



Earthquakes

An earthquake is the sudden, rapid shaking of the earth. It can cause major damage and sometimes triggers landslides, avalanches, flashfloods, tsunamis, fires, and explosion.

How it Might Impact Your Utility Service

Earthquakes can create many cascading and secondary impacts that may include, but are not limited to:

- Loss of power and communication infrastructure.
- Damage to gas pipelines due to gas leaks, fire, or even explosions.
- Damage to distribution lines, resulting in potential water loss, water service interruptions, low pressure, contamination and sinkholes, and large pools of water throughout the service area. The potential for total loss of water due to a major earthquake could render areas uninhabitable for weeks to months.
- Restricted access to facilities due to debris and damage to roadways can cause service restoration delays.



ALERTS

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA): WEAs, made available through the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) infrastructure, are just one of the ways public safety officials can quickly and effectively alert and warn the public about serious emergencies. To ensure your device is WEA-capable, check with your service provider.

Integrated Public Alert and Warning Systems (IPAWS): Created by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, IPAWS leverages national emergency communication channels to provide area-specific alerts in times of emergency.

Automated Weather Alerts: With CivicReady Automated Weather Alerts, notifications are automatically dispersed as soon as an alert is activated by the National Weather Service.

Nixle: Almost every city sends out Nixle alerts. They range from simple alerts about crimes and community notices to major alerts regarding disasters. It is a good idea to sign up for all applicable alerts in your area.

Outage Alerts: Stay informed by signing up for outage alerts with your utility service providers. The utility will contact you when there is an outage in your area and let you know when service is expected to be restored. Choose to be notified by text, phone, or email.

School Emergency Alerts: Most schools have comprehensive crisis plans detailing action for an emergency on school grounds. For example, many school districts nationwide use *ALICE* safety program, which stands for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate. Contact your children's school district to learn more about options for safety and survival in an emergency situation.

Employer Alerts: Understand the communications plan established by your employer. Information may be sent by e-mail, text message alert, website posts, or public address system to provide critical emergency guidance when needed.

BEFORE AN EARTHQUAKE

- Know how to shut off electricity, gas, and water. You may need to turn them off after an earthquake because of broken or exposed electrical wiring, a gas leak, or flooding from leaking pipes or sprinklers. Locate the gas and water shut-off valves and master electrical switch. Make sure you have a crescent or pipe wrench near the gas and water valves and in your emergency supplies.
- Have a professional help you do the following: a) bolt the building to the foundation if necessary; b) repair any deep cracks in ceilings or foundations; c) repair or replace defective electrical wiring and leaking gas connections – DO NOT repair gas or electrical lines yourself.
- Build and maintain an emergency kit that includes important items like non-perishable food, water, a battery-operated or hand-crank radio, extra flashlights, and batteries.
- Secure alternative charging methods for your phone or any device that requires power.
- Consider purchasing surge protectors for appliances and other equipment.
- If you are considering purchasing a generator for your home, consult a qualified electrician or engineer before purchasing and installing.
- Consider obtaining an earthquake insurance policy. Standard homeowner's insurance does not cover earthquake damage.
- Consider a retrofit of your building to correct structural issues that make it vulnerable to collapse during an earthquake.

DURING AN EARTHQUAKE

- If inside, decide whether to evacuate or stay. Any of the following may require immediate evacuation: fire, damage to a structure, gas leak, or hazardous material spill. In some situations, you may choose not to evacuate or to delay evacuation. For example, if there is a slight movement with no apparent damage and another hazard such as severe weather, it may be more dangerous to move children outside.
- If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and then quickly leave with the children, and shut the gas off at the outside main meter.
- Unless you must evacuate immediately (fire, severe damage to structure, gas leak, or hazardous materials spill), check all children and adults for injuries and give first aid for injuries before evacuating.
- As time permits, you may need to turn off utilities such as gas, electricity, and water. If electrical wires are crackling inside, shut off the gas first, then turn off the master electrical switch.
- If in a vehicle, stop in a clear area that is away from buildings, trees, overpasses, underpasses, street lights, or utility lines.
- If you are in a high-rise building, expect fire alarms and sprinklers to go off. Do not use elevators.
- If near slopes, cliffs, or mountains, be alert for falling rocks and landslides.

AFTER AN EARTHQUAKE

- Expect aftershocks to follow the largest shock of an earthquake.
- Check yourself for injury and provide assistance to others if you have training.
- If in a damaged building, go outside and quickly move away from the building.
- Do not enter damaged buildings.
- Call 9-1-1 if there is a fire or medical emergency. If the phone doesn't work, send someone for help.
- Listen to a battery-operated radio for instructions and the latest emergency information.
- Save phone calls for emergencies.
- Once safe, monitor local news reports via battery operated radio, TV, social media, and cellphone text alerts for emergency information and instructions.
- If you signed up for outage alerts, you should receive notification and updates from the utilities when services will be restored. If not, contact your utility service provider.
- Inspect all gas appliances to ensure they did not shift or sustain a damage. If you smell any gas, evacuate immediately. If you can, turn off the gas at the main then contact the gas company.
- Search for water leaks both inside and outside the house. Test drains and toilets as well as faucets to make sure the water flows correctly and is clear. Contact a plumber if there's any issue. For households using wells, take the time to inspect the yard for soil movement, cracks or sink holes. Before using the plumbing, ensure water and sewer lines are intact. Plug drains to prevent sewage backup.
- Check all electrical lines throughout the house and especially in the attic. Stored objects in the attic can fall over onto exposed electrical lines and damage them. DO NOT touch exposed wiring, downed power lines, or broken electrical appliances. If there is damage to wiring, turn off the electricity and contact a licensed professional.
- Dial 2-1-1 to get information on disaster relief services in your area. The 211 United Way Helpline is your one-stop resource for connecting with a variety of resources in your community including emergency food and shelter, disability services, senior services, healthcare, and much more.
- If you travel by road, dial 5-1-1 to get tariff and road closure information in your area.