

Earthquakes are Better at a Distance

The Earthquake that shook the town of Napa at the end of last month was serious for many living in that area. Fortunately no one was killed, but many were injured and needed medical treatment. The emergency service personnel responded quickly. By the time people got out to see the damage, the worst areas were taped off and being cleaned up.

We all feel lucky that this quake didn't hit our city, but what have we learned from it? What if this had been our 6.0 earthquake? Answer the questions below to see if you are prepared.



- At 3:20 AM on Sunday, August 24th, did you have a three-day supply of drinking water on hand? Many of us have some bottled water around the house, but did you know that you also have a large supply of fresh water stored in your hot water tank? You may hope that it stays hot for a shower, but PG&E will probably shut off the gas to avoid fires. Without gas to heat the tank, it will cool shortly. I would familiarize myself with the supply valve so that you can quickly shut off the supply avoiding contamination from line breaks. If water pressure disappears, there is a drain spigot on the side of most tanks to access the water. And if you are one of the handful of people who have not strapped your hot water tank to the wall yet, do it today!
- Were your bookshelves, or heavy items stored high on shelves, secured by hooks, line or straps? Yes, you have it on a list, but aside from the injury potential, a pile of books or your collection of CDs and VCRs can block a doorway. The cleanup afterward is difficult enough without making it more so.
- Did you have a plan of action that you discussed with your children, relatives and close neighbors, other than walking outside to observe?
- What was your plan B when your garage door wedged shut and your car (which you always keep half-full of gas) was trapped on the inside? Maybe it is a good time to start this discussion. This week would not be

too soon.

- Did you have a minimum two or three day supply of dry or canned food? The food in your refrigerator counts, but if the power goes off, it will only count for a day or two. In a larger, more serious earthquake, stores may be sold out quickly. There will be lots of jars of capers, but no water, bread, milk, juices, fresh food or batteries for your radios and flashlights. When planning food items, think no microwave, no gas, no power; now how do you feed your family? Abraham Lincoln had candles, do you?
- What was surprising in the Napa quake, was the number of red-tagged structures that were unsafe to occupy. This is in a downtown that has been considerably remodeled over the past decade. Many were tagged because they were unreinforced masonry, but others were tagged because the neighboring building was leaning against it. Until the suspected problem is cleared, these adjacent buildings cannot be occupied. This could take some time.

You packed for your vacation because you knew that you were going. Your earthquake is coming, but you haven't packed for it yet!