

## Quake Safe tips if you are outside

In an earthquake, the area immediately outside a building is the most dangerous place to be. We call this “the danger zone” because bricks, windows, facades and architectural details are often the first parts of the building to fall off. The taller the building, the wider the danger zone. A basic rule of thumb is if you are inside, stay inside and if you are outside, stay outside.

*But what if you are in the danger zone when the earthquake starts?*

**Rule:** If you have to look way over your head to see the top of the building, get back into the building and find a safe place. You simply won't have enough time or mobility to get far enough away from tall buildings when the ground is moving.

If you don't have to look up very much to see the top of the building, you are probably far enough away from it.

## Summary

- *Don't run during the shaking.*
- *Drop, Cover and Hold under a desk or table.*
- *If there's no table around, find the nearest safe place beside an inside wall or lower than furnishings.*
- *If outside and in an open area, sit down and cover your head with your arms.*
- *If in “the danger zone”, next to building, try to get back into the building for shelter.*

## Practice earthquake drills

The only way to insure you will take the appropriate “quake-safe” action during the earthquake is to practice. If you never practice getting under a desk or sitting beside an inside wall, the chances of you taking the appropriate safety action is only about 10%. People learn by using their senses. The more senses you use to learn something, the better you remember and respond in an emergency. By reading about how to be safe in an earthquake, hearing the same information via radio, television or from other people and physically practicing getting under a table or sitting against a wall, you virtually insure that you will make a good decision and take a quake-safe action when the earthquake happens.

If you can't physically practice, at least talk about what you would do in that situation. For example, when you are driving, talk about what you would do and visualize yourself pulling the car over and stopping. That's almost as good as a real practice drill.



Seattle Office of Emergency Management  
206-233-5076

# WHEN THE GROUND SHAKES



# HOW TO BE SAFE IN AN EARTHQUAKE

## Myths verses Fact

One of the great myths of an earthquake is that all the buildings collapse. Actually, in the United States, we don't see a lot of building collapse, especially when you compare it to the number of buildings that are impacted by the earthquake.

## Conquering the instinct to run

During earthquakes, many people's fight/flight instinct urges them to run: even when they know they should Drop, Cover and Hold.

Studies show that people in our country tend to be hurt by falling objects, not by collapsing structures. If you are on your feet trying to move, you are in danger from toppling bookcases, breaking windows, falling televisions or shifting furniture. Safety comes from taking quick action and finding a "quake-safe place" within 3 to 4 seconds.

You and your loved ones can learn to resist the instinct to run by knowing where safe places are in each room of your home and practicing.



When the earth shakes, **DROP** to the ground, **COVER** under a desk or table and **HOLD** on to the desk or table so it doesn't bounce away. Stay there until the shaking stops.

## "Quake-safe Advice"

To increase your likelihood of surviving any size earthquake, Drop, Cover and Hold under a desk or table within the first 3—4 seconds of shaking. Stay there until the shaking stops.

If you are in a place without a table your goal is that your head is not the tallest thing in the room. Start by getting low. If there is no table around you, think

*"Beneath, Beside, Between"!*

- Getting **BENEATH** any desk or table is always your best option.
- Sit **BESIDE** an inside wall or  
Get low and **BESIDE** heavy furniture.
- Crouch low **BETWEEN** the rows of chairs in a movie theater, church or stadium.  
Get low **BESIDE AND BENEATH** the level of a grocery cart in the supermarket.



*If there is no table around, get lower than the other furnishings.*

## Other Places You Might Be:

### *What if I'm...*

#### **in a car?**

You'll naturally do the right thing because it will feel like a flat tire. Slow down, pull over and stop. Stay in the car.

#### **driving on a bridge or overpass?**

Slow down, but continue driving if possible. When out of that situation, pull over and stop. If you can't drive out of the situation, at least stay in the car.

#### **outside?**

If outside and in an open area, sit down and cover your head with your arm. Immediately outside of a building is called the "danger zone". If you are immediately outside of building, move into the building and find a quake-safe safe place.

#### **in bed?**

Beds are relatively safe places to be in an earthquake, especially if you don't hang pictures on the wall at the head of your bed. Stay in bed, cover your head with the covers.

#### **upstairs vs downstairs?**

Either is safe. Find a quake-safe place where you are and avoid running during the shaking.

#### **Myth Buster!**

Doorways are **NOT** a recommended safe place to be in an earthquake. It's difficult to stay in the doorway during the shaking and the door often causes injury then it swings open and closed during the shaking.