

THE PacificComp TRAINER

WHEN THE SHAKING STARTS: EARTHQUAKE ADVICE

Frequently, we have small earthquakes in California, and when we do, whatever the size, do you know what to do? Are you aware that recommendations have changed over the years? Here are some updates.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO WHEN THE SHAKING STARTS?

According to seismologists, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and others, the rule is: drop, cover, and hold on.

DROP = Drop to the floor rather than getting knocked down by a violent quake.

COVER = Cover your body and head, preferably under a strong table or desk.

HOLD ON = Hold on tightly because furniture often moves with the shaking.

Studies of injuries and deaths caused by earthquakes over the past few decades have proven that you are more likely to be injured by falling or flying objects, such as, televisions, computers, lamps, broken glass, and bookcases, than to die in a collapsed building.

Empty space is created under tables and desks. Our buildings, built to earthquake standards, are very strong and designed to withstand the movement caused by earthquakes. A table or desk will help protect you from objects that fly or fall either during or after an earthquake.

Door frames are not as strong as desks or tables, and you are exposed to swinging doors and flying objects when standing in a doorway. Unless you are in an unreinforced adobe building, do not stand in a doorway. Years ago, you may recall that doorways were recommended because they were the only part of buildings left standing following an earthquake. But, with our upgraded standards to build earthquake-reinforced buildings, this is no longer the case.

So, what should you do if there is no table or desk nearby when an earthquake strikes? Move next to a large piece of furniture, such as, a couch, cover your head, and hold on. If there is no furniture, move next to an interior wall. If you are in bed,

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stay there and cover your head with a pillow. Prior to an earthquake, you should make sure that your bed is positioned away from windows that could break and fall causing glass to fall on you – and do not hang pictures above your bed. If you are in your car, pull over to the side of the road and remain in your vehicle. Do not get out of the vehicle to see what is going on because you will be exposed to very large falling and flying objects – remaining in your vehicle will provide protection.

Often, our inclination is to run from a building or to find other people to learn what is happening. But you need to stay as safe as possible until you are sure that the shaking has stopped. Do not run outside of a building or get out of your vehicle because you will be left completely unprotected and exposed to parts of buildings, broken glass, vehicles, and other heavy, large, and dangerous objects. After you are sure that the shaking has completely stopped, you will need to assess the damage and/or injuries. Also, be aware of the possibility of aftershocks because you may need to take cover AGAIN.