

Before the Next Earthquake

Plan for an earthquake

There is much you can do ahead of time to plan for an earthquake that will inevitably minimize the risks your business will sustain. You will integrate much of the information you have collected in your [Emergency Action Plan](#) to plan for an earthquake.

Key points in the plan:

- [Communications and Emergency Contacts List](#)
- Critical Equipment processes to provide instructions for safely shutting down processes, data processing equipment, etc. Consider disconnecting and relocating critical equipment to higher elevations.
- Identify a hot site (an off-site data processing location for immediate business resumption) or a cold site (an off-site location ready for setup of your own data processing equipment). Also, consider an off-site business recovery facility where you can resume general business operations.
- Identify actions to take in the event of live electrical wires, leaking gas, flammable liquids, corrosive/toxic materials, and damage to foundations or underground piping.
- Determine which company records are vital and make plans to protect/relocate them.
- Contact local authorities to plan and coordinate activities before the need for emergency action. This way you will both be better prepared.
- Arrange an off-site emergency communications control center, such as a hotel meeting room just outside your area, in case it becomes too dangerous to remain on site.
- Evaluate the interdependency of your facilities and develop a contingency plan. [Business Continuity Planning Process Diagram](#)
- Maintain ongoing agreements with contractors for supplies and repairs needed after an earthquake. When possible, use contractors who are outside your business area, as local contractors may also have storm damage or local authorities' needs may be given a higher priority.

Prepare your facilities

There are things you can do for your facilities to help mitigate the effects of an earthquake.

- Make your buildings safer to be in during earthquakes and more resistant to earthquake damage and disruption. Depending on when and how they were designed, built and furnished, existing buildings may have weaknesses that make them more vulnerable to earthquakes.
- Check with your local building-regulatory agency to find out whether, and for how long, structures in your area have been subject to building codes containing seismic design provisions. Verify that all fire protection equipment is in service.
- Know whether and for how long local seismic code provisions have addressed nonstructural building components. Nonstructural items include utility systems and architectural elements (e.g., light fixtures, suspended ceilings, windows, partitions), as well as furnishings, supplies,

inventory, equipment, and other building contents. Nonstructural seismic weaknesses can be as or more dangerous, costly, and disruptive as structural vulnerabilities. Any nonstructural items that are not effectively anchored, braced, reinforced, or otherwise secured could become safety hazards or property losses in an earthquake. Design and construction professionals are needed to properly secure some of these components, while others can be made safe by maintenance staff or other employees.

- Earthquake risk-reduction measures can range from inexpensive methods of securing building contents to expensive structural modifications. The mix of measures that is optimal for your facilities will depend on factors such as the potential severity of the earthquake hazards in your locale, the current condition of your facilities, whether your workplace is owned or leased, and how vulnerable your operations are to facility damage and associated downtime.
- Trim or remove any large trees that could fall and damage buildings or impair fire protection or electrical power and communication lines, etc.
- Permanently move water-reactive chemicals that are stored below expected flood depths to a safe location.
- Ensure that pumps are in working condition.

Gather Supplies

- Maintain straps or other means on hand to brace/anchor yard storage, signs, cranes, and roof-mounted equipment.
- Maintain emergency supplies. (Drinking water, nonperishable food, medical supplies, flashlights, batteries, walkie-talkies, portable pumps, hose, emergency lighting, hand and power tools, plastic covers and tarpaulins, etc.)- [Emergency Supplies List](#)

Prepare Your Workforce to

- **React Safely:** Every employee, from top managers to part-time and temporary workers, needs to learn [What to Do During an Earthquake](#). Safety orientations should emphasize safe places to “drop, cover, and hold on”.
- Evaluate approaches to your facility for bridges or other areas for emergency access and employee safe routes to return to work.
- Advise employees how they will be notified when to return to work. (Local radio or TV station public service announcement, telephone call, etc.)
- Establish priority/backup personnel or rotation personnel for critical operations and/or processes. Employees may also have personal emergencies and may or may not be able to return to work promptly.