

Quake Tips

B.C. is earthquake country. Should this alarm you? "Not at all," says Barry Growe, emergency services co-ordinator for the Canadian Red Cross, B.C.-Yukon Division, "but you should be prepared."

Unlike the earthquake that struck California in October 1989, (which registered a seven on the Richter scale) B.C.'s earthquakes have so far centred outside the cities, where most damage tends to occur. And our high building code standards mean that most structures are well-equipped to withstand strong quakes.

So even though most of our homes and offices are unlikely to collapse, being prepared by having a plan will help promote personal safety and limit property damage.

THE HAZARD HUNT

Injuries resulting from an earthquake are commonly caused by falling or moving objects. You can help minimize this danger by taking a few minutes to examine your environment for hazards. Take care to make these adjustments:

- ◆ Place heavy objects on low shelves.
- ◆ The water heater — gas or electric — should always be secured, as should any other gas appliance, to lessen the risk of shock and fires. Refrigerators, stoves, water heaters, washers and dryers can all move in a major quake.
- ◆ Secure cupboard doors and heavy furniture like bookshelves; don't overload.
- ◆ Never place a picture, mirror, or other heavy object above your bed or office desk.
- ◆ Avoid placing your desk or bed near a window. Glass can shatter.
- ◆ Cap and store flammable or hazardous chemicals away from heat sources and off high shelves.
- ◆ Be sensitive to the fears of children. Calm their earthquake fears by making a game of the hazard hunt.
- ◆ Relax. Once you've taken care of these basics, you've done a lot to improve your safety.

HOUSEHOLD "DO'S"

- ◆ Since power is likely to fail in an earthquake (in fact we should expect to spend at least the first 72 hours after the quake without power), keep a portable radio and flashlight in an accessible place. Check your batteries from time to time.



- ◆ Purchase materials for a first aid kit and store in a secure, accessible place (see checklist below; also see "Emergency Action" segment, Volume 1, Issue 3, of *Your Better Health Magazine*). Also, get training in first aid basics.
- ◆ Mount an A-B-C type (dry chemical) fire extinguisher to a wall



in your kitchen. Be sure to note the expiry date.

◆ Keep a crescent wrench in a safe place with the other essential supplies, so you can turn off the gas at the meter, if necessary. Don't turn gas off unless you can smell it, there's a fire or bad structural damage because gas requires a technician to reconnect it. Brief every family member on how to shut off gas, electricity and water. A word of caution: turn off the electricity only if you suspect wires have been broken



and never turn it off if you smell gas. Any electrical switch, including the breakers to turn off power, can create a potentially explosive spark.

◆ For added security, keep a three-day supply of bottled water and some canned food on hand. Your hot water heater contains enough water to last a few days. Strain and purify water before you drink it.

◆ Devise a plan for contacting other family members in case you're separated during an earthquake. You could prearrange to have each family member call a friend or relative living out of town who could then relay messages. Wait a few hours before making calls unless you need urgent assistance.

FIRST AID CHECKLIST

- ◆ 100 adhesive bandages (assorted)
- ◆ 20 dressings (10 cm. square, sterile, non-adherent)
- ◆ 10 wound dressings
- ◆ 2 triangular bandages
- ◆ 2 gauze rolls (3 cm)
- ◆ 2 eyepatches
- ◆ 2 elastic roller bandages
- ◆ 2 adhesive tape rolls
- ◆ 1 pair of tweezers
- ◆ 1 pair of scissors
- ◆ 1 thermometer
- ◆ 10 safety pins

DURING THE QUAKE

If indoors:

◆ "DUCK AND COVER" is important to remember. Crouching under a desk, table, or bed will help you avoid being hit by falling objects.



◆ Do not run outside. The least safe place is near a building, because this is where falling glass will land.

◆ Stay clear of windows in case glass breaks.

◆ If there is no place to take cover, stand in an inside doorway or kneel beside an inner wall, covering your head with your arms.

If outside:

◆ Stay there, but get as far away from buildings as possible.

◆ Stay away from powerlines.

◆ Get to an open area quickly.

If in your car:

◆ Stop and remain where you are. Try not to stop on a bridge.

AFTER THE QUAKE

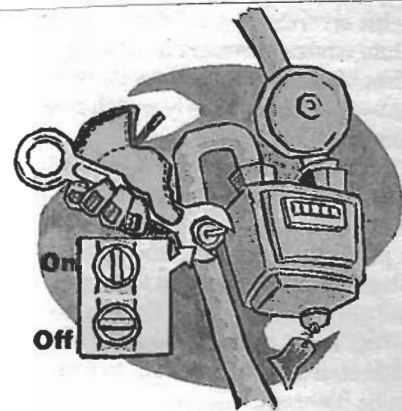
◆ Turn on your radio to find out about damages, hazards, crowded hospitals, the likelihood of aftershocks and the need for volunteers.

◆ Turn off the main gas valve if (and only if) you smell gas.

◆ Until you hear it's safe to travel, stay where you are.

◆ Stay away from the shoreline since tsunamis (tidal waves) can strike after the quake.

◆ Provide help to the injured.



ADDITIONAL PREPAREDNESS

The Provincial Emergency Program (PEP), the Red Cross and St. John Ambulance offer courses on earthquake preparedness. Consult your phone book for the nearest offices. ■

by Jane Ellis

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