

How to prepare for disaster

Check this clip-and-save page to see whether your family is ready in case disaster strikes. In our area, that could be a major earthquake. Be prepared to spend a week without utilities, medical aid or communications.

Before it happens

Gather documents and cash

- Store important documents** such as insurance policies, deeds, property records and birth certificates in a bank safe-deposit box. Store copies in your disaster-supplies kit.
- Keep a stash of cash** or traveler's checks at home where you can quickly get them in case of evacuation.

Make a family emergency plan

- Identify a safe place in each room** of your home and practice rapidly getting there. Best locations include under a sturdy desk or table, or beside a sturdy, large piece of furniture such as a sofa or bed. Avoid doorways; doors will bang open and shut in a large earthquake.
- Practice home-evacuation drills.** Choose someplace nearby for your family to meet. Expect a lack of transportation.
- Educate your children.** Get a copy of your school district's disaster policy regarding transportation and the release of students. Keep photos of family members in your wallet in case someone is missing.
- Take a first-aid course.** Learn CPR.
- Know where the nearest police and fire stations are.** Know the route to the nearest hospital emergency room. Keep critical phone numbers and your insurance-policy numbers by your phone and in your wallet.

Enter your "ICE" — In Case of Emergency — numbers on your cellphone so emergency workers will know whom to contact if you're hurt. For example, enter "ICE husband John" and the phone number.

Meet your neighbors and find out whether they have medical or other expertise. Plan to unite if your neighborhood becomes isolated. Help elderly, disabled or single-parent neighbors create an emergency plan. Get contact information for their relatives.

Fill in the spaces below and keep this page in a handy place.

FAMILY

Emergency meeting place:

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Out-of-state contact, phone number:

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Insurance company and phone numbers:

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Insurance policy numbers:

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Driver's license numbers:

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NEIGHBORHOOD

Neighbors' names, phone numbers:

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UTILITY COMPANIES

Electricity:

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Water:

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Natural gas:

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Phone:

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EMERGENCY

Call 911 in life-or-death situation

Doctors' phones:

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Pharmacy phone:

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Police nonemergency phone:

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Fire nonemergency phone:

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Closest emergency room, address:

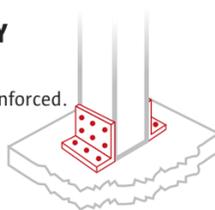
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OTHER

Evaluate your home

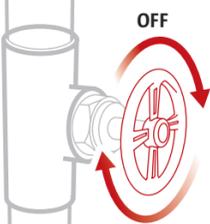
STRUCTURAL SAFETY

- Make sure your home is bolted to the foundation** and the structure is properly reinforced.
- Check roof, foundation, chimney and walls** for cracks and overall condition. If you decide to retrofit, check contractors credentials.
- If you live in an apartment,** know where your building's utility controls are and how to use them.



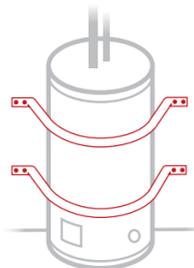
PLUMBING

- Family members should know how to shut off water lines** in case of a leak in the house. Label the shut-off valve clearly; it's the first valve in the line after it enters the house.



- Strap your water heater** (gas and electric ones) to studs in the wall with heavy-duty metal strips

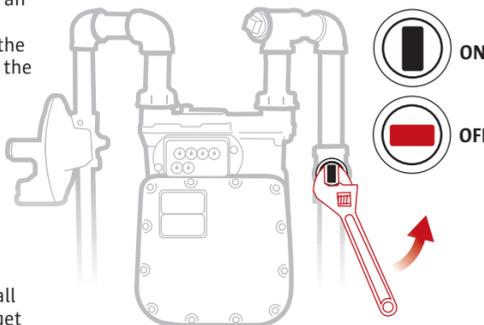
or to the floor to prevent gas leaks and possible fires from broken pipes. Home-improvement stores sell strapping kits.



