

INDIVIDUAL PREPAREDNESS

HOME HAZARDS

Non-structural hazards

Everyone should do a home hazard hunt to identify the potential dangers from non-structural hazards, and where possible, follow suggestions for dealing with these home hazards. Objects can be **relocated, removed, anchored, or simply identified as being dangerous.**

Consider the following:

- Be aware of the danger from broken and flying glass after an earthquake. Consider replacing glass with safety glass or adding a protective film. Locate beds away from windows (in North America windows are known to implode into the room)
- Identify top-heavy, free-standing furniture (such as bookcases and china cabinets) that could topple during an earthquake. Anything over 1 metre (3 feet) high could be a problem. Devices can be purchased to secure furniture to the wall, floor and/or ceiling.
- Identify heavy, breakable or valuable objects placed on high shelves or in cabinets. These can become projectiles. Secure them or move them to a lower location.
- Identify items such as mirrors, heavily framed pictures or shelving that are placed over beds, couches, tables and chairs. Relocate them or anchor them securely into a wall stud.
- Identify electronic equipment (such as stereos, televisions, and computers) and appliances (such as microwaves) that may slide off shelves or out of cabinets. Secure them with double-stick tape or Velcro fasteners, or provide a restraining edge on the cabinet itself.
- Appliances that generate heat (such as toasters/coffee pots) cannot be secured with Velcro pads because the glue in the Velcro will not adhere properly. Provide a restraining edge on the cabinet or shelf.
- Identify hanging plants, especially those in heavy baskets, and hanging lights or fans that are placed over exits or near windows. Move them to a safer location or fasten them securely.
- Computer owners should consider a small, uninterruptible power supply (UPS) to allow time to back up or shut down the computer if the main power fails.
- Check kitchen, bathroom and storage cabinets for latches that will not hold the door closed during heavy shaking. Secure them with hooks or better latches.

- Identify appliances such as stoves that could move enough to rupture gas lines or damage electrical cable. These appliances should be securely fastened. Check electrical cords to make sure they are long enough to allow for movement. Short, non-flexible gas lines can break during an earthquake. Consider replacing them with longer, flexible connectors. Only qualified personnel can install these connectors, which must be CSA-approved.
- Be sure the doorway exits will not be blocked by toppled furniture.
- Identify large appliances or furniture on wheels (such as portable dishwashers, refrigerators and stereo stands). These can become large moving projectiles that can cause serious damage.
- Improperly stored chemicals can create a secondary disaster following an earthquake. Store them properly now:
 - Keep on hand only those chemicals which will be needed and used.
 - Dispose safely old or unwanted chemicals.
 - Store chemicals in original containers and close lids tightly.
 - Store chemicals such as pesticides, cleaning fluids, paint thinner and other toxic materials on the floor or on a low shelf in a well ventilated outside shed. Make sure they won't easily slip off the shelf and break or spill on the floor.
 - Store chemicals away from food and waters supplies and away from the water heater and furnace.
 - Make sure all chemicals are out of reach of children and pets.
 - Check with the Provincial Waste Management if more information about safe storage of these materials is required.
 - Make sure that gas, electric and water valves are not rusted or stuck shut. A wrench or other shut-off device should be kept near the as meter. Everyone in the house should know how to turn off the utilities in case of a leak or problem. Know the location of the shut-off valves on neighbours' houses as well.
- Old, leaning trees can fall during earthquakes. Check for signs of root rot or other damage. Trees that lean against the house can also present a fire danger.

STRUCTURAL HAZARDS

Possible structural damage to the home must be considered. Experience indicates that wood-frame housing, such as the type common in British Columbia, performs well in earthquakes. A house can suffer major structural damage if it is not bolted securely to the foundation. In addition, inadequate foundation connections can result in loosened or broken utility connections. Inspect the foundation of the house and make sure it is securely bolted to the foundation.

- Some Structural hazards include:
- Unbraced simple stud walls
- Unattached porches and balconies
- Settling, especially on sloping or filled sites
- Detached footings