

What to Do Before, During, and After an Earthquake

While most of this weekend's attention has been focused on Hurricane Irene, the [FEMA National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program \(NEHRP\)](#) has not forgotten last week's East Coast earthquake. This event gave us an important reminder that we live on a restless planet. But there are many important things we can do to protect ourselves, our homes, and our families.

The M 5.8 earthquake centered in Mineral, VA was felt from Georgia all the way to Canada. Earthquakes do happen on the East Coast and they can cause serious life safety and economic losses for those in the impacted area. Because of the stable soils we have in the east, earthquakes tend to impact a much larger area than they do out west. Because earthquakes can happen here, and since we will be experiencing aftershocks in the coming weeks, it is important to remember that there are several things you can do before, during and after an earthquake to better protect yourself.

Before an earthquake, it is important for individuals, families, organizations, and communities to identify their risk, make a plan, create a disaster kit, and remove, relocate, or secure anything that can:

- Fall and hurt someone
- Fall and block an exit
- Fall and start a fire
- Require a lengthy or costly clean-up

During an earthquake, **DROP** to the ground; take **COVER** by getting under a sturdy table or other piece of furniture; and **HOLD ON** until the shaking stops. If there isn't a table or desk near you, cover your face and head with your arms and crouch in an inside corner of the building. **DO NOT RUN OUT OF THE BUILDING DURING THE SHAKING AS OBJECTS MAY BE FALLING OFF THE BUILDING AND CAUSE SERIOUS INJURIES OR DEATH.** For more information on what to do during an earthquake, visit [What to Do During an Earthquake](#) and www.shakeout.org.

After an earthquake, safely evacuate. Please note that aftershocks could happen. These additional shaking events can be strong enough to do additional damage to already weakened structures and can occur in the first hours, days, weeks, or even months after the main earthquake. Have a professional engineer or local building official inspect the structural integrity of your home and/or building for potential damages. This should also include:

- Inspecting chimney for unnoticed damage that could lead to fires. Even a few cracks that are not obvious at first glance can create an unsafe condition the next time the fire place is used; and
- Checking for gas, electrical, sewer, and water line damages to avoid fire and hazardous leaks.

For more information on what individuals need to do before, during, and after an earthquake, visit the [Earthquake Safety Guide for Homeowners \(FEMA 530\)](#) and [FEMA Earthquake](#).

