Home Earthquake Safety Inspection Checklist

Take 30 minutes and conduct a home walkthrough. Identify potential hazards by using this handy worksheet.

1. Check the water heater and forced air unit to see if they are securely fastened to wall studs with straps. Secure the water heater with metal straps available at most hardware stores.
2. Identify top-heavy, freestanding furniture that could topple in an earthquake, such as bookcases and china cabinets. Secure these items by installing appropriate anchoring materials.
3. Identify heavy or breakable objects on high shelves or in cabinets. Securely fasten or move these objects to lower locations.
4. Identify electronic equipment (stereos, computers, etc.) and appliances (microwaves, toasters, etc.) that may slide off their cabinets. Secure these by using double-stick tape or Velcro-like fasteners, or provide a restraining edge on the cabinet shelf.
5. Identify hanging plants, especially those in heavy baskets and hanging lights that are near windows. Move these to a safer location or securely fasten them.
6. Identify mirrors, heavily framed pictures, etc. which are placed over beds, couches, and chairs. Relocate these, or securely mount them.
7. Identify appliances that could move enough to rupture gas or electrical lines. Securely fasten these objects.
8. Check all appliances and the water heater to make sure they are connected to the fuel source with flexible lines. Install flexible connectors on all gas appliances and the water heater.
9. Identify latches on kitchen and bathroom cabinets, which will not hold the doors closed during heavy shaking. Install more secure latches or hooks.
10. Inspect four-poster beds, enclosed bed frames, and Waterbeds that may come apart or pieces that may fall onto the bed.
11. Identify poisons, toxins, or solvents especially those in breakable containers, which are located in high or dangerous locations. Move these containers to a safe, well-ventilated storage area. Store ammonia and bleach in different locations. If these liquids mix, they create toxic fumes. Plant pesticides, gasoline, paint thinners, etc. on the floor, on a low shelf, or in a locked cabinet that is securely fastened to the wall. If placed on a shelf, install a guardrail to prevent the bottles or containers from slipping off the shelf and breaking or spilling onto the floor. Close lids tightly on all containers. Store gasoline in vapor-proof containers. Keep them away from any water storage and out of the reach of children and pets.

12. Inspect the home’s foundation. Is the house securely bolted to it?

13. Remove or replace any loose tiles or bricks from the chimney and roof.

14. Check cabinets and closets for loose items that may fall, break or block exits.

15. Store items in the overhead of the garage to prevent them from falling to prevent breakage and damage to automobiles. The overhead storage area of a garage is a good location to store large bulky items and seasonal/holiday decorations. Small, heavy items (i.e. bowling balls and items that can break) are best stored on the floor or storage cabinet.

16. Keep the area clear in front of either a manual or electric garage door, ensure that large items cannot fall and block the garage door from the inside. Locate gas, water, and electric utilities. Know how to turn the utilities off. Teach family members how to shut off all utilities and when to do so. Identify the shut-off valve by painting it a bright color. Attach an adjustable wrench to the gas meter. (This eliminates taking time to find one after an earthquake.) If the gas is shut off, NEVER turn it back on. The structure will need to be checked for leaks and all of the pilot lights must be relit. SDG&E should be contacted to restore service.

17. If you live in a mobile home check the foundation to make sure that it has been reinforced and that the undercarriage has been securely tied to the foundation. Without this, the mobile home may be thrown off its foundation even during small tremors. Tie doublewide mobile homes together. The two units are generally of different weights. When an earthquake strikes, they tend to react differently and pull apart. Structural support bracing systems are commercially available. Designs and costs vary, but a good bracing system can be a very worthwhile investment. If interested in a seismic bracing system, contact the mobile home owner’s association, local mobile home dealer or look in the telephone book.