

# EARTHQUAKES

Earthquakes are a fact of life on Okinawa. The earth's surface is fractured here in the Western Pacific Region and the ground shakes from time to time. Usually, those shakes are too gentle to feel; however, earthquakes can be violent enough to cause damage.

- Driving during an earthquake: Earthquakes are powerful enough to cause substantial damage that will make it hard to stand or drive. The motion will damage roads and buildings.
- Injuries to personnel: Indoor injuries are caused from falling objects such as glass and debris because of the shaking. Outdoors, things like power lines, lamp posts, or debris from buildings may fall and hurt personnel.
- Injuries because of fire: Following an earthquake, gas lines and power lines are likely to be damaged which provides sources of fuel or ignition. Water lines will also be damaged, making fire-fighting harder. Damaged roads will make it difficult for fire trucks to get to fires.
- Major earthquakes are followed by aftershocks: The main shock of the earthquake doesn't always discharge all that stress from the Earth's crust. Aftershocks, some as powerful as the main earthquake, happen as the Earth settles into a new equilibrium. Buildings that stood up through the earthquake can collapse in aftershocks.

Earthquakes come without warning, so we have to be prepared at all times. Here are some things you can do to prepare for and survive earthquakes:

## **Before the Earthquake**

- Don't store large, heavy items on high shelves
- Anchor cabinets and bookshelves to walls
- Put latches on cabinet and closet doors to keep them closed and keep things inside
- If you see things like deep cracks in walls or ceilings in the building you live or work in, report them

## **During the Earthquake**

- DON'T PANIC! More people get hurt because they panic than for any other reason.
- STAY PUT. Move if you must to keep something from falling on you, but go only as far as you have to. Don't go in or out of buildings while the ground is shaking!
- TAKE COVER. A good, strong table, a bench, or any other well-built piece of furniture will keep debris from hitting you. If you don't have sturdy furniture available, curl up and protect your head and neck. Another source of cover is bathrooms and closets.
- HOLD ON. Everything is going to move, so stay with whatever you're using for protection. If you're in a car when the shaking starts, pull over as soon as you can. Your car is a good place to stay until the shaking stops.

## **After the Earthquake**

- Stay out of damaged buildings until engineers pronounce the building as safe.
- Stay away from fires, downed power lines, and other indefinable hazards.

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