

EARTHQUAKES

Vancouver is located in a region where seismic activity can be expected. It is prudent for all businesses in the building to be prepared for an earthquake. Considerable information is available from many sources on earthquake preparedness, some of which are listed below.

This information package is not meant to replace information available from qualified sources, but merely to provide information that is specific to an office environment and to 900 West Hastings.

This information package is structured in the following components:

- a. Preparedness
- b. What to do **during** an earthquake event
- c. What to do **after** an earthquake event
- d. Building staff's role
- e. Sources for more information

A. PREPAREDNESS

1. [Objectives](#)

The objectives of earthquake preparedness are to:

1. Prevent injury
2. Minimize damage
3. Be prepared for survival

2. [Seismic Restraining](#)

Falling objects are one of the major causes of injury during an earthquake event. Restraining of office furniture and other objects is highly recommended.

Furniture: Upright furniture (such as bookshelves and filing cabinets) should be secured to the wall to prevent them from tipping over in an earthquake. Floor mount computer server racks should be bolted to the floor. Fix mirrors and other wall hanging objects. We will provide assistance when requested.

Office organization: Keep heavy items on lower shelves. Put anti-skid pads (i.e. Velcro) under TVs, microwaves. Store valuable documents in fire resistant filing cabinets.

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Building Equipment: All base building equipment has been seismically restrained. This includes T-bar ceiling grids, drywall ceilings, lightings fixtures, air conditioning diffusers, speakers and similar base building equipment. As such, these items will remain hung from the structural floor above.

3. Earthquake kits

Businesses are encouraged to purchase earthquake preparedness kits. The purpose of these kits is to ensure you are self sufficient for the first 72 hours after a quake. The earthquake kit should include, at minimum, water, food, first aid supplies and blankets. For a detailed list of items recommended for an earthquake kit, visit www.72hours.ca.

Earthquake kits should be refreshed from time to time to ensure the quality of water and food.

4. Training

Train all staff members regularly in your premises in the following:

1. Knowing the “safe” and “dangerous” places in your office space (see section B: during an earthquake below), and practice taking cover;
2. Knowing what to do **during**, and **after**, an earthquake;
3. How to use a fire extinguisher (and know where it is).

Assign one person to be responsible for earthquake preparedness, for training staff, and for taking charge after an earthquake event. Typically, this is the Floor Warden.

5. Earthquake planning

Develop a plan to, post event, close down your business and evacuate your floor, and prepare for business continuity. Earthquake planning is unique to each business, but should include plans for each the following:

1. *People*. Consider how they get home. For those who live far, consider how they will survive while remaining in the building. What supplies and items are needed? Know the location of post-disaster facilities. Plan for the orderly evacuation of your floor.
2. *Property*: How to secure your business post disaster. Where are valuables or valuable documents stored. Abandoned buildings can become the target for criminal activity.
3. *Information*. Can your business recover from a major disaster? Where is your information stored? Is this information backed up regularly? Are important and valuable documents stored in fire resistant filing cabinets?
4. *Business continuity*: Plan how will you get back in business, post disaster.
5. *Insurance*: Does your business carry adequate earthquake insurance, and business interruption (loss of business) insurance.

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B. DURING THE EARTHQUAKE

1. [What to expect](#)

When an earthquake occurs, your first warning may be a swaying sensation, a sudden noise or roar. Next, vibration. Items will fall out of cupboards and bookcases. Windows may break. Ceiling tiles may fall out. Alarms may go off.

It may last a few seconds or go on for a few minutes. The initial shocks will likely be followed by aftershocks.

2. [What to do](#)

1. Take cover, and stay there. Protect your head and face.

“Safe” places are under heavy tables or desks, inside hallways, or at inside corners of rooms.

“Dangerous” places are near windows or mirrors, under objects that can fall, in the kitchen (where the content of cupboards may fall out and the refrigerator may move violently), and in doorways (because the shaking may slam the door on you).

Get out of kitchens or lunchrooms. Stay away from windows.

2. Remain in a protected space until the shaking stops. Anticipate aftershocks.
3. Do not go outside, where you may be hit by falling debris. If you are outside the building: take cover from falling glass.
4. Do not get into an elevator. If you are in the elevator, hit all floor buttons, and get out at the first opportunity.
5. Try to remain calm and help others.

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C. AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE

1. Check yourself and others nearby for injuries, and administer first aid. Take care of the most serious cases first. Account for all persons in your office.
2. Anticipate aftershocks. Move away from potential hazards.
3. Check your offices for damage and hazards. Watch for broken glass. Shut off exposed electrical circuits. Put out small fires with the fire extinguisher. If your floor is unsafe, evacuate to a lower floor. Floors 3, 7 and 11 are the cross-over floors.
4. Do not use the telephone, except in an extreme emergency. Do not flush toilets until sewer lines are checked to be intact.
5. Use a battery powered radio to listen for emergency information.
6. Once the situation has stabilized, collect all staff present and discuss an evacuation plan for each person. Note that depending on the severity of the earthquake event, transit systems may be disabled, and roads and bridges may not be passable.
7. Before vacating the floor, secure the office space. Put away valuables. The Floor Warden (or a person appointed in his/her place) is the last person off the floor.
8. Communication with building management personnel will likely be difficult. You may try the firefighter's telephone system.
9. If you have vacated your floor, leave a sign on your entrance doors or at your reception area advising of the status.

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D. BUILDING STAFF'S ROLE

Immediately following an earthquake, building personnel's first responsibility is to assess the condition of the building, its life safety systems, and utility connections. Accordingly, it is unlikely we will be able to attend your premises.

It is the responsibility of each business to be prepared to an earthquake, to look after its people during and after an earthquake, and to manage the effects of an earthquake event on its people, premises, and business.

Following an earthquake, building personnel will carry out the following tasks:

1. Check the building's life safety systems;
2. Check the utility connections to and in the building (and shut off utilities only if necessary);
3. Check the building for hazards, and address any hazardous conditions as practical;
4. Assess the condition of occupied spaces, connect with the Floor Wardens, assist with medical emergencies;
5. If required, assist with the orderly evacuation of the building;
6. Assess the condition of the building and major building systems and plan for repairs and restart to get the building back in business as expediently as possible.

E. RESOURCES

Many online resources are available with detailed information about earthquake preparedness, including the following:

City of Vancouver: <http://vancouver.ca/emerg/prepyourself/earthquaketips.htm>

BC Provincial Emergency Program: <http://www.pep.bc.ca/index.html>

San Francisco Bay Area: <http://72hours.org/earthquake.html>