

# Earthquake Survival

What to do before, during and after an earthquake, and preparing an earthquake survival kit for your home, automobile, and office.

## **WHAT TO DO**

In 1996, Copp made a film to prove his survival methodology. He recreated a model school and home, filling them with 20 mannequins. He collapsed the buildings with half the mannequins in 'duck and cover' position and the others in what Copp calls the triangle of life position. 'The height of the object that remains acts as a kind of roof beam to the void next to it, which will tend to end up with a sloping roof over it.'

When buildings collapse, the weight of the ceilings falling upon the objects or furniture inside somewhat crushes them, but the height of the object that remains acts as a kind of roof beam to the space or void next to it, which will tend to end up with a sloping roof over it. This space for survival Copp terms the triangle of life. The larger and stronger the object, the less it will compact. The less it compacts, the larger the void next to it will be. Such triangles are the most common shape to be found in a collapsed building.

When Copp and his crew re-entered the simulated earthquake scenario after the blast, they calculated that there would have been zero percent survival for the mannequins in 'duck and cover' position as against 100 per cent survival for those hiding in the triangles beside solid objects. Copp is categorical about the importance of this technique: "Everyone who simply ducks and covers when buildings collapse is crushed to death - every time without exception."

## **Move next to a solid object**

Position yourself next to a sofa, a car or another large bulky object that may compress slightly but will still leave a safe void next to it. A large safe would be ideal. If you are in bed, roll off. If you find yourself in bed when an earthquake occurs, simply roll off it and you will find yourself in the safe void that exists around the bed.

## **Assume the fetal position**

Putting yourself into the fetal position, as cats, dogs and children naturally tend to do, will enable you to survive in a smaller void. This is a natural survival instinct.

## **Avoid stairs**

Never go to the stairs as this is the first part of a building to be damaged. Even if they are not destroyed by the earthquake, they may well collapse with the weight of panicking people attempting to flee down them.

## **Avoid the bottom floor**

The higher you are in a building the less weight will be crushing down upon you and the safer you will be. The bottom floors have the combined weight of an entire building pressing upon them and the objects inside. Top floors meanwhile have less weight above them and are not usually collapsed in earthquakes.

## **Avoid doorways**

In Copp's experience of crawling into 875 collapsed buildings, everyone who tries to shelter under doorways is killed. If the door frame falls forwards or backwards the ceiling will drop from above; if the door frame falls sideways you will be cut in half by the doorway. Though most authorities have now stopped publishing instructional pictures of people sheltering under

doorways, the message has not yet got through and many people's first attempt at survival is to stand in these vulnerable spots.

### **Lie beside not inside your car**

If rubble falls from above, most cars will leave a void three feet high immediately beside them.

### **Move to near the outer walls of buildings or outside them**

The further inside you are from a building's outer perimeter, the greater the probability that your escape route will be blocked - or the route for a rescuer to reach you will be blocked. It is rare for the ground outside buildings to open up and so the safest place to be in an earthquake is outside.

### **Create safe islands in public buildings**

Unfolded paper does not compress and stacks of paper can make excellent triangles of life. Copp observed how boxes of newspapers could hold up whole buildings and now recommends that schools and other public buildings construct simple wood frames around piles of paper and put these in strategic positions. Rather than schoolchildren lying down under their desks and waiting to be killed, they can instead shelter in the voids by these safe islands.

### **Prepare Yourself and Your Family Now**

- Have an earthquake survival kit on hand.
- All family members should know how to turn off gas, water, and electricity.
- Plan family emergency procedures, and make plans for reuniting your family.
- Know emergency telephone numbers (doctor, hospital, police, 911, etc)
- Anchor heavy objects to walls (bookcases, wall units, mirrors, cabinets, etc.)
- Never place heavy objects over beds, and keep heavy objects lower than head height of shortest member of family.

### **After an Earthquake**

- Check for injuries-provide first aid.
- Check for safety-check for gas, water, sewage breaks; check for downed power lines and shorts; turn off appropriate utilities.
- Check for building damage and potential problems during aftershocks.
- Clean up dangerous spills.
- Wear shoes
- Turn on the radio and listen for instructions from public safety agencies.
- Use telephone for emergencies, only.

**May Allah Keep Us All Safe. Ameen**