

1.10.3 Personal Safety During an Earthquake

The previous sections have concentrated on making your environment safer before the next earthquake. What should you do during an earthquake? The next big earthquake will be less traumatic if you:

- 1) prepare an earthquake plan and practice it;
- 2) know what to do during a big earthquake; and
- 3) store supplies to make life more comfortable after the earthquake (see Section 1.10.4, After the Earthquake).

1.10.3.1 PREPARE A PLAN

How rational do you think you will be during the violent shaking of a major earthquake? Before the next earthquake, get together with your family or housemates to plan now what you will do during and after that event.

- 1) Teach everyone to "duck, cover, and hold."
- 2) Identify safe spots in every room, such as sturdy desks and tables, and interior walls.
- 3) Teach everyone who could be home alone how to turn off the gas--but only if they smell or hear a leak.
- 4) Establish an out-of-area contact person who can be called by all family members to relay information. In an emergency, out-of-area calls are often easier to place than local calls.
- 5) Store supplies and prepare a personal earthquake bag.

Practice your plan often before the next earthquake, so habit can overcome fear. Also work with your neighbors to prepare a neighborhood plan. You may have elderly or disabled neighbors who could need your help. The support of friends and neighbors could reduce the stress for everyone.

1.10.3.2 DUCK, COVER, AND HOLD

During an earthquake, duck or drop to the floor, take cover under a sturdy desk or table, and hold onto it so that it doesn't move away from you. Wait there until the shaking stops.