

Earthquakes and tsunamis are a part of life here on the North Coast, but there is no reason to live in fear. Past earthquakes and tsunamis from around the world... as well as locally... have taught us that everyone can survive if they know just a few basic things about how to respond to earthquakes and tsunamis.

So instead of worrying about the unknown aspects of these natural hazards, make sure that you and your family know what to do so you can both be safe...and stop worrying. There are only three key things to remember about earthquakes and tsunamis.

First, if you feel an earthquake, then drop, cover, and hold on.

Do this wherever you happen to be inside a building, even if there is not something to get under. Just crouching down and covering your neck and eyes is so important to protect you from falling debris.

Definitely do not try to run out of a building. California structures survive earthquakes very well but there is a good chance that something falling from the outside of the building, such as broken glass, can hit you as you exit.

The next two things you need to know only apply if you are in the tsunami zone so wherever you live, work, and play... know your zone.

There are a few ways to determine if you are in the tsunami zone.

There are maps on-line that you can use. Just Google "tsunami zone" and your county to find the maps.

You can also watch for road signs that indicate if you are entering or leaving the tsunami zone.

If you determine you are not in a tsunami zone then all you have to do is drop, cover, and hold on during the earthquake. If you are in the tsunami zone then there are two other things to remember.

First of all, as soon as the shaking lessens enough so that you can safely move, go to high ground. A tsunami could arrive in as soon as ten minutes so it is critical to get going right away.

But also remember that there is no need to panic. In most areas of the North Coast, it is possible to walk to high ground in less than 10 minutes.

Also, don't rely on your car to get to high ground since the earthquake can make roads impassable. If you are not sure if you can get to high ground from your home in ten minutes, consider testing out your route to high ground. Make it a family effort and keep it upbeat and positive.

The last thing to remember about earthquakes and tsunamis is to stay up on high ground long after you think the tsunami is over.

Tsunamis can appear to be finished and then a new surge can suddenly appear. This can happen many hours after the first waves.

So stay on high ground until you hear from an official source that the tsunami threat is gone.

To summarize, remember to: Drop, Cover, and hold on during the earthquake.

Then, if you are in the tsunami zone, go to high ground immediately, and finally: stay there until official word is received.

Remember that getting prepared can be fun and uplifting.

Being prepared will allow you and your family to feel better about living in earthquake and tsunami country.