

Department of Systemwide Safety and Emergency Management
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

Earthquake Safety Information

The following information was obtained from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to be reviewed and implemented in the event of severe weather. Administrators should share this information with students, staff, and parents, as appropriate. Also, NOAA weather radios and emergency phones should be monitored continuously. Questions regarding this information may be directed to the Department of Systemwide Safety and Emergency Management at 240-740-3066.

About Earthquakes

An earthquake is ground shaking caused by a sudden movement of rock in the earth's crust. Such movements occur along faults, which are thin zones of crushed rock separating blocks of crust. When one block suddenly slips and moves relative to the other along a fault, the energy released creates vibrations called seismic waves that radiate up through the crust to the earth's surface, causing the ground to shake. Earthquakes can last a few seconds or several minutes, and they can occur at any time of the day or night and at any time of the year.

Immediate Response - Drop, Cover, and Hold!

If you are inside a building when an earthquake occurs:

- Stay where you are until the shaking stops. Do not run outside. Do not get in a doorway as this does not provide protection from falling or flying objects, and you may not be able to remain standing.
- Drop down to the floor onto your hands and knees so the earthquake doesn't knock you down.
- Cover your head and neck with your arms to protect yourself from falling debris. If you are in danger from falling objects, and you can move safely, crawl for additional cover under a sturdy desk or table.
- If there is low furniture or an interior wall or corner nearby, and the path is clear, these can also provide additional cover.
- Stay away from glass, windows, outside doors and walls, and anything that could fall, such as light fixtures or furniture.
- Hold onto any sturdy covering so you can move with it until the shaking stops. Stay where you are until the shaking stops.

If getting safely to the floor to take cover won't be possible:

- Identify an inside corner of the room away from windows and objects that could fall on you. The Earthquake Country Alliance advises getting as low as possible to the floor. People who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices should lock their wheels and remain seated until the shaking stops. Protect your head and neck with your arms, a pillow, a book, or whatever is available.

If you are outside when you feel the shaking:

- Move away from buildings, streetlights, utility wires, and anything else that could fall over and cause injury. Once in the open, “Drop, Cover, and Hold.” Stay there until the shaking stops.

If you are in a moving vehicle when you feel the shaking:

- If you are in a moving vehicle, stop as quickly and safely as possible and stay in the vehicle. Avoid stopping near or under buildings, trees, overpasses, and utility wires. Proceed cautiously once the earthquake has stopped. Avoid roads, bridges, or ramps that the earthquake may have damaged.

After the shaking stops, evaluate your surroundings for potential hazards.

- If there is a clear path to safety, leave the building and go to an open space away from damaged areas.
- If you are trapped, do not move about or kick up dust.
- If you have a cell phone with you, use it to call or text for help.
- Tap on a pipe or wall or use a whistle, if you have one, so that rescuers can locate you.
- Once safe, monitor local news reports via battery operated radio, TV, social media, and cell phone text alerts for emergency information and instructions.
- Be prepared to “Drop, Cover, and Hold” in the likely event of aftershocks.

Additional information about earthquake safety can be found at the FEMA website—
<http://www.ready.gov/earthquakes>.