

Community Comment – October 24th, 2016

By Jon Sapper

Earthquake Preparedness

Last Thursday was the Great American Shakeout drill. Now, for those who aren't familiar with this annual activity, the gist of it is trying to prepare folks for the next big earthquake. A lot of research has apparently been done about what we're supposed to do when a big one hits. Many of you have heard the advice, "Drop, Cover and Hold". The theory is that you need to drop to your knees, take one arm and put it over your neck and head while taking the other arm and holding onto or wrapping it around a nearby object. Preferably you do all of this while trying to climb under a desk or table.

As you visualize this contorted almost a yoga position, you are also asked to crawl to the nearest inside cover if there isn't a desk or table nearby. Now, I don't know about you, but my old body doesn't take kindly thinking about crawling, if I'm already on my knees with one arm around my neck and head, and the other arm reaching out in front of me trying to grab something. Just for the heck of it, I tried this at home. I didn't do it in the office out of consideration for my colleagues who would see this as way too funny, especially with no anticipation of sympathy being thrown my way. After only moving about 18 inches on my knees, I face planted into the floor. Laughing when I told the story in the office, they said my action or rather impact was probably a 3.0. I asked if they were referring to the Richter Scale or Olympic score from my less than flattering exhibition of the Drop, Cover and Hold pose.

Some of you listening may not have been here in 1992. Those were impressive earthquakes where I would have benefitted from knowing what to do. When that shaking started, I was standing in the shower. Now, if I would have dropped, covered my head with one arm and reached out to try and grab something nearby, the closest thing would have been the commode. Please don't try to visualize this. It's not a pretty sight. Dripping wet, naked as a jaybird, on my knees with one arm over my neck and head and the other arm holding on to the turlit. Some may be familiar with that pose and not necessarily during an earthquake.

I'm really not sure how many people participated in this year's Great American Shakeout, but I do applaud all of those who took it seriously and got under their desks. With my bad back, by the time I would secure myself under a desk with that yoga pose, any shaking would probably be over.

I guess until someone does some research confirming that's it's ok to just sit there drinking some coffee; the drop, cover and hold strategy for an earthquake is probably the best thing to do. Just don't watch me.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.