

WEEKLY SAFETY TIP – 1/18/10 – 3.2.1 EARTHQUAKE

January 12th – a 7.0 earthquake struck Haiti. On January 10, an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.5 struck just off the coast of Eureka, California. This morning, an earthquake measuring 6.0 hit just off the coast of Guatemala. It is not a question of whether an earthquake disaster will happen. The question is whether you, your workers, your business and more importantly, your family will be prepared.

While the lists of things to do to be prepared are long and may vary, we have a short list of some of the more crucial points to consider. Here are 3 things to do before a quake happens, 2 things to do during an earthquake, and 1 thing to remember after the earth stops shaking.

Before:

1. Communication lines are typically both very important and disrupted following a disaster, especially in the immediate area. But how will you know if those who work off-site, like field techs, sales reps, or even your family, are safe? Prepare for a quake by establishing a point of contact at least 50 miles away. It could be a second business location, a phone service, or for your family – a distant relative. And instruct those off site to use cell phones to call and/or text to check in.
2. Emergency training. Following the Haiti earthquake, it took days for help to arrive. It is estimated that following a disaster, you may not have access to emergency services for up to 3 days. Prepare to survive with CPR, First Aid, and fire extinguisher operations training. If you have chemicals on site, get some basic spill clean-up training. Have evacuation routes planned for your business, and review them with your employees. This is an OSHA requirement – 29 CFR 1910.38, Emergency Action Plans (link: http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARD&p_id=9726) . Do the same for your family.
3. Preplan your survival. Look around wherever you are, whether at your desk or a client's site. Ask yourself, if a quake hit right now, where would I go? What would I do? Get your employees to do the same. Make it a game to play with your children, teaching them how to stay safe.

During:

1. Cover and hold. Things on shelves may fall. Pictures on walls may fall. Glass windows may break. If possible, get under a sturdy table or desk. If necessary, crouch next to an interior wall, facing away from windows, and cover your head with your arms. Stay there unless the area becomes unsafe until the shaking stops.
2. Do not brace yourself in a doorway, if at all possible. When the building shakes, doors may swing, catching and potentially injuring your fingers.

After:

1. Look around before you move. Unless you are in immediate danger, there is no reason to run outside. Assess your surroundings, looking for hazards like broken glass, fallen objects before you move. Then, put your emergency action plan to work. Establish your communication. Use your cell phone to call or text to your off site check in point. Get ready for aftershocks.

For more information, you can follow this link to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) website on Earthquake preparation:

<http://www.fema.gov/hazard/earthquake/>.

The American Red Cross has an earthquake safety checklist on their site. You can access it through this link:

<http://www.redcross.org/portal/site/en/menuitem.86f46a12f382290517a8f210b80f78a0/?vgnextoid=3750a5f0f013b110VgnVCM10000089f0870aRCRD>