



Everyone Has A Role In Earthquake Preparedness

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| City of Vancouver

Did you know that a year after The Great East Japan Earthquake, more than 5,400 businesses had yet to reopen and 1,000 businesses were bankrupt within one and a half years? The upcoming Great British Columbia ShakeOut drill, taking place on October 17th, is the perfect reminder that we live in a seismically active area. While we've been lucky not to have any damaging earthquakes in many years, we still need to prepare for one. The ShakeOut drill is not only an opportunity to practice how to 'drop', 'cover', and 'hold', it's a chance to make a family plan with loved ones and think about how best to prepare in your place of work.

Emergencies and disasters are inevitable. The question is not if they will happen, but when. While it is impossible to know the specifics ahead of time, using the best available information to plan for what might happen is the most effective way to be prepared for what does happen. Preparedness is a shared responsibility. Everyone needs to have a plan, both at home and at their workplace. Being prepared means first responders can prioritize helping those who need it most.

As a business/production company/theatre etc., you should start with having a basic preparedness checklist. Understanding the kinds of hazards your workplace may be exposed to is a good way to identify the risks to your business. For example, while on location in the Lower Mainland, it may be worth having emergency plans for flooding or for an earthquake. If on location in northern B.C. or interior B.C. during summer, risk of fires could hamper your activities.

Plan for your business

It's just as important for businesses to plan for emergencies and disasters. Disasters can be devastating for local economies; well-prepared businesses can recover faster and are essential in helping their communities recover. If you own or manage a business, it's important that you have a business continuity plan in place. Do you have the supplies you need at your workplace? Is your workspace safe, or are there hidden hazards you may not know about? Do you know how to reach your staff should an earthquake take place, and do they know what to do and where to go? All of these important questions are covered in the City of Vancouver's **Business and Employer Emergency Preparedness (BEEP) guide**.

For those interested in more information on how to prepare for emergencies such as earthquakes, the City of Vancouver offers frequent (and free!) Neighbourhood

Emergency Personal Preparedness (NEPP) workshops in community centres across Vancouver. You can register for a workshop by visiting vancouver.ca/beprepared.

Have a conversation

Do you know what kinds of hazards exist in your home or workplace? Do you know where to meet your loved ones if you can't meet them at home? These are the simple yet important questions you should discuss with your family and your colleagues. Encourage employees to develop household emergency plans. The City of Vancouver offers a **10-step family emergency plan** template as an easy planning guide to get you and your family started.

Be prepared to have employees trained on basic first aid training and how to aid employees or customers with special needs.

Know how to connect

After an earthquake, typical methods of communication may not be available. Even if the earthquake doesn't damage telecommunication towers, networks may not be able to handle call volumes. You should prioritize text messaging, emails, and app-based communication over phone or video chats, because they are more likely to connect. Have an out-of-town contact everyone in your family can contact.

You should also select a few designated meeting places in case you can't reach your colleagues or family: one should be close to home and one should be further away. Keep in mind children, seniors, pets, and those with disabilities may require some extra planning.

Have what you need to get by

If possible, put aside essential supplies at home such as food, water, flashlights, a first aid kit, and other basic supplies. Critical services like water and gas may not be available after an earthquake; if you have the supplies you need and your home is not damaged, you can stay there even without power or water as long as you have supplies.

You should also put a few essential items

such as copies of important documents and prescriptions for all family members in a go-kit in case you do need to leave after an earthquake.

Get to know your neighbours/ business network partners

Being prepared isn't just about what you have, it's about who you know. After a major emergency such as an earthquake, neighbours need to rely on each other. Whether you live in a house or an apartment building, know who your neighbours are, what skills they have, and what they might need from you. Similarly, it is important to discuss and exchange emergency plans with all the suppliers and service providers.

How the City of Vancouver is preparing

The City of Vancouver is actively planning and preparing for earthquakes and other hazards in a variety of ways. Most recently, the City conducted a full-scale emergency exercise in May 2019, testing the ability to respond to a moderate earthquake. The exercise, which involved over 600 participants included recreation centre evacuations, building and infrastructure inspections, search and rescue operations, and internal and external communications.

Some other key ways the City has worked to improve earthquake response and resilience include the following:

- Upgrades to critical water, sewer and energy systems to increase seismic resilience in the event of an earthquake.
- Development of communications plans, including the establishment of an emergency communications volunteer organization known as **VECTOR**.
- Staff training and exercises for the city's Emergency Operation Centre, Disaster Staging Areas, and other response teams.
- Development and training of Canada Task Force 1, one of five Heavy Urban Search and Rescue operations in Canada.

The City of Vancouver is preparing and planning for emergencies, but everyone has a role to play.