

martha stewart

# Martha Stewart Earthquake Prep

Whether or not you live in an earthquake-prone area, it's so important to be prepared should the worst happen.

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October 30, 2020



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You may not give much thought to earthquakes—and the damage they can do when they hit—if you're not living in a quake-prone area, like California. However, every homeowner around the country should know the basics when

it comes to prepping their homes for this often-dangerous disturbance. Here's how to make sure your home can withstand a tectonic shift.

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## Prepare for fire.

If you live in an area that sees frequent seismic activity, you may already be aware that fires are the biggest risk after an earthquake—which is why Soraya Sutherlin, MPA, CEM, and JUDY Emergency Management Director, says the best thing you can do to protect your home is to make sure you know where the gas shutoff is on your property (or consider having an automatic shut-off valve installed). "Also, have a working fire extinguisher on each floor of your home and in the kitchen," she says.

## Secure fragile and dangerous items.

California native **Bonnie Heatzig** of The Luxury Real Estate Authority says that homeowners should position beds away from windows that could crack or shatter and remove anything hanging over pillowcases. "Make sure furniture like dressers and bookshelves are attached to the wall, so they don't tip," she says. In the kitchen, consider "inverted babyproofing," which involves locking upper kitchen cabinets to prevent contents from falling out during a tectonic shift. "This is easy to do yourself and, while it might take a little extra effort to open your cabinets, it may be worth it to keep expensive glassware and heirloom china safe," she says. In fact, anything over four-feet tall should be secured to your wall—and that includes your refrigerator. As for other precious items, like picture frames? "Ensure that hallway picture frames are

secured to the wall with earthquake putty to prevent them from falling during the shaking," adds Sutherlin.

## **Consider structural changes.**

If you are living in an earthquake-prone area, consider making some structural changes to your home, says Stephen Katz of [The Agency](#). "If the house hasn't been bolted (attaching a house to its concrete foundation), I always encourage my clients to get a [quick foundation inspection done](#)," he says. In Los Angeles, where Katz is based, that extra bit of information can often give homeowners peace of mind. "If you have concerns about earthquakes, it's always best to get a professional opinion," he adds. "Here in Los Angeles, the city even has a rebate program that gives some owners money towards the cost to 'bolt' their home."

## **Keep an emergency kit handy.**

If the worst happens and you need to leave your home after a quake, you'll want to have an [emergency kit](#) that is ready to grab and go. It should be packed well enough to "last a couple of days" and have the essentials, like "food, water, a hand-crank radio, and backup chargers," explains Katz. "It's one of those things where you hope you never have to use it, but just knowing it's there brings comfort." And be prepared to move quickly when the time comes to leave. "Place close-toed shoes under your bed with a flashlight (batteries installed up-side-down) and a whistle," adds Sutherlin. "This goes for children, also."

## **Check your insurance policy.**

Perhaps the most important way you can prep your home for an earthquake is to make sure it's insured for one. "Create a home inventory list to review with your insurance agent every year," suggests Marian Molhem, a State Farm Insurance Agent. While you're discussing any changes, review what your plan coverages are (most homeowner and renter policies do not cover earthquake damage unless specified).