



Drop, Cover and Hold is still the right action to take

If you are in an earthquake in New Zealand, Drop, Cover and Hold is still the right action to take. This is the drill that has been taught to school children for many years, and is what we continue to promote around the country. The advice can be summarised as:

- If you are inside a building, move no more than a few steps, then Drop, Cover and Hold to protect yourself from falling objects. Stay indoors till the shaking stops and you are sure it is safe to exit. In most buildings in New Zealand you are safer if you stay where you are until the shaking stops.
- Not all people may be able to easily drop. If you are unable to drop the best action is to stop moving and brace yourself against a wall or furniture.
- If you are outside, move away from buildings, trees, streetlights, and power lines, then Drop, Cover and Hold. Stay there until the shaking stops.
- If you are driving, pull over to a clear location, stop and stay there with your seatbelt fastened until the shaking stops. Once the shaking stops, proceed with caution and avoid bridges or ramps that might have been damaged.

Respond quickly

In a severe earthquake it is absolutely vital that people respond immediately. Be clear about what actions to take in the environments where you spend most of your time.

Look around you now, before an earthquake. Identify safe places such as under a sturdy piece of furniture or against an interior wall in your home, office or school so that when the shaking starts you can respond quickly.

Building code

New Zealand experiences more than 20,000 earthquakes every year. Most are too small or too deep to be noticed but over 100 earthquakes a year are big enough to be felt, and a severe one can occur at any time.

In 1931 the 7.8 Hawke's Bay earthquake caused significant damage and loss of life, and resulted in New Zealand's first earthquake-resistant building design code. Several times since 1931 the code has been upgraded and buildings strengthened. The code has been further upgraded with lessons identified from the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010 and 2011.

Fixing problems in older buildings from before modern codes – retrofitting – is in most cases the responsibility of the building owner. Planned well, small improvements can make big differences.

The higher a building's design limits – from when it was built and retrofitting – the safer the building.

Injuries

Most earthquake-related injuries and deaths are caused by collapsing walls, and falling glass and objects caused by the shaking. Many injuries are caused by people moving during or immediately after the shaking. Even after earthquake shaking stops, move with care as debris can cause further injuries.

In a major earthquake, masonry and glass falls off buildings and into the streets. If you are inside, Drop, Cover and Hold – **do not run outside or you risk getting hit by falling masonry and glass**. If you are outside, move away from buildings, trees, streetlights, and power lines, then Drop, Cover and Hold. Stay there until the shaking stops.

Discredited earthquake safety information

You will find other information (not Drop, Cover and Hold) on the Internet about what to do in an earthquake. Much of it has been discredited, and should not be followed.

One email (which has been widely discredited), often known as the "triangle of life", goes as far as discouraging people from taking cover under sturdy furniture. Research from the United States, Taiwan, Japan and Christchurch (all places with modern, earthquake resistant building design codes), supports and recommends the core message for New Zealand: Drop, Cover and Hold is the right action to take in an earthquake.

More information

- For what to do before, during and after an earthquake, go to www.getthru.govt.nz
- www.eqc.govt.nz (provides information about how to make your house quake safe).

You can also contact your regional, city or district council to get local information about earthquake preparedness in your area.

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Published April 2015 by the Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management, with advice from GNS Science