



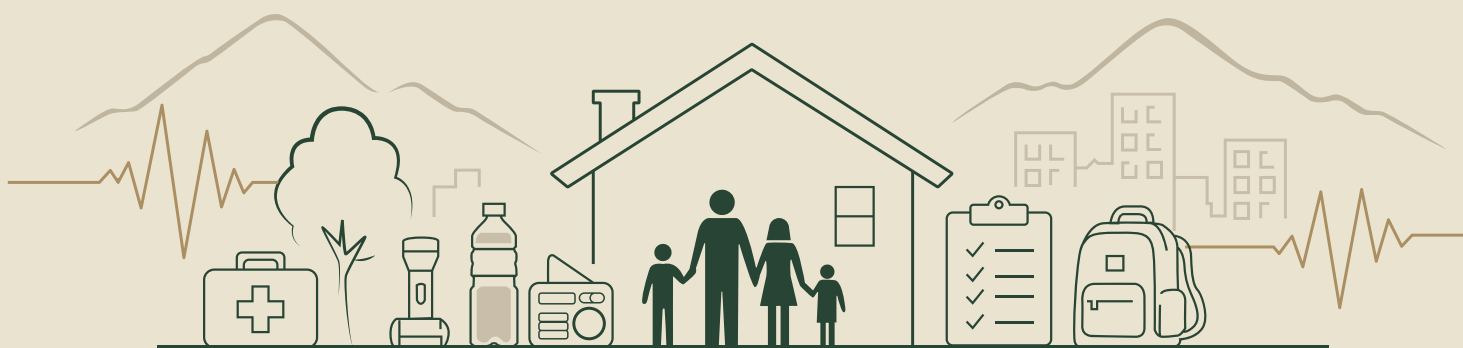
KINGDOM OF PEACE AND JUSTICE CENTER

**Civil Training Program: Risk Management
and Emergency Preparedness**

EARTHQUAKES

MODULE 1

PHASE 2: DURING



Educational document for the general population
of Latin America and the United States

Edition 1 - 2026

EDUCATIONAL GUIDE FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT:
EARTHQUAKES
MODULE 1 · PHASE 2: DURING THE EARTHQUAKE
For the home, family, and community

| First edition · September 2026

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This guide is intended for individuals and families who wish to prepare their home and surroundings.

It is intended for educational and preventive purposes. It does not replace local civil protection regulations, the judgment of the relevant authorities, or the assessment of a qualified professional. Each person and each family should adapt these recommendations to their home and circumstances.

In an emergency, always follow the instructions of the authorities in your country.

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EARTHQUAKES

MODULE 1 | PHASE 2: DURING

Immediate action and protection during the shaking



Learning objective

For the participants to identify and apply the drop, cover, and hold on action during an earthquake, adapting it to wherever they happen to be, recognise which actions to avoid while the shaking continues, and know how to protect themselves from the immediate hazards around them.

During the shaking, do not attempt to evacuate a building hastily, do not run toward exits, and do not use elevators. Protect yourself first. Once the shaking has stopped, assess the conditions and evacuate when it is necessary and safe to do so.



2.1 FUNDAMENTAL ACTION DURING THE EARTHQUAKE

When the shaking begins, there is usually no time to take complex actions. Therefore, people should already know a simple response that can be applied immediately:

