



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Would you be ready to ride it out if an earthquake hit today? San Bernardino County Fire is Prepared, are YOU?

San Bernardino County Fire urges residents to be prepared in the event of a catastrophic earthquake.

The old saying it takes something drastic to happen to make us take notice is more prevalent than ever these days. Recent natural disasters such as the devastating earthquakes in Japan, New Zealand, Haiti and Chile underscore the importance of individual preparedness.

California's Emergency Management System is the envy of the country, with Fire, Law Enforcement and Emergency Management Mutual Aid available across the state. Even so, Volunteers from programs like CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) may have to provide help and rescue until the first responders can arrive.

San Bernardino County Fire stands prepared to respond to a major earthquake. We are one of ten California fire departments that are certified by the California Emergency Management Agency to host a Regional Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Task Force. A Regional USAR Task Force includes 29 personnel specially trained for USAR duty. Urban Search and Rescue teams respond to events such as earthquakes or terrorist incidents that cause widespread damage to a variety of structures and entrap up to hundreds or thousands of people. Other examples of USAR events can range from mass transportation accidents with multiple victims to single-site events such as a trench cave-in or confined space rescue involving only one or two victims. This status also allows for County Fire's Regional USAR Task Force to respond to requests for assistance from other agencies in California when requested through the Master Mutual Aid System.

Since 2006, San Bernardino County participated in the annual Golden Guardian Exercise, a statewide disaster preparedness program sponsored by the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and the California Emergency Management Agency and hosted by the San Bernardino County Office of Emergency Services. These exercises provide first responders from local government and state agencies with the opportunity to see what works and what doesn't when they put their plans into action. One important lesson already learned is that no single city or county can meet all the needs of its residents and businesses in a catastrophic situation.

Yes California is the leader in developing and using seismic building codes. However, earthquakes will happen and damage will occur. There is no such thing as "earthquake proof". According to the California Emergency Management Agency, most residents of California will not be killed or injured by the next earthquake, but they will be inconvenienced by damage to freeways, utility grids, and the telephone system. It is up to every individual, family and business to take the earthquake threat seriously and be ready. If you are ready, you will be a resource to your family and community.

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What we do now, before the earthquake, will determine what our lives will be like after. The following are key actions from the Seven Steps to Earthquake Safety (www.daretoprep.org):

- Do a "hazard hunt" for items that might fall in your home during earthquakes and secure them,
- Create a personal or family disaster-preparedness plan,
- Plan for your family's specific needs (seniors, disabled, children, pets),
- Teach all household members how to use a fire extinguisher,
- Create wallet cards for each family member with essential contact information,
- Organize or refresh your emergency supply kits,
- Store at least one gallon of water per person, per day, for 3 days and ideally for 2 weeks,
- What else would you need to be on your own for up to 2 weeks?
- What would you need if you are in your car or office when the earthquake strikes?
- Identify your building's weaknesses. Ask a local earthquake retrofitting contractor for a free structural inspection of your home or building. Also, review your insurance coverage, whether home-owner or renter. Consider whether earthquake insurance is right for you.
- Create a game where everyone responds to a signal by practicing Drop Cover and Hold On. Talk to your children about what to expect during and after an earthquake,
- Enroll in a local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training to learn more about how to take care of yourself and your family when you are "on your own" after a disaster,
- Provide non-English speaking members of your family, neighborhood or community with written information in their language.

Don't become complacent, now is the time to prepare. Resident should be familiar with their Family Disaster Plan, evacuation routes and should have a store of emergency supplies. Residents can download a copy of the Family Disaster Plan, and other earthquake preparedness tips from www.sbcfire.org/oes and clicking on the Disaster Preparedness link. Information on how to become a CERT member may also be found at this site.

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