

Earthquakes

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is the shaking, rolling or sudden shock of the earth's surface. Earthquakes happen along "fault lines" in the earth's crust. Earthquakes can be felt over large areas although they usually last less than one minute. Earthquakes cannot be predicted -- although scientists are working on it!

Most of the time, you will notice an earthquake by the gentle shaking of the ground. You may notice hanging plants swaying or objects wobbling on shelves. Sometimes you may hear a low rumbling noise or feel a sharp jolt. A survivor of the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco said the sensation was like riding a bicycle down a long flight of stairs.

The

intensity of an earthquake can be measured. One measurement is called the Richter scale. Earthquakes below 4.0 on the Richter scale usually do not cause damage, and earthquakes below 2.0 usually can't be felt. Earthquakes over 5.0 on the scale can cause damage. A magnitude 6.0 earthquake is considered strong and a magnitude 7.0 is a major earthquake. The Northridge Earthquake, which hit Southern California in 1994, was magnitude 6.7.

Earthquakes are sometimes called temblors, quakes, shakers or seismic activity. The most important thing to remember during an earthquake is to DROP, COVER and HOLD ON. So remember to DROP to the floor and get under something for COVER and HOLD ON during the shaking.



Federal Emergency Management Agency