01

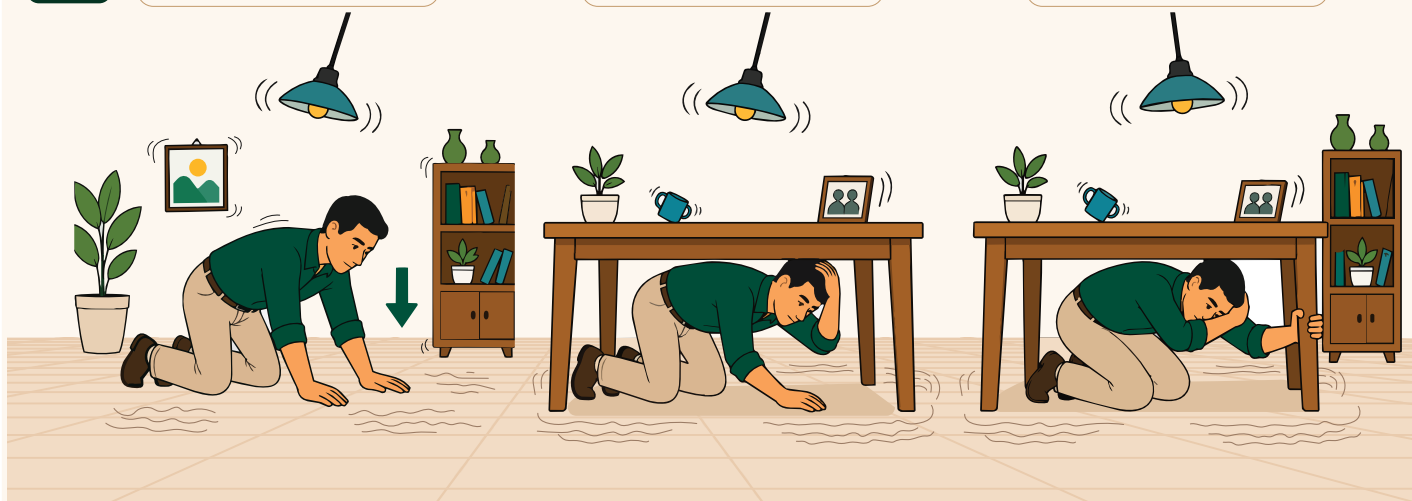
DROP



COVER



HOLD ON



Get down immediately to reduce the risk of being knocked over by the movement of the ground.

Get down on your hands and knees when you can do so. This position reduces the risk of falling and allows you to move a short distance if it is absolutely necessary to seek nearby protection.

Do not try to stay standing or run while the ground is moving intensely.

Protect your **head and neck** in particular.

Whenever possible, get under a table, desk, or other sturdy piece of furniture nearby.

If no protection of this kind is within reach, stay crouched and cover your head and neck with your arms and hands.

Whenever you can do so without exposing yourself to greater risks, stay away from:

- windows, mirrors, large glass surfaces, tall furniture, shelving, suspended objects, lamps, equipment that could fall, heavy items stored overhead.

Do not cross a room during intense shaking just to look for a table or a place that appears safer.

If you are under a sturdy table or desk, hold on to it until the shaking stops.

Furniture may move during the earthquake. If this happens, try to stay underneath it and adjust your position to stay protected, without unnecessarily exposing yourself to danger.

If you are not under a piece of furniture, keep your head and neck protected until the shaking stops.

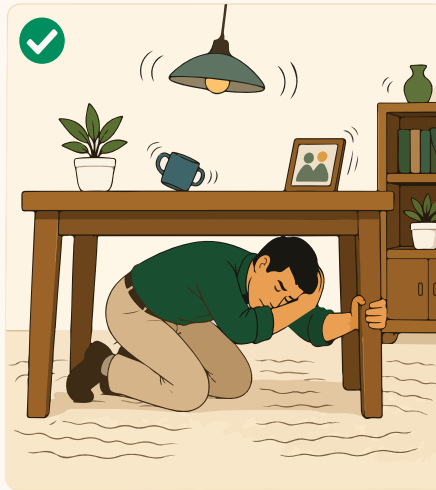
02

DO NOT EVACUATE WHILE IT IS SHAKING

One of the most important behaviours during an earthquake is to **avoid a hurried evacuation while the shaking continues**. Trying to run towards the exits during intense shaking can considerably increase the risk of:

- falls; blows;
- cuts from glass;
- injuries caused by falling objects;
- pushing and crowding;
- blocked doorways;
- groups becoming separated;
- losing control of children;
- injuries on stairways.

In places with large numbers of people, a simultaneous and disorderly evacuation can create additional hazards.



The general instruction should be:

PROTECT YOURSELF FIRST.

EVACUATE AFTER THE SHAKING STOPS, WHEN NECESSARY, WHEN IT IS SAFE TO DO SO.

03

DO NOT USE DOORWAYS AS AUTOMATIC SHELTER

Door frames are not automatically safe places. In older houses the frames could be the only thing left standing because of how solidly they were built, but in modern construction they are not structurally strong.

The general recommendation is to protect yourself under a sturdy table or desk when one is available and close by. If there is none, drop down and protect your head and neck, especially, while avoiding windows and objects that could fall.



04

DO NOT USE THE SO-CALLED "TRIANGLE OF LIFE"

The so-called **"triangle of life"** must not be used as a substitute for the recommended protective action. During an earthquake, do not try to figure out where supposed protective spaces might form between furniture and debris.

The general action must continue to be:

DROP – COVER – HOLD ON



Whenever possible, protect yourself under a sturdy table or desk.



2.2 IF YOU ARE AT HOME

If you are at home when the earthquake begins:

Do not move around the home unnecessarily looking for some perfect place to take cover.
Protect yourself quickly in the nearest safe place.



Stay away from windows, mirrors, and glass.



Stay away from tall furniture and objects that could fall.



Take cover under a sturdy table and hold on.



Protect your head and neck.

01

- Stay inside while the shaking continues, unless there is an immediate danger that requires you to move;
- get down;
- take shelter under a sturdy table or desk when one is nearby;
- hold on;

- protect your head and neck;
- stay away from windows, mirrors, and glass surfaces;
- stay away from tall furniture, shelving, and objects that could fall;
- do not run toward the exit door;

- do not use the stairs during intense shaking;
- do not attempt to shut off the gas while the shaking continues;
- do not attempt to shut off the electricity while the shaking continues.

IF YOU ARE IN THE KITCHEN

Kitchens can contain numerous items that can become hazards during an earthquake:



Move away from anything that can fall, break or spill hot liquids.

