

EARTHQUAKES

SAFETY TIPS

Earthquakes usually give no warning at all.

Prepare your family

Before the earthquake

Now is the time to formulate a safety plan for you and your family. If you wait until the earth starts to shake, it may be too late. Consider the following safety measures:

- Always keep the following in a designated place: bottled drinking water, non-perishable food (chura, gur, etc), first-aid kit, torchlight and battery-operated radio with extra batteries.
- Teach family members how to turn off electricity, gas, etc.
- Identify places in the house that can provide cover during an earthquake.
- It may be easier to make long distance calls during an earthquake. Identify an out-of-town relative or friend as your family's emergency contact. If the family members get separated after the earthquake and are not able to contact each other, they should contact the designated relative/friend. The address and phone number of the contact person/relative should be with all the family members.

Safeguard your house

- Consider retrofitting your house with earthquake-safety measures. Reinforcing the foundation and frame could make your house quake resistant. You may consult a reputable contractor and follow building codes.
- Kutchha buildings can also be retrofitted and strengthened.

During quake

Earthquakes give no warning at all. Sometimes, a loud rumbling sound might signal its arrival a few seconds ahead of time. Those few seconds could give you a chance to move to a safer location. Here are some tips for keeping safe during a quake.

- Take cover. Go under a table or other sturdy furniture; kneel, sit, or stay close to the floor. Hold on to furniture legs for balance. Be prepared to move if your cover moves.
- If no sturdy cover is nearby, kneel or sit close to the floor next to a structurally sound interior wall. Place your hands on the floor for balance.
- Do not stand in doorways. Violent motion could cause doors to slam and cause serious injuries. You may also be hit by flying objects.
- Move away from windows, mirrors, bookcases and other unsecured heavy objects.

- If you are in bed, stay there and cover yourself with pillows and blankets
- Do not run outside if you are inside. Never use the lift.
- If you are living in a kutcha house, the best thing to do is to move to an open area where there are no trees, electric or telephone wires.

If outdoors:

- Move into the open, away from buildings, streetlights, and utility wires. Once in the open, stay there until the shaking stops.
- If your home is badly damaged, you will have to leave. Collect water, food, medicine, other essential items and important documents before leaving.
- Avoid places where there are loose electrical wires and do not touch metal objects that are in touch with the loose wires.
- Do not re-enter damaged buildings and stay away from badly damaged structures.

If in a moving vehicle:

Move to a clear area away from buildings, trees, overpasses, or utility wires, stop, and stay in the vehicle. Once the shaking has stopped, proceed with caution. Avoid bridges or ramps that might have been damaged by the quake.

After the quake

Here are a few things to keep in mind after an earthquake. The caution you display in the aftermath can be essential for your personal safety.

- Wear shoes/chappals to protect your feet from debris
- After the first tremor, be prepared for aftershocks. Though less intense, aftershocks cause additional damages and may bring down weakened structures. Aftershocks can occur in the first hours, days, weeks, or even months after the quake.
- Check for fire hazards and use torchlights instead of candles or lanterns.
- If the building you live in is in a good shape after the earthquake, stay inside and listen for radio advises. If you are not certain about the damage to your building, evacuate carefully. Do not touch downed power line.
- Help injured or trapped persons. Give first aid where appropriate. Do not move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger of further injury. In such cases, call for help.
- Remember to help your neighbours who may require special assistance- infants, the elderly, and people with disabilities.
- Listen to a battery-operated radio for the latest emergency information.
- Stay out of damaged buildings.
- Return home only when authorities say it is safe. Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches or gasoline or other flammable liquids immediately. Leave the area if you smell gas or fumes from other chemicals. Open closet and cupboard doors cautiously.

- If you smell gas or hear hissing noise, open windows and quickly leave the building. Turn off the switch on the top of the gas cylinder.
- Look for electrical system damages - if you see sparks, broken wires, or if you smell burning of amber, turn off electricity at the main fuse box. If you have to step in water to get to the fuse box, call an electrician first for advice.
- Check for sewage and water lines damage. If you suspect sewage lines are damaged, avoid using the toilets. If water pipes are damaged, avoid using water from the tap.
- Use the telephone only for emergency calls.
- In case family members are separated from one another during an earthquake (a real possibility during the day when adults are at work and children are at school), develop a plan for reuniting after the disaster. Ask an out of state / district relative or friend to serve as the “family contact”. Make sure everyone in the family knows the name, address, and phone number(s) of the contact person (s).