Earthquake Home Hazard Hunt

Recommendations for reducing earthquake hazards in your home are presented on the other side of this poster.

- Brace or replace masonry chimneys
- Secure ceiling fans and hanging light fixtures
- Strap down televisions and other expensive or hazardous electrical components
- Securely fasten or relocate heavy pictures and mirrors over beds and furniture
- Secure cabinets to wall studs; use latches to keep cabinet doors from flying open during an earthquake
- Brace water heaters and ensure that gas models have flexible connections
- Strengthen garages that have living space above them
- Know how and when to shut off utilities
- Upgrade unbraced crawlspace walls (or other foundation problems)
- Strap bookcases and shelves to walls to prevent tipping
- Straps down computers
Your earthquake home hazard hunt should begin with all family members participating. Forgetting, imagination, and common sense are all that are needed as you go from room to room imagining what would happen if the earth and house started shaking. Anything that can move, break, or fall when your house starts to shake is a potential hazard.

What would happen to heavy furniture, fixtures, and appliances? Check for possible flying glass.

- Secure gas lines by installing flexible connectors to appliances.
- Sheath crawlspac e walls with plywood to prevent collaps e.
- Check your roof. Make sure all tiles are secured - loose tiles could fall.
- Remember, it is very expensive to lift a house, repair the foundation, and walls and to determine whether your foundation and walls are likely to be damaged in an earthquake and what upgrades may be needed. Check with local officials for permit requirements before starting work.

What would happen to the house itself? Check for possible flying glass.

- Look at the area around the garage door opening are there braces or studs?
- Replace loos e shelving by applying earthquake putty on each corner bracket. Place heavy items and large appliances on designed and installed around the opening (Figure B). Remember to use a wood product used, the plywood, thick and nails spaced far apart. Include safety straps across garage door and the weight of the chimney.

Garages With Living Spaces Above

- Look at tall bookcases and shelves. How much would fall off the shelves?
- Replace glass bottles in the medicine cabinet and around the bath and shower with plastic containers.
- Do you have hanging light fixtures or plants? Could they swing and hit a window?
- Look at tall bookcases and shelves. How much would fall off the shelves? Would the whole bookcase topple, or is it securely fastened to wall studs using flexible fasteners (e.g., nylon straps) and lag screws.
- Wooden floors and stud walls are not braced to resist horizontal shaking, which can shift or fall. Please note that horizontal or vertical wood siding is not strong enough to bear wood stud crawlspaces.

Water Heaters

- Water heaters should be braced (see Figure G). There are many solutions - all relatively inexpensive.
- Purchase and install a strap kit or bracket from your local hardware store.
- Other options include:
  - Have a licensed plumber install the water heater according to code.
  - Use heavy duty screws and straps to secure the water heater to the wall studs.
  - The gas and water lines must have flexible connectors. These are safer than rigid pipes. These are safer than rigid pipes. Be sure to check the straps once a year. They can come loose as a result of vibrations, rust, or other causes.

Further Information

For more information about earthquake preparedness and safety, refer to the following publications, which are available from the FEMA Distribution Center at 1-800-480-2520. As noted, some are available for download from the FEMA website. See http://www.ready.gov/are-you-ready-guide or http://www.fema.gov/national-earthquake-hazards-reduction-program for information.

- Earthquake Safety Checklist, FEMA 526.
- Disaster Safety Checklist. How to make your home safer after an earthquake; http://www.ready.gov/are-you-ready-guide
- How to be prepared for an earthquake - both physically and emotionally. The following steps are recommended:
  - Follow the steps in Figure A and Figure B to strengthen your foundation. The type of wood product used, the plywood, thickness, and nail size and spacing are all important when making this upgrade. See your local building department for more information.
  - If your home has neither steel nor concrete support, the cost of bracing your house may shift or fall. A house and create a crawlspace. Please note that horizontal or vertical wood siding is not strong enough to bear wood stud crawlspaces.

Figure A. Strengthening weak crawlspace walls.

Figure B. Strengthening garage walls below living space.