- dishes,
- bottles,
- containers,
- items stored overhead,
- sharp objects,
- hot liquids,
- appliances,
- furniture and cabinets,
- glass,
- appliances connected to gas or electrical systems.

02

If an earthquake begins while you are in a kitchen, **do not rush through the house while the shaking continues.**

If you can do so immediately and without exposing yourself to greater risk, move away from items that could fall, break, or spill hot liquids.

Get down and protect your head and neck.

If there is a sturdy table nearby, take shelter underneath it and hold on.

Do not attempt to shut off the gas valve during the earthquake.

Once the shaking has stopped, and only when it is safe to do so, the utility systems can be checked.



2.3 IF YOU ARE IN A MULTI-STORY BUILDING

Being on an upper floor may cause the shaking to be felt more intensely or for a longer period of time.



Feeling significant swaying does not, by itself, indicate whether or not the building will sustain structural damage.

Do not attempt to assess the building's structural integrity while it is shaking.

During the shaking:



Once the shaking has stopped, assess the situation and use evacuation routes that remain safe if it is necessary to leave the building.

01

ELEVATORS

Do not use elevators during an earthquake.

Seismic movement can coincide with:



Power outages.



Mechanical failures.



Damage to elevator components.



Elevators getting stuck.



Other conditions that make their use unsafe.



Do not assume that all buildings are equipped with automatic earthquake-response systems.



After the earthquake, do not automatically resume using the elevators until conditions allow them to be deemed safe and, when required, their use has been authorized.

02

STAIRS

During intense shaking, **do not run toward the stairs to attempt to evacuate.**



The shaking can make it considerably more difficult to maintain your balance and increase the risk of falls.



In addition, a large number of people attempting to use a stairway simultaneously can lead to pushing, crowding, and injuries.



Once the shaking has stopped, if it is necessary to evacuate, use only routes that remain safe and follow the instructions of those in charge or the appropriate authorities.

03

WINDOWS, GLASS, AND FACADES

During the earthquake, stay away from:



- windows;
- glass doors;
- display cases; glass panels.



- partitions;
- mirrors;
- other elements that may break.

A single minimum distance cannot be established for all buildings and situations. The principle is simple: **Stay as far away from glass as reasonably possible without moving in a manner that exposes you to greater danger.**



Protect your head and neck especially.

04

CEILING, LIGHT FIXTURES, AND HANGING OBJECTS

During an earthquake the following can come loose or shift:

- suspended ceiling panels;
- light fixtures; lamps;
- fans;
- projectors;
- sound equipment;
- signs;
- decorative objects;
- other items installed overhead.

For that reason, protect your head and neck especially. When a sturdy table or desk is nearby, get underneath it and hold on.

05

IF THERE ARE NO TABLES OR DESKS

In hallways, churches, temples, gyms, auditoriums, halls, stadiums, and other spaces, a sturdy table or desk may not be available.



In those cases:

- Drop down to avoid being knocked down;
- protect your head and neck with your arms and hands;
- stay away from windows and glass;
- when you can do so without exposing yourself to greater risks, move away from objects that could fall;
- stay protected until the shaking stops.



Do not cross a room during intense shaking in search of an exit or somewhere you assume is structurally safer.



2.4 IF THE EARTHQUAKE HAPPENS WHILE YOU ARE SLEEPING

- If the earthquake begins while you are in bed, do not get up hastily in the dark.
- Fallen objects or broken glass can cause injuries, and the shaking can make it difficult to remain standing.
- If staying in bed does not present an immediate danger, stay there and protect your head and neck with a pillow.
- If there is a heavy object directly above or next to the bed that could fall, and you can move to a safer location without exposing yourself to greater risk, take action based on the circumstances.



Preparing the bedroom in advance is especially important:

- do not place heavy objects above the head of the bed;
- keep sturdy, closed-toe shoes near the bed;
- have a flashlight readily available;
- keep evacuation routes clear.



