

ESP FOCUS



WHO'S TAKING CARE OF THE KIDS?



WHY

You might be away from your children when the next earthquake strikes!

Fortunately, most of the recent earthquakes that have occurred in California have struck during the early morning hours when most families have been together.

The next damaging earthquake might occur while your children are at school, at play or at home when you're not there.

Are your children prepared to respond and cope if you're separated during the next earthquake?

You can increase the ability of your children to handle such situations by involving them in earthquake preparedness plans and drills at home and by working in advance with their schools and others who might be responsible for their safety.

The reverse side of this Focus Sheet features information and resources to increase the safety of your children when they're away from you.

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SEPTEMBER

SAFETY AT SCHOOL

Your children spend much of their time at school. How prepared is your school for the next earthquake? Help increase school safety by taking the following steps:

- Ask whether your child's school has an earthquake preparedness plan? (California law requires public and private schools with 50 or more students, or more than one classroom, to have an earthquake emergency procedure plan.)
- Volunteer your assistance at your child's school. For example: offer your time help with emergency drills and materials to help secure classroom furniture that might move or topple over; build a storage shed for emergency supplies; sew banners or vests to identify school emergency staff and gathering areas.
- Support earthquake preparedness actions taken by your school board, district and PTA.
- Some schools require children to have emergency "comfort" kits. If your child's school does, include family photos, a special note and a favorite toy or book, as well as typical emergency items such as changes of clothing, flashlights and nonperishable snacks. Inform your child's teacher if your child has any special allergies or requires daily medication; include an extra supply of medication in your child's kit. If your child's school does not require students to have emergency "comfort" kits, work with school administrators to implement such a program.
- Review and update the information on your child's emergency card. Make sure you authorize someone nearby to pick up your child in case you are unable to do so after an earthquake.

SAFETY AT HOME

Many children spend time at home alone or with childcare providers. Take the following steps to increase their safety:

- Turn fear into fascination! Discuss how and why earthquakes occur and what you can do to prepare. Research shows that those who are informed about earthquakes understand and have a better chance of coping emotionally and psychologically after an earthquake.
- Develop a family plan. Discuss safe and danger spots at home. Teach children what to do if they are inside or outside, how to evacuate and where to reunite. (Do you know that doorways are no longer considered the safest places to be during earthquakes?) Practice taking cover under a sturdy desk or table!

Discuss plans for reuniting if your family is temporarily separated. If you leave your children with a childcare provider or if they'll be alone at home before or after school, take time to discuss what they should do during and after an earthquake. Select a neighbor to care for them.

Involve your children in earthquake safety measures at home. Conduct a hazard hunt for things that might fall, move, slide or block doors and injure someone. Put together emergency supplies and include provisions for your pets.

Teach older children how and when to turn off utilities. Review this information with childcare providers.

Teach older children how to operate a fire extinguisher.

Sources for this document included "Earthquake Preparedness: A Checklist for Parents," developed by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

Resources:

The following publications on school earthquake preparedness are available through the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services:

- Earthquake Preparedness Checklist for Schools (photo copy only)*
- Earthquake Policy Considerations for School Governing Boards (photo copy only)*
- Earthquake Preparedness: What every childcare provider should know*
- Guidebook for Developing a School Earthquake Safety Program*
- Identification and Reduction of Nonstructural Earthquake Hazards in California Schools*

For more information, call (818) 304-8383, (619) 525-4287 or (805) 568-1207.

This action sheet is produced as part of the Earthquake Survival Program (ESP). ESP is an awareness campaign designed to increase individual and home earthquake preparedness. ESP was developed by the County of Los Angeles. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services and representatives from Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Mono, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties assist in the development of campaign materials and in coordination of the campaign.

Steps to Survive in 1995

