

FOCUS: FLASHLIGHT AND BATTERIES



This action sheet is produced as part of the Southern California Earthquake Survival Program (ESP). ESP is an effort to increase the level of individual and family preparedness in this region. It is coordinated by eight southern California counties and the Southern California Earthquake Preparedness Project.

WHY

Every home in California should have flashlights and extra batteries. Their importance was shown quite clearly on October 17, 1989 after the Loma Prieta earthquake left 1.4 million people without electrical power. Areas of southern California could conceivably lose 50 percent of available power after a major earthquake (CDMG Publication 60, 1982), resulting in the loss of electricity for an undetermined period of time.

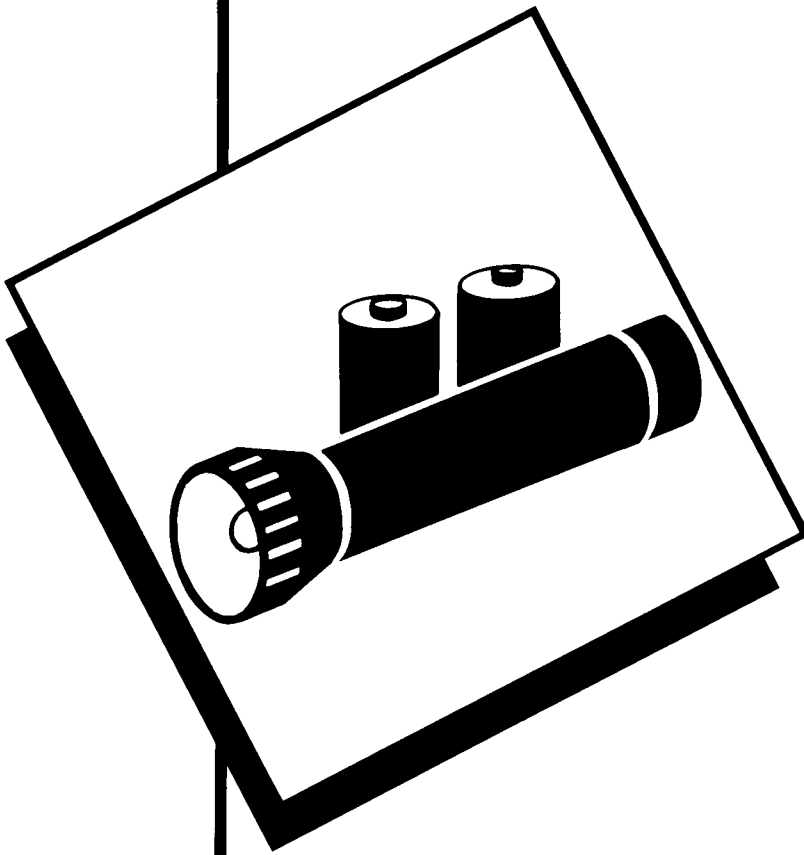
The utility company that serves the Bay Area was able to restore power to all but 26,000 customers within 48 hours of the Loma Prieta earthquake. But the restoration time would be longer after an earthquake of greater magnitude, centered in a more populated area. The loss of electrical power means the loss of much we take for granted, including lights, food storage and preparation equipment, radio, television, ATMs and credit cards.

Response plans will be activated when the disaster strikes, but responding agencies will not have enough resources to meet the needs of every citizen. Everyone should have alternative sources of lighting at home, at work and in the car to offset the impact of reduced electrical power.

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AUGUST



WHAT TO DO

Inspect the interior and exterior of your home after an earthquake. Check for fallen or loose wires, gas leaks and damaged appliances. Also inspect the service panel and the place where electrical service enters the house. Show family members the location of the service panel and teach them how to turn off the electricity. Other steps to take:

- Shut off electrical power at the service panel if there is damage to the house wiring. Disconnect damaged appliances and turn off non-essential electric circuits at the service panel. If the earthquake or other emergency has caused a power outage at your home, determine whether the power is out only in your home or in the entire neighborhood.
- Do not use electrical switches or appliances if you suspect a gas leak; using the switches may create sparks and cause a fire.
- Keep clear of fallen power lines and, if possible, report the locations to the appropriate utility company.
- Stay in the car and wait for help if a power line comes in contact with your automobile due to an earthquake or an accident. Get out of the car carefully, however, if fire or other life-endangering situations threaten your safety. Be sure to avoid touching wires and making simultaneous contact with the ground and the vehicle.

(Source: Earthquake Awareness, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power)

AUXILIARY LIGHTING

DO NOT USE matches, candles, lamps or other open flames until you determine that there are no gas leaks.

Flashlights— safe for use immediately after an earthquake. There are many types available. Fluorescent flashlights provide a bright light; tungsten flashlights last at least 10 years; and continually-charging, plug-in security lights automatically become flashlights when the electricity goes off. Have extra batteries and bulbs.

Small Personal Flashlight— for purse or key chain to ensure you will always have a safe light source at hand.

Lightsticks— chemical, short-term safety lights. They are convenient to store with emergency supplies and need no source of ignition.

Candles— small candles set in wide-mouth empty jars (with a book of matches) can be stored in every room for short-term lighting needs.

Hurricane Lamps— a type of candle holder that protects the flame during windy conditions. Have extra candles and matches and/or extra candle wick and lamp oil.

Lanterns— kerosene, butane or propane are useable. Have extra fuel, wicks and matches.

- Store enough lighting supplies to last for two weeks.
- Be careful with open-flame lighting because of the potential fire hazard. They can be knocked over during aftershocks.

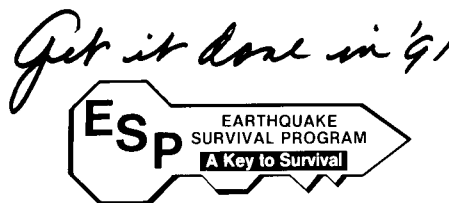
(Source: Earthquake Preparedness Handbook, Lafferty & Associates, Inc.)

EXPERIENCE SAYS...

- Store more than one flashlight. Each individual should have his or her own.
- Replace your batteries once a year.
- Batteries last longer if you store them in a refrigerator.
- Lightsticks work well as night lights for children, providing a source of emotional comfort after a disaster.



California Earthquake Preparedness



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