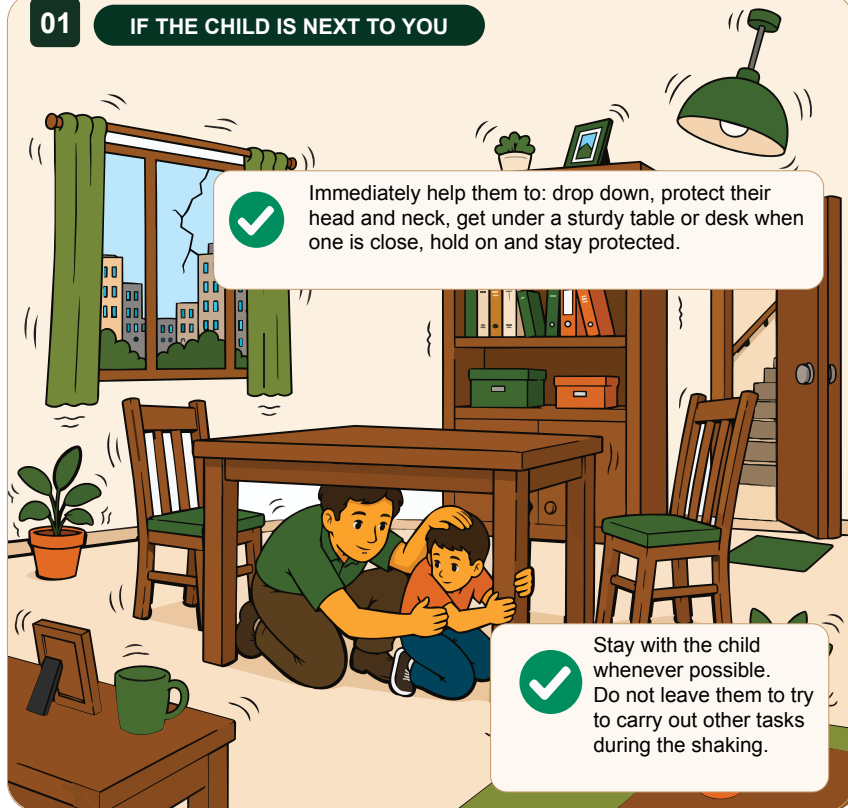
2.5 PROTECTING BABIES AND CHILDREN

Children need special attention during an earthquake.

The priority is to **protect them where they are** and **stop them running towards the exits in a disorderly way**. Do not try to cross a building carrying a child while intense shaking continues, unless staying where you are presents a greater immediate danger.

01

IF THE CHILD IS NEXT TO YOU



Immediately help them to: drop down, protect their head and neck, get under a sturdy table or desk when one is close, hold on and stay protected.



Stay with the child whenever possible. Do not leave them to try to carry out other tasks during the shaking.

02

BABIES AND SMALL CHILDREN



If you are holding a baby when the shaking begins:



Hold them firmly, get down, protect their head and neck, and protect yourself too;



If there is a sturdy table or desk nearby and you can reach it safely, get underneath it.

If the baby is already correctly placed in a baby carrier, keep them secured and protect their head and neck in particular.

Do not deliberately place your body in a position that could cause them serious injury, and do not adopt unstable postures trying to act as a "human shield."

Protection must aim to keep both the child and the adult helping them safe at the same time.

03

Small children

Use simple instructions:

"GET DOWN."

"HOLD ON."

"COVER YOURSELF."

"STAY WITH ME."

04

School-age children

Children who have practiced drills may quickly recognize the instructions.

Reinforce the learned behavior and stay with them when circumstances allow.

05

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN

The adult should try to remain calm and give brief, clear instructions. You can use phrases such as:

"Stay with me."



"Cover your head."

"We are protecting ourselves."

"Wait here until it stops."



Avoid alarmist statements that could unnecessarily increase fear.



The priority during those seconds is for the child to understand what **they need to do**, rather than give them complex explanations about what is happening.



2.6 CROWDED PLACES

If you are in a:



Shopping mall



Supermarket



Cinema, theater



Stadium



Church or temple, schools



Auditorium



Station



Community center

A disorderly crowd reaction can result in:

- pushing and shoving;
- falls;
- crowding;
- blocked exits;
- separation of children from adults;
- additional injuries.

First protect yourself from falling and displaced objects.

When the shaking stops, follow the instructions of the staff in charge and evacuate in an orderly way when it becomes necessary.



Do not immediately run toward the exits while the shaking continues.



- Stay in your designated area when it is safe to do so;
- get down;
- protect your head and neck;
- stay away from structures that could fall.



Do not try to move through a crowd while the ground is still shaking.

01 CINEMAS AND THEATERS



02

SUPERMARKETS AND SHOPPING CENTERS



These places may present particular risks due to:

- tall shelving;
- products stored overhead;
- display cases;
- large glass surfaces;
- signs;
- light fixtures;
- hanging objects.

During the shaking:

- move away from shelving and glass when you can do so immediately without passing through hazardous areas;
- get down;
- protect your head and neck;
- use nearby sturdy protection when available;
- do not run toward the exits;
- do not use elevators.

After the shaking, follow the staff's instructions and use the routes that remain safe.

If you are in a stadium, grandstands, or large public event:

- do not run toward aisles or exits during the shaking;
- do not jump over barriers or attempt to rush into other sections;
- stay in your section when it is safe to do so;
- get down when appropriate;
- protect your head and neck;
- use a backpack, bag, or other soft item to protect yourself if you have one immediately available;
- wait for instructions from the staff in charge once the shaking has stopped.

Large numbers of people moving at the same time can create additional hazards.

03

STADIUMS, STANDS, AND EVENTS



04 ESCALATORS

Do not use escalators as an evacuation route while the intense shaking continues.

The shaking can cause falls and a sudden crowding of people can increase the risk of injury.



Once the earthquake has ended, follow the signs and the venue's instructions and use the designated routes that remain safe.

