

Structural Preparedness

Secure Your Home's Structure

Buildings are designed to withstand the downward pull of gravity, yet earthquakes shake a building in all directions. Common issues limit a building's ability to withstand the up, down and sideways shaking of an earthquake, according to *Putting Down Roots in Earthquake Country*, a source for earthquake preparedness written by experts.

For Homeowners

Inadequate foundations. If the foundation is damaged, or built in the "pier and post" style, consult a contractor or engineer about replacing it with a continuous perimeter foundation. Look for bolts in the mudsills. Bolts should be no more than 6 feet apart in a single story and 4 feet apart in a multistory building. Adding bolts to unsecured houses significantly increases earthquake safety.

Unbraced cripple walls. Houses with a crawl space should have panels of plywood connecting the studs of the short "cripple" walls. You or a contractor can strengthen the cripple walls relatively inexpensively.

Unreinforced masonry. All masonry (brick or block walls) should be reinforced, whether part of the house's structure or merely the chimney.

If your house needs retrofitting, consult a professional, identify problems, prioritize how and when to fix and get started! See www.daretoprepare.org for instructions on how to secure your building.

Water or gas pipes anywhere in your house can break. Water leaks can cause extensive damage, and gas leaks pose a fire hazard. Have a plumber evaluate, replace and properly secure rusted or worn water and gas pipes.

For Renters

As a renter, you have less control over the structural integrity of your building, but you do control which apartment or house you rent.

Ask the landlord these questions:

- What retrofitting has been done on this building?
- Have the water heaters been strapped to the wall studs?
- Can I secure furniture to the walls?

The Big One is coming.

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