

ESP

FOCUS

Back to School



A Safe Place to Learn

There is a lot that can be done by school officials to plan for disasters, to limit the risk, to protect the safety of students and teachers, and to ensure that schools recover quickly. However, the clock is ticking. The time to prepare is right now.

Many states now require specific disaster preparedness activities in their school systems. In California, for example, schools are required to have a disaster plan, to hold periodic "Drop, Cover, and Hold On" drills and to hold educational and training programs for students and staff. Whether mandated or not, all schools should have an emergency response plan that addresses the following:

- Identification of hazards and steps to reduce the risk
- Evacuation plans and routes
- Needs of students and staff with disabilities
- Onsite shelter plans
- Emergency supplies and equipment
- Plans for releasing students and school personnel
- Communication

Parents should know the policies and procedures of their children's school during times of disaster or crisis. Parents should also make sure the school has their updated emergency contact information. Keep your children's school emergency release card current.

While planning for a future disaster may seem overwhelming, it is not impossible, and the benefits far outweigh the time and trouble it takes to prepare a school plan.

It is also important for schools to plan in advance to deal with the problem of psychological trauma after a disaster. Signs to look for include withdrawn and/or more aggressive students, those acting overly responsible or parental, children who are edgy, jumpy, quick to anger, out of control or with a non-caring attitude. Encourage teachers to discuss these and other changes in behavior with parents.

The reverse side of this Focus Sheet offers additional information for preparing your school and students for the next disaster. You can help take the terror out of terrorism, earthquakes and other disasters by preparing in advance.

Check these websites

- www.shakeout.org
- www.earthquakecountry.org (Earthquake Country Alliance/SCEC)
- www.capso.org (California Association of Private School Organizations (CAPSO))
- www.cert-la.com (Community Emergency Response Team)
- www.espfocus.org (Emergency Survival Program)
- www.fema.gov/kids
- www.lacoe.edu/ (Los Angeles County Office of Education)
- www.redcross.org/disaster/masters (American Red Cross)
- www.teamsafe-t.org (Team SAFE-T)



SEPTEMBER

www.espfocus.org

What You Can Do Now

Parents have an important role in assuring the safety of their children whether at school or at home. The suggestions below are guidelines for you to follow.

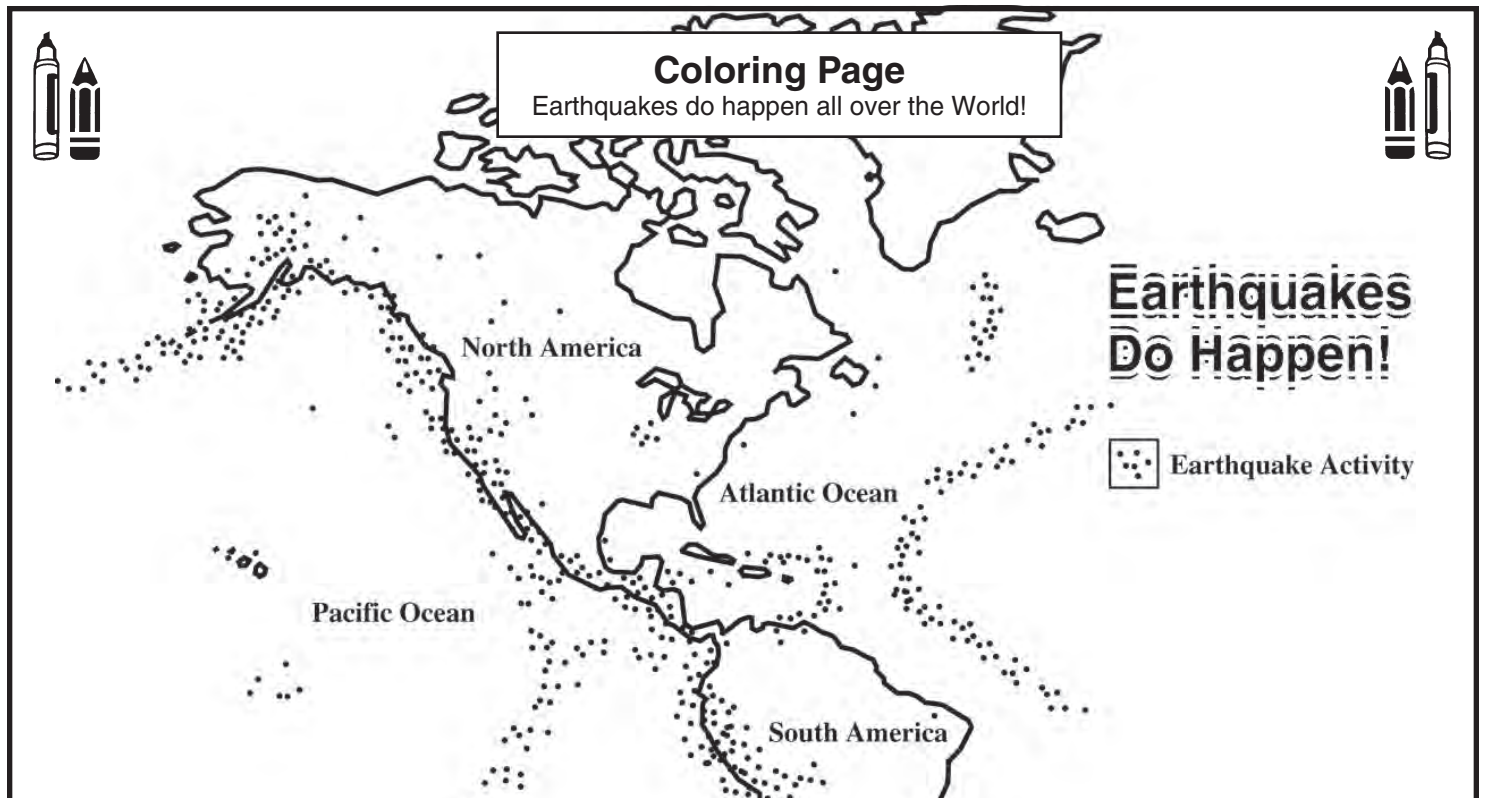
- Prepare a school emergency supplies kit for each of your children. Let them help you put the kit together. What they have on hand when a disaster occurs could make a big difference in their safety and survival. A list of some of the recommended items that could be included in each child's emergency supplies kit is as follows:
 - Emergency drinking water (3-day to one-week supply)
 - Non-perishable food (3-day to one-week supply)
 - First aid kit and book
 - Essential medications
 - Lightstick or a flashlight with extra batteries
 - Identification card
 - Family photos
 - Towelettes
 - Blanket
 - Medical release card
 - Emergency telephone numbers
 - Change of clothing
 - Favorite toy

- Teach your children what to do in an emergency and make sure they know their own names, addresses, and telephone numbers as well as the full names and contact information for parents and a second adult emergency contact.

A Special Note About Children

If earthquakes scare us because we feel out of control, think how much more true this must be for children, who already must depend on adults for so much of their lives. It is important to spend time with children in your care before the next earthquake to explain why earthquakes occur. Involve them in developing your disaster plan, preparing earthquake bags, and practicing "Drop, Cover, and Hold On." Consider simulating post-earthquake conditions by going without electricity or tap water for a few hours.

After the earthquake, remember that children will be under great stress. They may be frightened, their routine will probably be disrupted, and the aftershocks won't let them forget the experience. Adults tend to leave their children in order to deal with the many demands of the emergency, but this can be devastating to children. Extra contact and support from parents in the early days will pay off later. Whenever possible, include them in the recovery process.



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