05 MANAGING PANIC AND COMMUNICATION DURING THE SHAKING

During an emergency, some people may feel intense fear, confusion, mental block, or an immediate urge to flee.

People supervising groups should use instructions that are: brief, clear, consistent, firm, easy to understand.



Avoid giving contradictory instructions.



In crowded places, clear instructions can help reduce disorderly behaviour.



2.7 IF YOU ARE OUTDOORS

If you are already outside when the earthquake begins, stay where you are or move, **when you can do so safely**, to an open, clear area.

Stay away from:

- buildings;
- building facades;
- ledges;
- balconies;
- walls;
- windows;
- glass;
- signs;
- poles;
- electrical wires;
- transformers;
- antennas;
- trees;
- structures or objects that could fall.



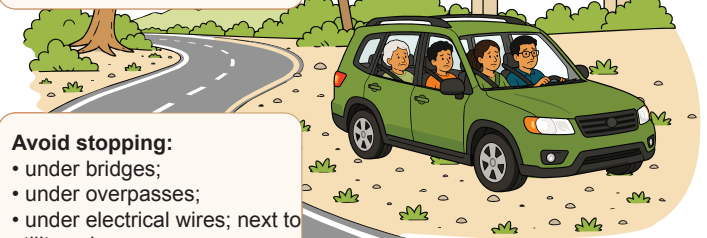
Do not deliberately take shelter next to a facade, under a ledge, awning, or projecting element. Do not position yourself next to the base of a building as a general protective measure.

If you cannot immediately reach a more open area without exposing yourself to greater risks, protect your head and neck and minimize your exposure to falling objects.

02 IF YOU ARE DRIVING

If you are driving a vehicle when an earthquake begins:

- gradually reduce your speed;
- stop in a safe place when you can do so;
- remain inside the vehicle until the shaking stops.



Avoid stopping:

- under bridges;
- under overpasses;
- under electrical wires; next to utility poles;
- next to trees;
- directly next to buildings;
- in areas exposed to falling objects.



Do not brake suddenly if doing so could cause an accident. Once the shaking has stopped, continue with caution and stay alert for possible road damage.



2.8 PETS DURING THE EARTHQUAKE

During an earthquake, **people's safety is a priority**.
Animals may react unpredictably to noise, vibrations and movement.

A frightened pet may:

- run;
- hide;
- try to escape;
- resist being handled;
- scratch or bite defensively.

If the pet is immediately next to you

If you can keep the pet with you **without compromising your own protection**, do so.

Do not leave your safe place or cross a room during intense shaking to look for the pet.

If you are under a sturdy table and the pet is already within your reach, you may try to keep it close to you, provided that doing so does not prevent you from protecting your own head and neck or holding on.



If the pet hides

Do not run after it.

Do not reach under furniture or into hard-to-reach places while the shaking continues.

Protect yourself and wait until the earthquake is over.

Once the shaking has stopped and it is safe to do so, locate the pet before opening doors to the outside, as a frightened animal may try to escape.

If the pet is in a carrier

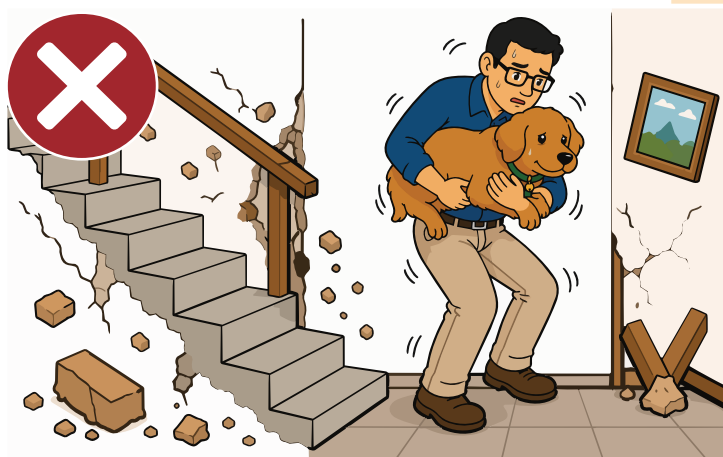
If the animal is already inside a secure pet carrier, do not take it out during the earthquake.

If the pet carrier is within your reach and you can move it a few inches toward a more protected area without exposing yourself to danger, you may do so.

Do not deliberately place your body on top of the pet carrier.



Do not evacuate hastily while carrying a pet



Do not try to go down stairs or cross a building while carrying an animal during intense shaking, unless there is an immediate greater danger that requires you to leave the area.



2.9 PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND OTHER ASSISTANCE NEEDS

People with disabilities may require different protective strategies depending on their individual characteristics, level of independence, assistive devices, and surroundings.

There is no single course of action that applies to everyone.

The general principle remains:

PROTECT YOURSELF DURING THE SHAKING AND EVACUATE AFTERWARD WHEN NECESSARY AND SAFE.

Autonomy should be encouraged and unnecessary separation of a person from their assistive devices should be avoided.

