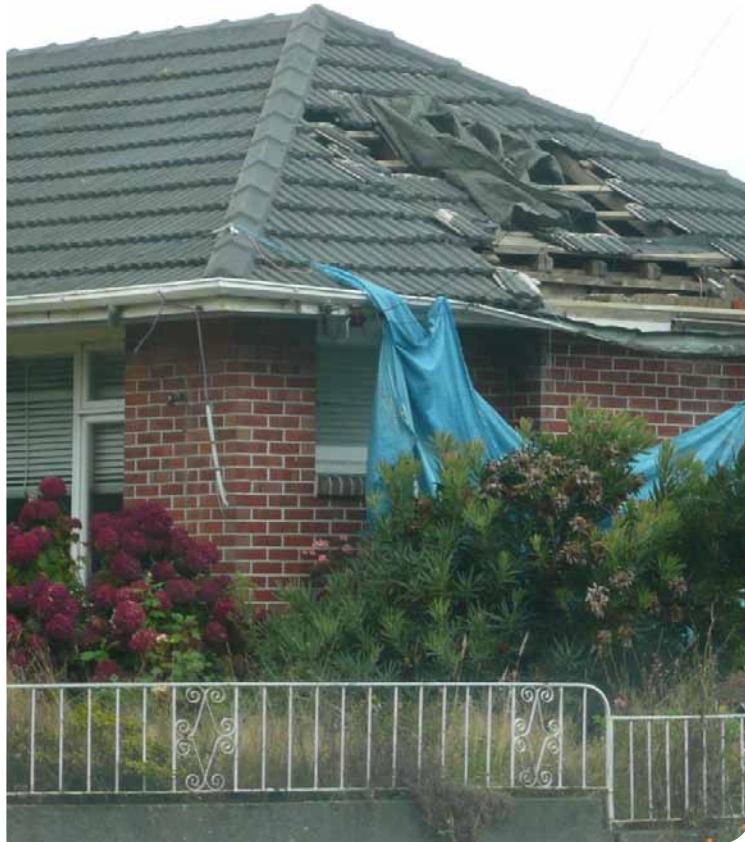
- » Stay indoors until the shaking stops and you are sure it is safe to move.
- » Stay calm, check yourself for injuries and get first aid if necessary.
- » Help anyone who is injured or trapped.
- » Assess your home or the building you are in for damage. If it appears unsafe, evacuate.
- » Identify a safe exit route, walk out slowly, watching for anything that has fallen or could fall. Go to your chosen meeting point.
- » Do not use lifts.
- » Expect aftershocks. These are secondary earthquakes; usually less violent than the main earthquake. They can however cause additional damage and weaken buildings. Remember to DROP, COVER, HOLD each time one occurs.
- » Call '000' if there is a life-threatening emergency.
- » Do not make non-emergency phone calls as this can overload telephone lines. If you must use your mobile phone, send text messages rather than calling.
- » If you detect a gas leak, evacuate the building, opening doors and windows as you leave. Do not unplug or plug in any electrical appliances or switch lights on or off. Turn off the gas at the meter. (*Always obtain professional advice before reconnecting the gas supply.*)
- » Turn off electricity and water services if they have been damaged.
- » Do not drive unless for an emergency so that streets are clear for emergency vehicles. If you must drive, watch out for damage and debris and obey all normal traffic rules.
- » Check on your neighbours, help others if you can.
- » In particular help anyone who needs special assistance such as elderly people, those without transportation, people with a disability and their carers.
- » Listen to local radio stations for updated emergency information and instructions.
- » Do not go "sightseeing" in damaged areas.



2) Assessing your property

To assess if your home is safe look for:

- » Damage to chimneys, parapets and gable end walls, these are common falling hazards. Take care as damage can be hidden.
 - » Bowing or “out of plumb” walls.
 - » Loose brickwork.
- » Cracking in walls, particularly at the sides of openings.
- » A sunken or spreading roof or cracks in the ceiling which might indicate roof damage.
- » Uneven floors or sloping floors.
- If you have any doubts about the safety of your home contact a structural engineer for advice. See “Engineers – Consulting” in the Yellow Pages.



After an earthquake

continued



3) If you need to evacuate

You may need to evacuate your home if it has been damaged, looks unsafe or if Emergency Services have informed you that it cannot be re-occupied.

- » Stay out of the house until a structural engineer has checked it and given further advice.
- » Seek temporary accommodation with family, friends or neighbours.
- » Alternatively, listen to the radio for the location of emergency relief centres.
- » Know where you will be staying the night, before darkness falls.
- » Turn off services including water, power and gas.
- » Make your home as safe and secure as possible before leaving.
- » Take your small valuables – if it is safe to recover them.
- » Take your emergency kit – if it is safe to recover it.
- » Tell your neighbours where you are going and how you can be contacted.
- » If you must drive, watch out for damage and debris and obey all normal traffic rules.

4) Insurance

- » If your property is damaged or uninhabitable, call your insurance company.
- » If you have lost your policy documents or don't know who your insurer is, call the Insurance Council Hotline on **1 300 728 228**.
- » If you rent your property, contact your landlord and your contents insurance company.
- » If it is safe to do so, take reasonable steps to prevent further damage to your property. Discuss this with your insurance company.
- » If any damaged items on your property present a health hazard or make your home uninhabitable, ask your insurance company for advice.
- » Discuss with your insurance company the removal of any damaged items to ensure your loss is covered.
- » In most cases the insurance company will send an assessor to your home to review your claim. Work with the insurance assessor to progress your claim.



After an earthquake

continued



5) Cleaning up your property

Before starting a cleanup:

- » Attend to any injuries you have suffered.
- » Ensure that your home is safe. If you have any doubts about the safety of your property, contact a structural engineer for advice.
- » Make sure your drinking water supply is safe before drinking. Listen to local radio stations for advice.
- » Make sure the water supply and sewer line are working before starting a washing machine or dishwasher.

When cleaning up:

- » Wear sturdy shoes, clothing and gloves.
- » Keep children away for their own safety.
- » Open cupboards carefully as objects may have shifted and could fall off shelves.
- » If appliances appear damaged unplug them and have them checked by a licensed electrician.

- » If you suspect that products containing asbestos have been damaged do not undertake the cleanup without proper protective equipment. You must follow proper handling and disposal practices, or employ a professional. Information on asbestos is available from **www.safework.sa.gov.au** or to find asbestos removal contractors see "Asbestos Removal" in the Yellow Pages.
- » Remove spoiled food and rubbish as soon as possible, and dispose of it appropriately.
- » Expect aftershocks, remember to DROP, COVER, HOLD each time one occurs.



6) Help your family and community to heal

Most people will suffer some degree of emotional trauma after experiencing a disaster such as a damaging earthquake. Try to:

- » Follow a routine as much as possible.
- » Keep the family together as much as possible.
- » Eat healthy meals, do not skip meals or overeat, exercise and stay healthy.
- » Stay busy – this might include helping in the community as a volunteer.
- » Accept help from family, friends, co-workers and other people you trust and talk about your feelings with them.
- » Talk to your children about their experience and feelings.
- » Limit your time around the sights and sounds of what happened, don't dwell on television, radio or newspaper reports of what happened.
- » Seek counselling if you or your family experience emotions or physical symptoms which are too intense or persistent.



Further Information

sa.gov.au/emergency/earthquake



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