

What to Do During The Next Quake

During Monday's earthquake, many persons promptly ran outside. That — safety officials say — is exactly the wrong thing to do.

Dashing for an exit usually increases the risk of being hit by falling bricks, plaster, furniture, and shattering glass.

"Most of the damage we found in the earthquake was due to broken glass and bricks coming off the sides of buildings," said Roger Pulley, senior planner for the state Office of Emergency Services in Sacramento.

"The best thing to do is not waste time trying to get outside," he said.

"If a person reacts at the first jolt, and tries to go outside, he may reach the door about the time a second jolt hits and sends debris showering down," Pulley said.

"You only have a few seconds," he said. "If you are near a window, get away from it. If you

are near something tall that might fall over, get away from it. If there is a strong desk or table nearby, get under it."

Interior doorways are particularly good places in which to stand during a large earthquake. The effect is that you have gotten inside a wall. If a ceiling comes down, you are protected.

"Don't attempt to leave the building until you are sure the building has stopped shaking," he added. "Once you are in the open, move away from power lines or anything that might fall on you. A large earthquake is often followed by strong aftershocks, so don't go immediately back inside, especially a building that is obviously damaged."

Before earthquakes strike, home owners should make common sense preparations such as keeping flashlights with extra batteries on hand, storing drinking water and a few days' supply of food, and learning where to turn off gas, electricity and water.

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After an earthquake, safety measures include a check for gas leaks — odor is the best clue — and listening to a radio for emergency instructions in case the tremor has caused a general disaster. Do not use the telephone except in a genuine emergency. The Pacific Telephone Co. directories contain a summary of earthquake safety instructions.

Several agencies supply free brochures detailing measures that should be taken before, during and after earthquakes. The American Red Cross, Golden Gate Chapter, will send a pamphlet to anyone who mails a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Red Cross, 1550 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA 94109.

The state also provides an earthquake preparedness packet to anyone who asks for one. Send the request to California Office of Emergency Services, Post Office Box 9577, Sacramento, CA, 95823.