01

PEOPLE WHO USE WHEELCHAIRS

If you use a wheelchair:

LOCK



LOCK: Lock the wheelchair brakes.

COVER



COVER: Protect your head and neck especially, with your arms and hands. If you have an appropriate protective item immediately available, use it.

HOLD ON



HOLD ON: Keep a stable position until the shaking stops. Lean forward when you can do so safely.

Do not try to leave the chair during intense shaking simply to get onto the floor.

02

PEOPLE WITH REDUCED MOBILITY



If a person is on a bed, couch, or other stable location and cannot move safely:

- they should not attempt to move in a way that increases the risk of falling;
- they should protect their head and neck especially;
- they may use pillows or other padded items that are immediately available;
- they should stay away, if possible, from glass and falling objects.

Canes, crutches, walkers and other mobility devices should remain accessible for use after the shaking.

03

ACTIONS OF CAREGIVERS AND PEOPLE PROVIDING SUPPORT



If you are with a person who needs assistance:

- protect yourself as well;
- help them into a safe position when you can do so without exposing yourself;
- protect their head and neck when the person cannot do it themselves;

- keep them away from glass and objects that could fall whenever possible
- do not leave them to carry out secondary tasks;
- do not try to move them any distance while intense shaking continues.

The caregiver should avoid becoming a second victim. Assistance should aim to protect both people simultaneously.

04

PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

During the shaking:

- explain what is happening clearly;
- use brief instructions;
- let the person know before making any necessary movements;
- do not pull the person unexpectedly;
- help them protect their head and neck when necessary;
- warn them of fallen objects or nearby hazards when you are able to identify them.

After the earthquake, bear in mind that displaced objects may have changed routes the person knew previously.

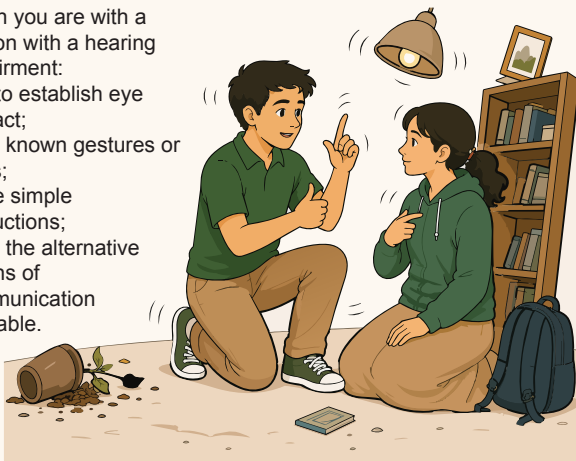


05

PEOPLE WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

When you are with a person with a hearing impairment:

- try to establish eye contact;
- use known gestures or signs;
- give simple instructions;
- use the alternative means of communication available.



If the power goes out, keep in mind that there may not be enough light for lip-reading or communication using sign language.

When you have a flashlight available, use it in a way that facilitates communication without shining a bright light directly into the person's eyes.

06

PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL OR COGNITIVE DISABILITIES, OR NEURODIVERGENT PEOPLE

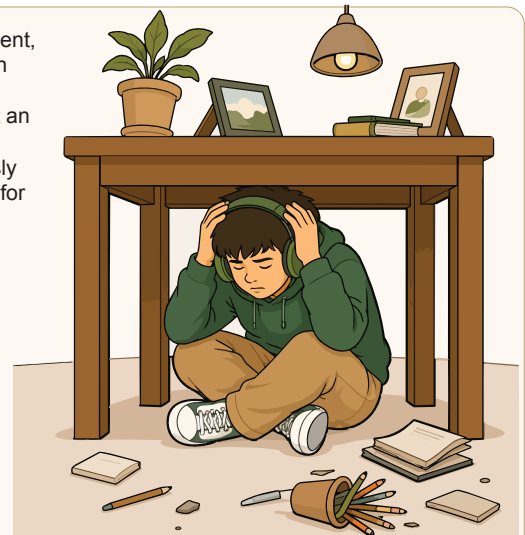
Noise, alarms, movement, yelling, and the sudden changes in the surroundings can elicit an intense reaction. Use brief and previously practiced instructions, for example:

"GET DOWN."

"COVER YOURSELF."

"STAY HERE."

"HOLD ON".



When the person requires physical assistance, provide only the necessary support to prevent them from being exposed to immediate danger.

Physical restraint or a forced attempt to hold the person should not be used as a general rule, as it may increase distress or cause injury.

Assistance should be adapted to each person's known needs and should promote their autonomy.



2.10 WHEN THE SHAKING STOPS

When the shaking stops, do not automatically rush toward the exit.

Stay alert because there may be:

- fallen objects;
- broken glass;
- electrical wires;
- structural damage;
- fires;
- gas leaks;
- spilled liquids;
- blocked exits;
- injured people;
- aftershocks.

Quickly assess your surroundings before moving.

There is no universal rule requiring people to wait 15, 20, or 30 seconds under a table after every earthquake.

