

# Disaster Preparedness – Earthquakes

Living in the Sequim area means living in earthquake country.

## EARTHQUAKES

■ **Washington state** is one of the more active areas in the world for seismic activity. Earthquakes, which can occur any time, result in major planning and preparation in this state. Schools have earthquake drills. Here are a few safety points to remember about earthquakes:

Drop, Cover and Hold on! (Take cover under a heavy piece of furniture, or stand against an inside wall.)

If you're outside when an earthquake strikes, stay clear of buildings, trees and power lines.

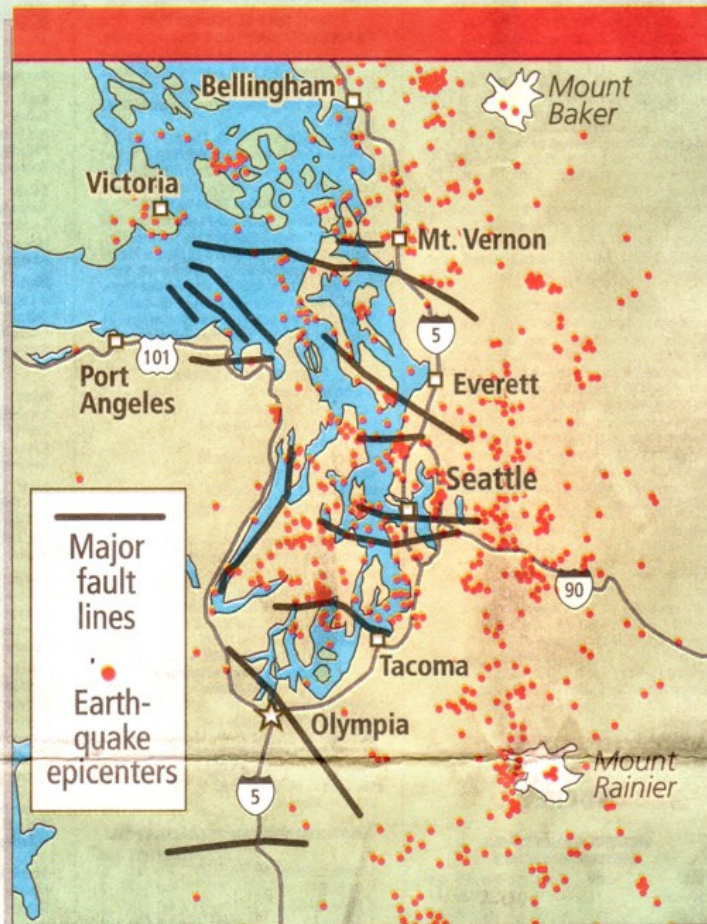
In a car, try to drive to an open space away from buildings, etc., and stay away from overpasses, underpasses, bridges and powerlines.

The Puget Sound area historically gets a significant earthquake every 20 to 40 years. The 6.8-magnitude earthquake in 2001 (200+ injuries, one death) was preceded by the 1965 6.5 earthquake (seven deaths), and a 7.1 earthquake in 1949 that caused 16 deaths.

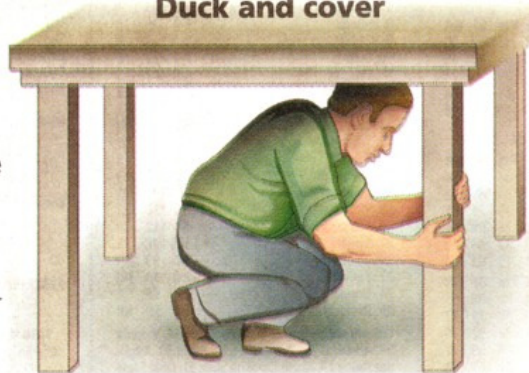
Geologists anticipate two sources for a very major earthquake that will one day affect Seattle. The "Seattle Fault" runs east-west under Qwest Field and across Puget Sound. The other, off the Washington coast, is a major subduction zone that geologists expect will one day produce a 9.0+ earthquake and tsunami.

Local building codes require special design and construction methods to strengthen our buildings and infrastructure in anticipation of an earthquake. By requiring all buildings meet these codes, we ensure a higher level of safety. As we've learned more about what needs to be done to prepare for an earthquake, state and local authorities have been busy retrofitting and modifying older buildings and bridges so that each better survives an earthquake.

Building and bridge collapses resulting from earthquakes are rare in the United States. What tends to be the greatest danger in an earthquake are the falling parts of a building and falling furniture. Many past deaths and injuries from earthquakes came from falling objects — building cornices, awnings or ceilings. Bookshelves and furniture such as tall dressers and entertainment units pose greater danger of falling over, so fasten those heavy pieces to the walls!



