BACKGROUND READING
FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Classroom resources provided by Cairns Regional Council

EARTHQUAKE

Be prepared

You can survive an earthquake and minimise damage by being aware of, and prepared for, potential hazards. An earthquake will be over before you can do much about it.

Most people are killed or injured when they attempt to move during the earthquake and are struck by falling or flying objects.

Your chances of avoiding serious injury are high if you remain calm and take cover as recommended below. Follow this advice and by being well-prepared, you could be a potential resource for your community.

Are you at risk?

- Ask your local council (www.cairns.qld.gov.au/community-information/cyclone-emergency-information/plan) whether tremors or earthquakes have occurred in your area and what damage resulted.
- Ask your local SES if they have a pamphlet or poster showing Australia's earthquake hazard zones.
- Even if you're in a slight risk zone, ask your council how to make your house safer.
- Check that your insurance covers earthquake damage.

Planning for the disaster

There are several steps you need to take when planning for the possibility of an earthquake.

With your family, create an emergency plan including:

- Safe places in the house during an earthquake and after-shocks.
- Where to meet if you are separated.
- Make a list of all the emergency phone numbers and put it in a place that everyone can access it. For example, on the fridge.
- Have a copy of emergency phone numbers in your Emergency Survival Kit.

Emergency survival kit

Creating an emergency survival kit is important for your survival during an earthquake. Find out what you should include:

- http://www.cairns.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/7727/Emergency-Kit-Checklist.pdf
- http://www.cairns.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/62283/Household-Emergency-Plan-final.pdf

Look out for early warning signs

- Unusual animal behaviour - watch for frightened or confused pets running around, or a bird-call not usually heard at night. It may also be unusually still or quiet.
- Ground-water levels - watch for sudden changes of water level in wells or artesian bores.

During the earthquake

If you are indoors

- Stay there. There could be falling debris outside.
- Take cover under an internal door frame, sturdy table, bench or bed.
- Keep away from windows, mirrors, chimneys, overhead fittings and tall furniture.
- In high-rise buildings, get under a desk near a pillar or internal wall.
- Do not use elevators.
- In crowded areas, do not rush for doors. Stay clear of roof and wall fittings.
- Listen to the radio for warnings before moving.

If you are outside

- Keep well clear of buildings, walls, power lines and trees.
- Shelter from falling debris under strong archways or doorways of buildings.
- Don't stand under awnings or parapets/walls as they may collapse.
- If you are in a vehicle, stop in the open until shaking stops. Beware of fallen powerlines and damage to roads, overpasses or bridges.
- Listen to the radio for warnings before moving.

Continued ...

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After the earthquake

Remember that there could be **after-shocks**, and even though they may not be as severe, it it is important that you follow the same emergency survival tips as during an earthquake.

- Check for injuries and apply first aid.
- Do not move the seriously injured unless they are in danger.
- Do not use the telephone unless there is a serious injury or fire, to avoid congestion on phone lines.
- Turn off the electricity, gas and water. Check for gas and fuel leaks before lighting matches.
- Check for water or sewerage leaks and broken electrical wiring.
- Do not touch any wiring.
- Check for cracks and damages, including the roof, chimneys and foundations.
- Be prepared for after-shocks.
- Evacuate the house if it is badly damaged.
- Do not waste food and water as supplies may be interrupted.
- Listen to the local radio, heed warnings and follow advice on damage and service disruptions.
- Avoid travelling unless for emergencies (keep the streets clear for emergency vehicles).
- Do not go sight-seeing or enter damaged buildings. Stay calm and help others if possible.

Source

Australian Government Attorney General's Department, Australian Emergency Management institute, Earthquakes.

Available via: https://schools.aemi.edu.au/earthquake/earthquakes-be-prepared