The decision should depend on the conditions at the time.



2.11 BE READY FOR AFTERSHOCKS

After an earthquake, additional shaking may occur.

Stay prepared to protect yourself again. If another tremor starts:

DROP– COVER – HOLD ON

Do not assume that the danger has passed simply because the initial shaking stopped.



2.12 EVACUATION AFTER THE SHAKING

Once the earthquake is over, evacuation may be necessary in the case of:

- visible damage;
- fire; smell or signs of a gas leak;
- electrical hazard; unstable objects;
- conditions that make it unsafe to remain there;
- instructions from relevant authorities.

If evacuation is necessary:

- use routes that remain safe;
- do not use elevators;
- walk, do not run;
- avoid pushing and shoving;
- help those who need assistance;
- keep children and organized groups together;
- proceed to the designated meeting point;
- stay away from building facades and other hazards.



This does not mean that everyone must automatically evacuate after every earthquake. The conditions at the site and the instructions of the authorities should be considered first.

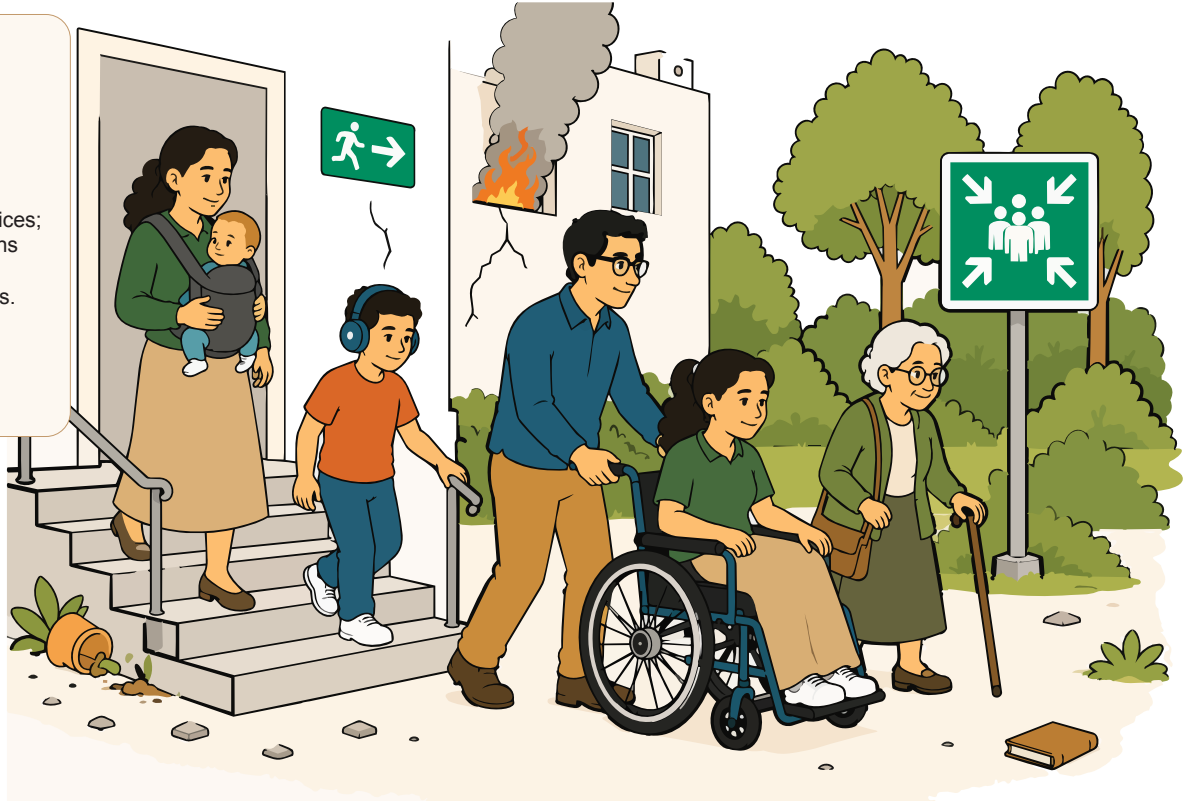


2.13 PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES DURING EVACUATION

When evacuation is necessary, every effort should be made to ensure that the person keeps their essential assistive devices with them.

This may include:

- wheelchair;
- crane;
- crutches;
- walker;
- hearing aids;
- communication devices;
- essential medications readily available;
- other essential items.



Do not delay a necessary evacuation to retrieve non-essential items.



Do not use elevators if there is a risk of damage or if the authorities or those responsible indicate that they should not be used.



The evacuation should be adapted to each person's specific abilities and needs and to the actual conditions of the available routes.



2.14 PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER



1. PROTECT YOURSELF IMMEDIATELY

Do not spend the first few seconds trying to decide whether the earthquake will be strong or weak.



2. DROP – COVER – HOLD ON

Protect your head and neck especially.