### Duck and cover



When an earthquake hits, get under a solid piece of furniture such as a table and hold on. If the table moves, you should hang on and move along with it. Keep your head and face away from broken glass.

## Earthquakes – What Can We Do to Prepare?

Steps to preparing include:

- Learning more about earthquakes – especially those likely in the Pacific Northwest.
- Personal preparation including preparing your home and securing emergency supplies.
- Neighborhood preparation.
- Training.

## Earthquakes – More Information

Two in depth discussions of earthquakes in the Pacific Northwest can be found on the HHMC website:

- Cascadia Deep Earthquakes at [http://www.hhmcsequim.org/Disaster\\_Cascadia\\_Deep\\_Earthquakes.pdf](http://www.hhmcsequim.org/Disaster_Cascadia_Deep_Earthquakes.pdf)
- Magnitude 9 Earthquake Scenario at [http://www.hhmcsequim.org/Disaster\\_Magnitude\\_9\\_Eathquake\\_Scenario.pdf](http://www.hhmcsequim.org/Disaster_Magnitude_9_Eathquake_Scenario.pdf)

The following website is also excellent: <http://earthquake.usgs.gov/hazards/>

## Personal Preparation – Getting Your Home Ready

Two websites offer in depth instruction on preparing your home:

<http://www.crew.org/home/homeowners.html#homeowner>  
[http://www.emd.wa.gov/preparedness/prep\\_personal\\_prep\\_video\\_index.shtml](http://www.emd.wa.gov/preparedness/prep_personal_prep_video_index.shtml)

The latter site includes quite a few instructional video clips.

## Personal Preparation – Securing Emergency Supplies



Washington State  
Emergency Management Division  
2009

Washington State's Emergency Management Division has an excellent "72 hours on your own" kit contents list. It is posted on the HHMC website at

[http://www.hhmcsequim.org/Disaster\\_72\\_hour\\_kit.pdf](http://www.hhmcsequim.org/Disaster_72_hour_kit.pdf)

Another take on what makes up a good emergency kit can be found at this website.

[http://www.johnmartin.com/earthquakes/EQGUIDES/eqgui\\_4001.htm](http://www.johnmartin.com/earthquakes/EQGUIDES/eqgui_4001.htm)

Fire District #3 recommends that you keep your kit in a closet near a door or in the trunk of your car, noting that portability is key since you may have to evacuate (to a shelter) and will want to take this with you.

## How Long On Our Own?

While these sources counsel preparing for three days on our own, there are folk recommending preparation for a longer period based, in part, on our geographic isolation. The District #3 Fire Chief has said "The Olympic Peninsula is an isolated area. People need to be prepared to survive for at least three days after a disaster; a week would be better." That is echoed by Seattle's (now ex) mayor Greg Nickels: "Given that it may take a week to mount a citywide rescue effort, planners emphasize the need for residents to be self-sufficient for seven days, maybe longer." Others see the need for a longer period. Phyllis Darling, director of the American Red Cross Olympic Peninsula Chapter, has stated: "We highly recommend you prepare for two weeks, just in case." A *New York Times* September 10, 2005 article, 'Some Ways to Prepare for the Absolute Worst', quotes FEMA: "Indeed, the Federal

Emergency Management Agency advises that Americans prepare a two-week supply cache because it could take that long for help to arrive.

## Neighborhood Preparation

The third major consideration in getting ready is understanding the opportunity of neighborhood readiness. Seattle disaster planners advise that “a key to survival after a disaster is for neighbors to take responsibility for helping each other out” and “helping each other is always going to be easier than riding it out by yourself.”

Washington State has been preparing citizens to effect neighborhood preparation via the ‘Map Your Neighborhood’ (MYN) program. An overview of this program has been placed on the HHMC website Disaster Preparedness - Map Your Neighborhood at [http://www.hhmcsequim.org/Disaster\\_Map\\_Your\\_Neighborhood.pdf](http://www.hhmcsequim.org/Disaster_Map_Your_Neighborhood.pdf)

This document includes an 11 minute video clip interview with LuAnn Johnson, the woman behind the Washington State program. Watch the video first, and then read the document – the video link is at the end of the document.

Once you’ve taken the MYN steps with your neighbors, the following is a good checklist to test your readiness.

[http://www.johnmartin.com/earthquakes/EQGUIDES/eqgui\\_4201.htm](http://www.johnmartin.com/earthquakes/EQGUIDES/eqgui_4201.htm)

## Training

Additional information for dealing with emergencies can be found in the Washington State ‘Emergency Resource Guide - 2008’ located on the HHMC website at

[http://www.hhmcsequim.org/Disaster\\_Emergency\\_Resource\\_Guide\\_2008.pdf](http://www.hhmcsequim.org/Disaster_Emergency_Resource_Guide_2008.pdf)

