



A wave pounds Newport's north jetty during rough seas.

Photo © Ken Gagne

The Ground Starts to Shake: What to Do

We're dedicating this entire issue to answers to the top emergency questions we're hearing

We all know "The Big One" –a catastrophic earthquake– will happen on the Oregon Coast. The only question is "when?" Next year? Not for a hundred years? No one knows. More and more disaster planning is happening in our district, and we are very supportive. Several of our employees recently helped out at an emergency preparedness fair, and made a list of the main questions being asked. Here are those questions– and the answers:

What should you do if you encounter a downed power line?

Downed power lines can carry an electric current strong enough to cause serious injury or even death. If you come across a low or fallen line, adhere to the following safety tips:

If you see a downed power line, **move away from it** and anything touching it. The ground around power lines – up to 35 feet away - may be energized.

You cannot tell whether or not a power line is energized just by looking at it. You should **assume that all downed power lines are live.**

The proper way to move away from power line on the ground is to **shuffle away with small steps**, keeping your feet together and on the ground at all times. This will minimize the potential for a strong electric shock.

If you see someone who is in direct or indirect contact with a downed line, **do not touch the person.** You could become the next victim. Call 911 for help.

Do not attempt to move a downed power line or anything else in contact with it by using an object such as a broom or

stick. Even non-conductive materials like wood or cloth, can conduct electricity if even slightly wet.

Be careful **not to touch or step in water** near where a downed power line is located.

Do not drive over downed power lines. If your car comes in contact with a downed power line while you are inside, **stay in the car.** Honk your horn to summon help, but direct others to stay away from your car. If you must escape from your car because it is on fire, jump out of the vehicle with both feet together and **avoid contact with both the car and the ground** at the same time. Shuffle away from the car.

–Electrical Safety Foundation International-
esfi.org




Linemen Jeff White and Scott Johnson replace power lines downed by a freak snowstorm in 2012

What should you do if an earthquake hits, and you are inside?

Stay inside. DO NOT run outside or to other rooms during shaking.

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In most situations, you will reduce your chance of injury from falling objects and even building collapse if you immediately:

DROP down onto your hands and knees before the earthquake knocks you down. This position protects you from falling but allows you to still move if necessary.

COVER your head and neck (and your entire body if possible) under the shelter of a sturdy table or desk. If there is no shelter nearby, get down near an interior wall or next to low-lying furniture that won't fall on you, and cover your head and neck with your arms and hands.

HOLD ON to your shelter (or to your head and neck) until the shaking stops. Be prepared to move with your shelter if the shaking shifts it around.

DO NOT stand in a doorway. You are safer under a table. In modern houses, doorways are no stronger than any other part of the house. The doorway does not protect you from the most likely source of injury—falling or flying objects. Most earthquake-related injuries and deaths are caused by falling or flying objects (e.g., TVs, lamps, glass, bookcases), or by being knocked to the ground.

If possible, within the few seconds before shaking intensifies, quickly move away from glass and hanging objects, and bookcases, china cabinets, or other large furniture that could fall. Watch for falling objects, such as bricks from fireplaces and chimneys, light fixtures, wall hangings, high shelves, and cabinets with doors that could swing open.

If available nearby, grab something to shield your head and face from falling debris and broken glass.

If you are in the kitchen, quickly turn off the stove and take cover at the first sign of shaking.

If you are in bed, hold on and stay there, protecting your head with a pillow. You are less likely to be injured staying where you are. Broken glass on the floor has caused injury to those who have rolled to the floor to seek safety.

What if an earthquake hits, and you are outside?

Stay outside, and stay away from buildings, utility lines, sinkholes, and fuel and gas lines.

The area near the exterior walls of a building is the most dangerous place to be in the event of an earthquake. Windows, facades and architectural details are often the first parts of a building to collapse. Also, shaking can be so strong that you will not be able to move far without falling down, and objects may fall or be thrown at you. Stay away from this danger zone.

If outdoors, move away from buildings, utility lines, sinkholes, and fuel and gas lines. The greatest danger from falling debris is just outside doorways and close to outer walls. Once in the open, get down low (to avoid being knocked down by strong shaking) and stay there until the shaking stops.

What if an earthquake hits, and you are in a vehicle?

If you are in a moving vehicle, stop as quickly and safely as possible. Move your car to the shoulder or curb, away from utility poles, overhead wires, and under- or overpasses. Stay in the car and set the parking brake. Turn on the radio for emergency broadcast information. A car may jiggle violently on its springs, but it is a good place to stay until the shaking stops. If a power line falls on the car, stay inside until a trained person removes the line.

When you are able to drive on, watch for hazards created by the earthquake, such as breaks in the pavement, downed utility poles and wires, rising water levels, fallen overpasses and collapsed bridges.

– <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/>



How to use a home generator safely?

If your generator is installed without the right safeguards, a lineman could be killed or badly injured. Here's how to make sure that this doesn't happen:

We at Central Lincoln pride ourselves in having a minimum of outages, but they do happen on occasion, and are likely if a major earthquake happens. If you invest in a generator for your home or business, and that generator is connected directly to your wiring, a transfer switch must be installed by a licensed electrician. If power is out, and a line crew is working nearby, generators without a transfer switch could "backfeed" into dead power lines, unexpectedly energizing those lines. That electricity could maim or kill a line worker!

Make sure emergency generators can be rolled out onto a nearby dry surface under an open-but-covered area, and check to see that the generator is grounded following the manufacturer's instructions. Never run a generator where it can get wet, or in a place with standing water due to the risk of electrocution.

Never operate a generator inside a home or in any enclosed or partially-enclosed area. Generators produce carbon monoxide, an odorless, colorless gas that can kill animals and humans. Generators must be run a safe distance from homes – even 15 feet is too close – and take care to make sure generators are away from windows, doors, and vents.

Overloading or refueling a generator while it is running is a fire hazard. All appliances powered by a generator should be unplugged before a generator is shut down. Once a generator is off, it needs to cool before refueling.

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