Ready
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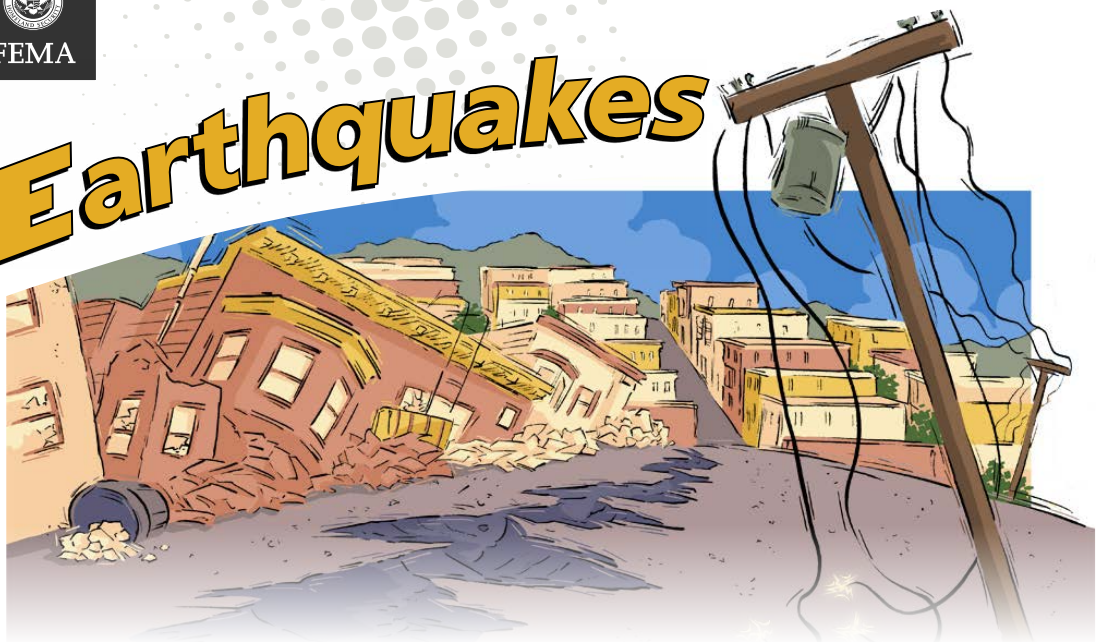
FEMA

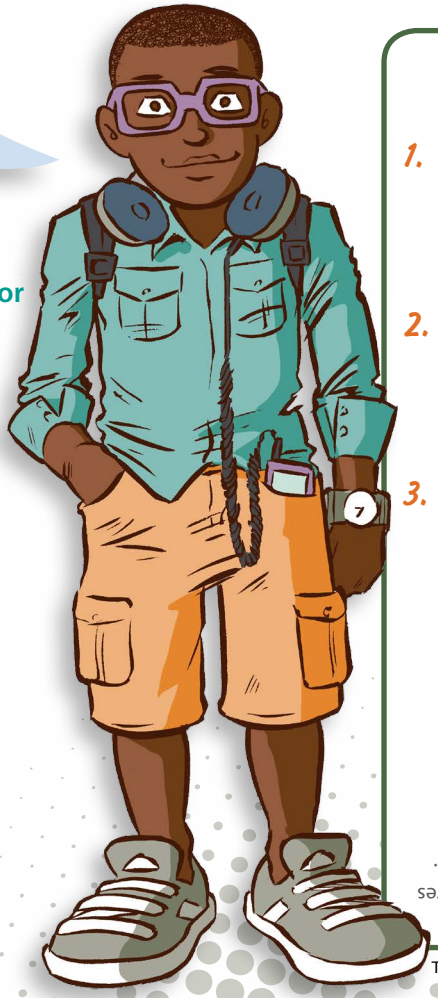
Earthquakes



Earthquakes are the shaking, rolling or sudden shock of the earth's surface. Earthquakes happen along cracks (called fault lines) in the earth's surface. Earthquakes can be felt over large areas, although they usually last less than one minute. Earthquakes cannot be predicted — although scientists are working on it!

Am I at risk?

All 50 states and 5 U.S. territories are at some risk for earthquakes. Earthquakes can happen at any time of the year.



FACT CHECK

1. What is the Richter scale, and how high does it go?

2. What is the "Ring of Fire"?

3. What other disasters could be triggered as a result of an earthquake?

ANSWERS

(1) Developed by Charles Richter, a physicist, the Richter scale measures the magnitude, or size, of earthquakes. It goes from 0.0 (none) to 10.0. Earthquakes below 2.0 are rarely felt by people, and a 10.0 has never been recorded.
(2) Also called the Circum-Pacific belt, it's the zone surrounding the Pacific Ocean where about 90% of the world's earthquakes occur.
(3) Tsunami, Flood, Home Fires, Blackouts, Landslides, and Volcano eruptions.

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Earthquakes
Be Prepared

BEFORE

- Build an emergency kit.
- Make a family communications plan.
- Know the safe spots in every room – under a sturdy table or against an inside wall.
- Ask your family to hold earthquake drills – drop, cover, and hold on!

DURING

If inside:

- DROP to the ground.
- Take COVER under a sturdy table or other heavy furniture. If there is nothing to get under, cover your face and head with your arms and crouch near an inside wall.
- HOLD ON until the shaking stops.
- STAY AWAY from windows, glass, lighting fixtures, or furniture that could fall – like bookcases.
- STAY INSIDE!
- Do not use elevators!

If outside:

- Stay there. Move away from buildings, streetlights, and wires.
- Stay out in the open until the shaking stops. Buildings could collapse and hurt you.

If trapped under debris:

- Cover your mouth with your shirt.
- Do not scream – you could breathe in dust.
- Tap on a pipe or wall so rescuers can find you.

WORDS TO KNOW

Seismic Activity Another word for earthquakes, along with tremors, quakes and shakers

Fault Lines Cracks in the rocks below the earth's surface

Afterschock A smaller earthquake that follows the main shock or previous earthquake

Epicenter The center, or focus, of an earthquake, from which seismic waves are sent spherically in many directions

Seismograph A machine that measures an earthquake

AFTER

- Expect aftershocks. They are usually not as strong but can cause damage.
- Open cabinets carefully. Objects might have moved and could fall on you.
- Wear long pants, long sleeves, and shoes to protect your skin from getting scratched by broken objects.
- Text, don't talk. Unless there's a life-threatening situation, if you have a cell phone, send a text so that you don't tie up phone lines needed by emergency workers. Plus, texting may work even if cell service is down.

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