

# AN EARTHQUAKE PREPAREDNESS GUIDE

For

## BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED PERSONS

Remember that all you do now, will add to your comfort and safety following an earthquake!

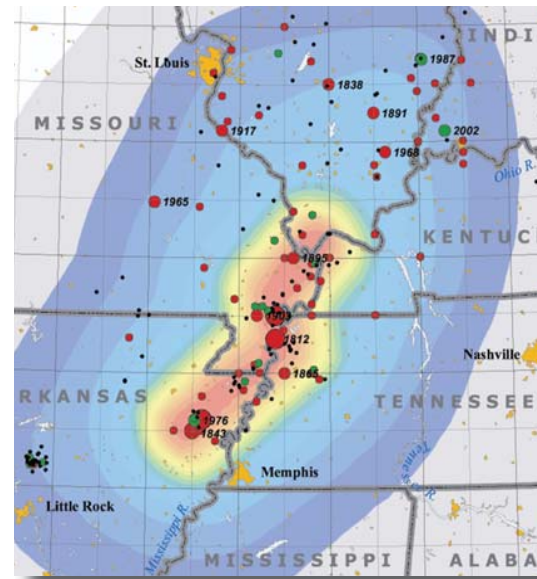


Central United States  
Earthquake Consortium

A major earthquake and its aftershocks will not only damage weak homes and public buildings, but it could also seriously damage lifeline functions of an entire region. Blind or visually impaired persons are at higher risk during this time. This brochure is designed to assist a blind or visually impaired person prepare for this natural disaster.

Imagine, yourself at home in the evening listening to the radio. Suddenly you hear a low growl that grows increasingly louder. At the same time your home begins to shake violently. The floor is moving in erratic horizontal and vertical directions and waves of motion ripple through the building. Dust belches up and chokes your breathing. The noise level now is thundering, the low growl has grown to an eerie screech. You hear furniture sliding and falling, and dishes crashing. The shaking is so violent that you are thrown to the floor. You want to move, but you can't get your balance and nausea sweeps over your body. You realize that you're in the midst of a major earthquake!

The description you've just read is of a quake that lasted only a few seconds. But it could be the most terrifying moments of your life.



Area in red shows approx. location of the New Madrid Seismic Zone. Dots represent earthquakes that have happened in the past.

Earthquake risk for persons living in the Central U.S. is highest in counties located in and near the New Madrid Seismic Zone. Education and preparation will be your best safeguards, if you live in this region.

Preparation will be your key to coping with an earthquake, its aftershocks, and the expected aftermath. Electricity, water, phone, and gas may be out of service for days.

Emergency response personnel will be overwhelmed during this time. Your normal resources for help may not be available. Hospital, fire, and police personnel should not be counted on for immediate help. Your help will have to be provided by close family, friends, or neighbors. Planning and preparation now will help you cope when the earthquake strikes.

## WHEN THE QUAKE STRIKES:

If you feel the ground move, assume it is an earthquake. Seek cover under heavy furniture or a doorway. Drop to your knees and protect your head with your arms. Also grasp hold of a firm object.

Protect yourself from falling objects. If you are outdoors when the earthquake begins, move to a clear area, away from trees, signs, or buildings. Live power lines could also be down. Move with caution. Be prepared for severe aftershocks which could further harm structures or cause total collapse.

Contact your local building officials for assistance with a post-earthquake inspection of damaged buildings.

Your major source of help following an earthquake will be someone who lives close by. Prepare by working out a plan of contact now. You should have at least two specific people who are willing to check on you. Your surroundings will be disrupted. There will be debris in your path, and if you use a seeing-eye dog, he could be injured or too frightened to rely on.

## AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE:

**B**e ready for aftershocks, which could cause more damage.

**I**f you are trapped, or believe that you are in immediate danger, do anything to attract attention. This is when your contact people will be most important to you.

**C**heck yourself for injuries. Evacuate if you smell gas or think the situation is dangerous. Don't use elevators. Be aware that there may be debris in corridors blocking your exit. Wear thick soled shoes because there could be a lot of broken glass.

**I**f you are outside, don't reenter any damaged buildings - the structure may be critically damaged from the violent shaking.

**U**se a portable radio for information. Except for a medical emergency, don't tie up telephone lines. Some lines will be out, and others will be overcrowded with emergency calls. Remember to put your phone back on the cradle if it has shaken off.

**Y**ou may need to be able to operate without critical services for several hours or days and must rely mainly on designated "contact persons" for one or two days following a major earthquake. Preparations taken before the earthquake will greatly enhance your ability to cope and will make life more tolerable in unpleasant surroundings.

**E**ducate yourself. Emergency response agencies provide free materials on earthquake preparedness.

### NOTICE:

To receive a free braille copy of this brochure, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

**Department of Rehabilitation  
University of Arkansas at Little Rock  
2801 S. University Ave.  
Little Rock, AR 72204**

### Prepared by:

James Blacklock, Ph.D., P.E.  
Donna Elliott, Earthquake Technical Writer

### DISCLAIMER

This publication is meant to be instructional and provide information that will help you understand and reduce earthquake risk. The information in this publication is believed to be accurate at the time of publication. The agencies and individuals involved in the preparation, printing, and distribution of this publication assume no responsibility for damage or injury that arises from any action that is based on information found in this publication.

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## HOME PREPAREDNESS

Earthquake preparedness for a visually impaired or blind person is vitally important. Large earthquakes are disastrous because of the damage they do to our physical environment. Therefore, anything that can be done now to lessen the chances of damage later, will benefit you. Some things which you can do now to prepare are:

- \* strap water heaters, stoves, or other appliances which could move or fall to wall studs or floor.
- \* fasten together or to wall studs any bookshelves, filing cabinets, or large pieces of furniture to increase stability.
- \* increase supports to water or gas pipes to help prevent fractures or leaks.
- \* install a fire extinguisher and smoke alarm with shake-resistant mountings. Every six months replace the batteries and check the chemicals.
- \* replace large panes of glass or mirrors with smaller panes which won't shatter as easily or cover with clear protective window film.

It is also advisable to conduct a survey of possible structural hazards within your home. **Remember that all you do to prepare now, will add to your comfort and safety following an earthquake!**

## SURVIVAL TIPS

Preparing now will increase your chances of survival of an earthquake and the aftershocks. You will also have the comfort and security of knowing that you are prepared. Some important things to remember are:

- \* arrange for two or three persons to check on you following the quake. These people should live within walking distance, because transportation could come to a stand still.
- \* plan now to secure bookcases and other furniture which could fall and cause disorientation of your surroundings.
- \* store an extra cane at home and at work. Even if you have a seeing-eye dog, there will be much debris and you will need a cane.
- \* prepare a supply of extra food, water, and medical needs. Remember to include food for your seeing-eye dog, too. You should store enough to last for at least 72 hours. Remember to rotate this stock every six months.
- \* expect electrical service to be interrupted for several days, maybe a week or more.
- \* assemble a first aid kit, complete with all prescription medication.

Plan to be self-reliant for as many days as possible!