Earthquake Safety Meeting Kit

What’s At Stake

There are events or occurrences that no man or scientific device can ever predict. One of these fortuitous events is an earthquake. It is a sudden, rapid shaking of the ground caused by the breaking and shifting of rock beneath the Earth’s surface.

What’s the Danger

The shaking can result in damage to buildings and bridges, disruption of electric and phone service and it could trigger other forms of destruction such as landslides, avalanches, flash floods, fires, and even ocean waves. Because of the destructive nature of earthquakes, it is important that everyone should be prepared for such calamity.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING AN EARTHQUAKE

Small or moderate earthquakes

- These can last only a few seconds and represent no emergency risk.
- Ceiling lights may move, and some minor rattling of objects may occur in your home.
- You may feel a slight quiver under your feet if you are outside.
- If you are close to its source, you may hear a loud bang followed by shaking.

Large earthquakes

- These can last up to several minutes and constitute a natural disaster if its epicentre is near a densely populated area, or its magnitude sufficiently large for the

region.

- The ground or floor will move, perhaps violently.
- Whether far away or close to the source, you will probably feel shaking followed by a rolling motion, much like being at sea.
- If you are far away from the source, you might see swaying buildings or hear a roaring sound.
- You may feel dizzy and be unable to walk during the earthquake.
- If you live in a high rise or a multi-storey building, you may experience more sway and less shaking than in a smaller, single-storey building. Lower floors will shake rapidly, much like residential homes. On upper floors, movement will be slower, but the building will move farther from side to side.
- Furnishings and unsecured objects could fall over or slide across the floor or be thrown with damaging force across the room.
- Unsecured light fixtures and ceiling panels may fall.
- Windows may break.
- Fire alarms and sprinkler systems may be activated.
- Lights and power may go off.

FOUR SPECIFIC MEASURES TO PROTECT EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

Eliminate Potential Hazards: Conduct a thorough survey of the workplace. Identify harmful objects and eliminate them. Secure all cabinets, shelves, and heavy equipment that could tip over during an earthquake. Storing heavy items on top of shelves is also not a good idea as it might fall on someone. Also, avoid placing items that might fall into aisles or hallways that are part of the evacuation routes. As much as possible, arrange your workspaces in a way that when cubicle partitions fall, it would not trap employees. Make sure that all exits are marked visibly that employees can be able to go out.

Conduct Training with Employees: Teaching employees on what to do during an earthquake can help ensure their safety. Learning about the building and earthquake safety procedures can go a long way in

avoiding panic among employees. Identify the different evacuation routes, medical kits, and fire extinguishers so that employees will know where to get them when they need it. It is also important that you pick “safe places”. These safe places could be under a sturdy table or desk or it could be an interior wall that is away from the windows or tall furniture that could fall on you. Injury statistics suggest that moving as little as ten feet during an earthquake is most likely to be injured.

It is important that employees know about the **drop, cover, and hold-on routine in a safe place**. The employees need to practice these situations so that they become an automatic response. Practicing these safe earthquake procedures at least twice a year can help reinforce these safe behaviors. So when an earthquake actually occurs, the employees are able to respond and automatically protect themselves against injury.

Appoint an Emergency Team: Supervisors should brief employees on the emergency plan when an earthquake occurs. The discussion should cover evacuation procedures, communication techniques, and emergency contacts. An emergency team should also be formed that would lead and execute the emergency plan. This emergency team should take a first-aid class from organizations such as the American Red Cross and American Heart Association.

Stock up Emergency Supplies: During emergency situations, it is crucial to have emergency supplies ready and stored in an accessible place. Supplies should include medical kit, flashlights, battery-powered radio, towels, garbage bags, dust masks, can opener, and a whistle. It is also recommended to have 3-days worth of non-perishable food such as canned goods, crackers, granola bars, and water. It is important to note that gas, electricity, and phone service may not be available in these situations so it’s better to have a solar cell phone in order to communicate with the authorities or a rescue team.

FINAL WORD

Preparation, preparation and more preparation. Being prepared for

natural disasters will not just ensure safety among employees but it can also save lives.