

EARTHQUAKE PROCEDURES

HOW PREPARED ARE WE?

Jamaica is *essentially unprepared* for a catastrophic earthquake. Having no experience with catastrophic type earthquakes, most organisations have done very little to prepare for them; the last two big ones to shake Jamaica was in Kingston on January 14th 1907, and before that Port Royal on June 7th 1692, many of us were not around then. While we cannot predict exactly when an earthquake will occur, we do know that we live on an Island which could have a major earthquake any time, and it is possible for us to do certain things that would greatly minimise its destructiveness.

HOW TO PREPARE

These procedures outlined are simple guidelines that will assist in alleviating fatalities. Nevertheless these procedures can be categorized into three stages.

- BEFORE Preparatory actions.
- DURING Tranquil actions during the event.
- AFTER Recovery and assessment.

BEFORE AN EARTHQUAKE

1. Potential hazards at home and the workplace should be removed or corrected.
2. All doors should be pushed to exit building.
3. Emergency exits should be accessible and clear of obstructions.
4. Family members or staff must have knowledge of evacuation procedures.
5. Family members or staff must have knowledge of the assemble area.
6. Family members or staff must have knowledge of the Triage area.
7. Designate family members or staff as search and rescue team.
8. Appoint family members or staff as first aid team.
9. Practise earthquake drills frequently as is possible.

DURING AN EARTHQUAKE

1. Stay calm.
2. If you are indoors, remain indoors
3. Get under sturdy furniture, and doorways.
4. Stay away from glass windows and glass doors.
5. If you are outside stay in the open away from buildings and power lines.
6. If you are travelling in a vehicle it should be brought to a stop, away from buildings and power lines.
7. Remain in the vehicle.

AFTER AN EARTHQUAKE

1. Evacuate the building as soon as the shaking stops.
2. Get to your assemble area and remain there.
3. Do a roll call of family members.
4. Activate your search and rescue team.
5. Activate your medical team.
6. Check for injuries and provide first aid.
7. Carefully inspect exterior of building for cracks in wall.
8. Turn off all electrical power.

Because we operate in an environment that is prone to earthquakes, flood and hurricanes, we must be prepared to implement the necessary procedures to ensure that family members or staff can respond effectively to any type of disasters. Regular training should be in place to co-ordinate the use of resources, both human and material, for the saving of life and property.