

The Most Practical Ways to Prepare For An Earthquake

When you live in earthquake country, there are some easy first steps to get prepared. Here we share our favorites, organized by the best “bang for the buck.”

If you have \$0 and only 2 minutes, choose one of these and do it:

- Write down on a piece of paper and keep it in your wallet: the cell phone numbers of your spouse/children/parents and the phone numbers of the school/workplaces where they are during the day.
- Put a pair of shoes next to your bed and keep them there. Then you won't accidentally step on broken glass.
- Teach your children how to dial 911.

If you have \$0 and only 10 minutes, choose one of these and do it:

- Go meet one of your neighbors – you might need to rely on each other.
- Remove any heavy items hanging above your bed.
- Move flammable or poisonous products like propane, wood stain, or pesticide to the bottom shelf of a closed cabinet. This prevents fire or hazardous waste in your home.

If you have a little bit of money but no time:

- When you're out shopping, pick up a solar charger. If the power is out, your phone will be an essential lifeline.
- Consider parametric earthquake insurance which provides a lump-sum of money as soon as the next day, which you can use however you need. It's a budget-friendly first step to get financially prepared. [Jumpstart](#) is one example.

If you have half a day, choose one of these and do it:

- If you have a gas water heater, [brace it](#) or make sure it's braced. This prevents it from toppling, which could start a fire.
- Secure heavy items, especially tall shelves so they don't fall on you. Here are some [detailed instructions](#).

If you can allocate some savings and some time:

- Remove your brick chimney and replace it with a lightweight alternative. This is really important because the most earthquake deaths come from falling bricks.

Conventional advice that we believe is less important:

- Storing lots of food and water – rely on your pantry and the water in your water heater.
- Making a comprehensive plan – you can't plan for every circumstance, better to have a few key pieces of information and emergency savings.

What about seismic retrofit?

[Bolting your foundation](#) and bracing your crawl space is a big commitment of time and money. It prevents your house from sliding off its foundation, which probably won't kill you but prevents your house from becoming a total loss.

Here are our favorite tips by others:

- [Earthquake Country Alliance](#)
- [FEMA](#)
- [Red Cross](#)
- [California Academy of Sciences](#)