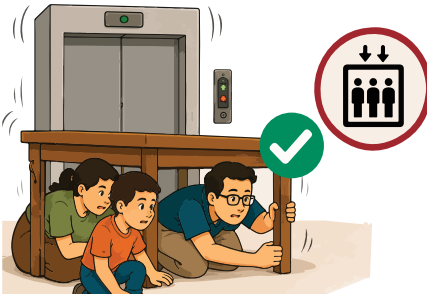
3. DO NOT RUN TOWARDS THE EXIT WHILE THE GROUND IS SHAKING

A hasty evacuation can result in additional injuries.



4. DO NOT USE ELEVATORS

Stay protected until the shaking stops.



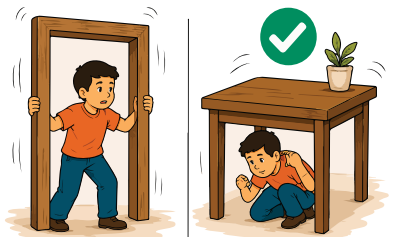
5. STAY AWAY FROM GLASS AND OBJECTS THAT COULD FALL

But do not unnecessarily cross a hazardous area to do so.



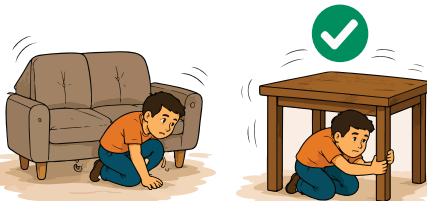
6. DO NOT AUTOMATICALLY USE DOOR FRAMES AS SHELTER

Look for suitable protection nearby.



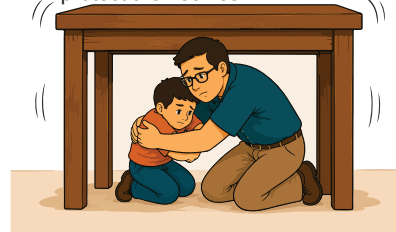
7. DO NOT USE THE SO-CALLED “TRIANGLE OF LIFE”

Follow the recommended steps:
DROP – COVER – HOLD ON.



8. PROTECT CHILDREN AND PEOPLE WHO NEED ASSISTANCE WITHOUT EXPOSING YOURSELF UNNECESSARILY

The person who helps should also protect themselves.



9. IF YOU ARE OUTSIDE, STAY AWAY FROM OBJECTS THAT COULD FALL

Look for an open area when you can do so safely.



10. WHEN THE SHAKING STOPS, ASSESS THE SITUATION BEFORE ACTING

There may be damage, broken glass, electrical wires, fires, leaks, and other hazards.



11. PREPARE FOR AFTERSHOCKS

If the shaking starts again:
DROP – COVER – HOLD ON.



12. EVACUATE ONLY WHEN NECESSARY AND SAFE TO DO SO

Do not turn immediate evacuation into a new source of danger.



REMEMBER



When an earthquake begins, **the first few seconds are for protecting yourself, not for evacuating.**



Do not run.



Do not use elevators.



Do not move unnecessarily.



Stay away from glass and objects that could fall when you can do so without exposing yourself to greater risks.

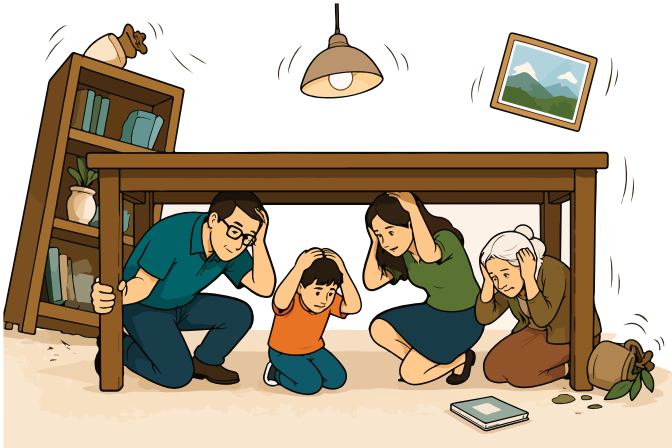


Protect your head and neck especially.



Help children, older adults, people with disabilities, and those who need assistance, without unnecessarily putting your own life at risk.

If you are inside a building:
DROP - COVER - HOLD ON



If you are already outdoors, stay put or move safely towards an open space, away from buildings, facades, walls, poles, cables and other things that could fall.



When the shaking stops, assess the conditions before moving.



Be ready for aftershocks.

And remember the fundamental principle:

PROTECT YOURSELF FIRST.

ONCE THE SHAKING HAS STOPPED, ASSESS THE SITUATION AND EVACUATE IN AN ORDERLY MANNER WHEN IT IS NECESSARY AND SAFE TO DO SO.



Civil Preparedness Training Program: Risk Management
and Emergency Preparedness

EARTHQUAKES

MODULE 1

PHASE 2: **DURING**

EDUCATIONAL DOCUMENT FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE UNITED STATES

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