

## **Protecting Your Family and Home in an Earthquake**

We are all aware that California is not on solid ground. There are many faults stretching from Washington state to Mexico and beyond. It is important for families to be prepared in the event of an earthquake occurring. Talk to your children about this possibility, but keep it to a minimum; there is no need to cause alarm. Create a plan with your children. If they are involved with the details of what is needed and learn a safety drill, it will diminish some of the anxiety for both children and adults. Make a game out of the discussion. What you would do if an earthquake happened at your home?

The standard practice as taught by the Red Cross is to “Drop, Cover and Hold On.” Drop to hands and knees to prevent loss of balance and falling down. Cover heads with arms in a crouched position, preferably under a desk or table, to protect the head and neck from flying objects. Hold on tight to the shelter until the shaking stops, even if it moves around the room. If there is nothing to hold, crouch next to an interior wall. Have a plan on how to get out of the bedroom. Are there two exits? If bedrooms are on the 2nd floor it’s advisable to have a rope ladder that can hook on the window ledge. Talk to your children about what supplies you would need in the house such as: paper plates, plastic cutlery, paper towels, cups, plastic bags, batteries, prescriptions, etc. Have the children contribute to the list and bring them with you when you purchase your items. Maybe they would like to add a soft toy or a game to the supply list. If you have to evacuate from your home, designate a meeting place, somewhere safe outside where all the family members can meet. Arrange with a friend or member of your family who live out of state or the country, to use their phone number as a family contact. It’s easier to reach long distance than local numbers when phone systems are on overload. Have enough food and water for each family member, including pets, for at least three days. Having some cash in small bills is also important. Some stores may be without electricity and will only accept cash.

“Quake safe” your home in order to avoid unnecessary accidents. With the help of your children, inspect your surroundings. Check to see what things could become a safety hazard. Brace water heaters, free standing units, etc., to the walls. Small items can be temporarily stuck on shelves with a putty substance. Don’t hang anything on walls near or over beds. Also, for wall hanging pictures, televisions, computers, or table top items you can use a heavy duty Velcro. Know how to shut off utilities at the main power source and share this information with your children, just in case you are not available. Keep supplies and comfortable clothes in a backpack in your car. You could be stuck and away from home in a situation where you have to walk a long distance.

Many Californians procrastinate about getting earthquake supplies or updating them (I’m guilty too). However, the reality is that quakes happen. The most comforting way to deal with that possibility is to be prepared and practice with your children, at least twice a year. Above all, Keep calm and don’t panic. At Woodcrest School, we have an Earthquake Preparedness Plan in place. We conduct drills regularly and have enough food and water for three days. We also have first aid supplies, teachers who are Red Cross Certified and a very large swimming pool if we need water for washing etc. Happy New Year and stay safe.

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