GAS

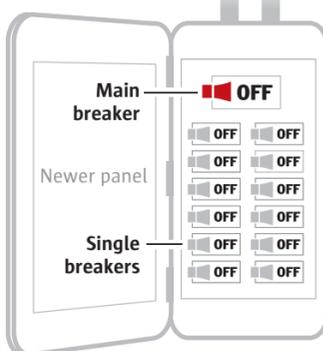
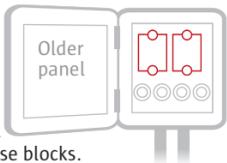
- All occupants should also know how and when to turn off the gas.**

If you smell gas after an earthquake or other emergency, shut off the meter valve found at the first fitting on the supply pipe coming out of the ground. Use a wrench to turn the valve either way until it is perpendicular to the pipe. Keep a wrench attached to the gas meter with a wire. Call the gas company to get service restored.



ELECTRICAL

- Learn how to shut off the electricity:** Turn off single breakers first, then switch off the main breaker. To turn back on, switch the main breaker first, then the single breakers. On older panels, pull the main fuse blocks.



- Buy a portable, gas-powered generator** for emergency electricity. Only appliances that can use extension cords should be attached to a generator. A 2200-watt unit can power a refrigerator and several lamps. Keep fuel in a safe, protected container.

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

- Place flashlights in hallways,** bathrooms and bedrooms. Keep a flashlight, spare batteries and sturdy shoes under the bed. (Shoes will protect you from broken glass and other debris on the floor.)
- Evaluate each room.** Ask yourself: If the home began shaking, what would fall?
- Secure appliances,** bookshelves and hutches to wall studs. Mirrors should be hung on double hooks; do not lean them against the wall.
- Place heavy objects and electronic equipment on lower shelves.** Use large Velcro patches or nonskid rubber shelf liner to help keep items from moving around too much. Place a beanbag of sand or shot in the bottom of vases and other breakable items to help hold them down.
- Use plastic,** not porcelain hanging planters.
- Store household chemicals safely,** preferably on or near the floor.

Supplies you need

Experts suggest having three emergency kits: one at home, a small one at work, and a few basic supplies in the car, especially for winter. Pick up a few items on the list every time you go shopping.

FOOD, WATER

- One gallon of water per person per day** (Try to store a week's supply. Do not use milk jugs; 2-liter pop bottles can be used if they are thoroughly cleaned and filled to the top.)

- A backcountry water-filtering device or a bottle of unscented liquid chlorine bleach to purify water** (16 drops per gallon or 8 drops per 2-liter bottle right before you use it, NOT before you store it)

- Nonperishable food**
- Can opener**
- Pet food**

FIRST AID, HYGIENE

- First-aid handbook**
- Bandages** in a variety of sizes, gauze, bandaging tape, surgical gloves
- Portable supply of prescription drugs** and copies of prescriptions
- Backup of special supplies** you regularly use, such as oxygen tanks or hearing-aid batteries
- Moist towelettes**
- Toilet paper**
- Baby and feminine-hygiene items**

SHELTER/CLOTHING

- Camp stove and fuel** (Never use them indoors.)
- Sleeping bags or blankets**
- Sturdy shoes**
- Hat**
- Boy Scout Handbook** for basic "how-to" instructions

TOOLS

- Flashlight**
- Portable radio**
- Extra batteries**
- Multipurpose pocketknife**
- Crowbar**
- Handsaw**
- Sledgehammer**
- Work gloves, goggles, dust masks**
- Rope**
- Plastic sheeting or tarps**
- Duct tape**
- Fire extinguisher** with ABC rating (Keep instructions on the canister.)
- Candles**
- Waterproof matches**
- A loud whistle** (one for each family member) to signal for help
- Documents**
- Photocopies of credit cards,** driver's licenses, birth certificates, bank information and account numbers, other official identification

UPKEEP

- Store the items in plastic boxes** that are waterproof and pest-proof. Stash emergency supplies near your front door or in your bedroom, somewhere you can easily grab them on your way out in an emergency. Don't keep supplies in the basement or other areas not easily accessible.
- Replenish kits annually** when you reset your clocks at daylight-saving time. Toss outdated food and cans that are dented, rusty or swollen. Restock as family's needs change.

Resources

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):
www.fema.gov/areyouready/

Washington Emergency Management Division:
http://emd.wa.gov/

Seattle Emergency Management:
www.seattle.gov/emergency/