



Environmental Health and Safety Office

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EARTHQUAKE PREPARATION AND RESPONSE GUIDE

Version	Date	Comments
1	September, 2011	Initial <i>Earthquake Response Guide</i>

A. INTRODUCTION

This Guide is designed to help familiarize university employees and students with procedures before, during, and after an earthquake.

B. SCOPE

This guide is designed to help university departments, employees, and students respond to and prepare for earthquakes and should be used in conjunction with the *Emergency Evacuation Guide*.

C. RESPONSE

If You Are Indoors: Remain indoors and seek protection until the earthquake subsides. Stay calm and take precautions to protect yourself from potential debris by:

- **Drop** to the floor and get under or adjacent to a sturdy table, desk, or permanent fixture.
- **Cover** your head and neck with your arms and hands.
- **Hold On** to the table or desk you are under as objects may shift during the earthquake.
- If you are not near a sturdy table or desk, drop to the floor against an interior wall and cover your head and neck with your arms and hands.
- Stay away from windows, overhead fixtures, objects on walls, tall furniture, large appliances and cabinets filled with objects that may be displaced and fall during an earthquake.
- If you are in an elevator you are afforded a reasonable amount of protection and should remain in place. Entrapment may occur; notify emergency response personnel by using the elevator phone, help button, or cell phone.
- If you are in bed, remain in bed and cover your head with a pillow.

If You Are Outdoors: Move away from buildings, overhangs, trees, and power lines to a clear area such as a large open public area or field. If you're driving, pull over and stop in an area that does not have any overhead hazards.

After the Earthquake: Once the earthquake has stopped do the following:

- Exit the building when safety permits and move to the designated assembly area.
- Use emergency exit route information posted throughout university buildings to determine the quickest route out of the building.
- If the building loses power during the earthquake and you are unable to safely navigate your way out of the building due to low visibility, remain in place and notify University Police of your location if you are able.
- Move to the Designated Assembly Area and take account of your co-workers, students or peers; report missing persons to emergency response personnel and University Police.
- Do not re-enter any building until it is cleared by, University Police, Facilities Management, emergency response personnel, Environmental Health and Safety Office, or university official.

The university will assess buildings for damages, chemical and physical hazards, and utility failures prior to authorizing re-occupancy of buildings. If you witness trapped or injured people, contact University Police by dialing 9-1-1 from a university phone or (703) 993-2810 from a cell phone. Never re-enter a building that appears to have structural damage.

Consider the following after an earthquake:

- Limit cell phone usage to text messaging only to allow emergency response communications to function properly.
- If you are unable to re-enter your work area or classroom for an extended period of time consider alternate work arrangements and discuss them with your supervisor or instructor.
- Limit travel as major road ways may be congested due to regional evacuations.
- Monitor Mason Alert and the university webpage for information updates.
- Remain aware of the potential for aftershocks to occur in the days or weeks following the initial earthquake. Aftershocks are typically less severe than the initial earthquake but can still result in significant damage.
- Buildings, parking structures, and roadways may remain closed for a period of time following an earthquake while damage assessments and repairs are conducted.
- Be aware that utilities such as gas, power, and water lines may be damaged; if you are aware of a gas leak, power outage, utility failure, or other building damages report the issue to Facilities management (703) 993-2525.

D. PREPARATION

Earthquakes cannot be forecasted therefore it is best to be prepared at all times. The following are best practices recommended by the Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Agency guidelines to prepare for earthquakes.

- Create a family plan that identifies alternate meeting locations in the event that you or your family are unable to return home, emergency contact numbers, and supplies that may be needed during an emergency such as bottled water, non-perishable food, and

reserve medications. For additional information and a family plan template, please visit www.ReadyVirginia.gov.

- Identify your Primary and Alternate Assembly Areas.
- Store heavy or breakable objects in closed cabinets, as low as possible.
- Secure refrigerators, book shelves, appliances, bookcases and other heavy items to prevent them from falling during an earthquake.
- Evaluate where hanging objects are placed. Mirrors, pictures or other hangings near seating or sleeping areas could fall and cause injury. Arrange these items so they do not pose a fall hazard to those below.