

EARTHQUAKE WARNING CALIFORNIA



Earthquake Warning California

Scientists are still unable to predict earthquakes, but thanks to new technology, individuals and organizations can potentially receive a few seconds of notice to take appropriate safety precautions before an earthquake strikes. Earthquake Warning California utilizes the California Integrated Seismic Network, which is a partnership between Cal OES, United States Geological Survey (USGS), UC Berkeley, the California Institute of Technology, and the California Geological Survey. The system uses ground-motion sensors to detect earthquakes that have already started and estimates their size, location, and impact. When it detects a significant magnitude, the system issues a ShakeAlert® Message, providing a warning before shaking begins.

To receive earthquake warnings, individuals and family members should download the MyShake App and ensure phone settings are adjusted to receive emergency alerts, including:

Earthquakes can happen in California at any time, and medical facilities should be appropriately prepared to react and respond quickly when an earthquake occurs. The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) invites medical facilities, including but not limited to hospitals, outpatient centers, long-term care settings, and community clinics, to learn about how they can receive warning before shaking is felt with California's comprehensive earthquake warning program, "Earthquake Warning California." The program includes tools and resources to help warn Californians and visitors as soon as shaking is detected.

This document is intended to supplement existing emergency preparedness procedures. Please review existing organizational earthquake preparedness plans for full instructions on how to proceed during an emergency.

- **Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs):** No-cost text messages for emergency situations (magnitude 5.0 or higher and Modified Mercalli Intensity IV shaking);
- **MyShake App:** Free smartphone app that provides iPhone and Android users with audio and visual warnings (magnitude 4.5 or higher and Modified Mercalli Intensity III shaking). Available in the Apple App and Google Play stores; and
- **Android Earthquake Alerts:** Android phones with updated operating systems are automatically subscribed to Android Earthquake Alerts, which uses the same technology as the MyShake App.

Benefits and Applications

Medical facilities and personnel play a critical role in the aftermath of an earthquake by helping injured individuals. Earthquake Warning California can help medical personnel prepare for an earthquake and assist patients to a safe area. In addition, Earthquake Warning California can warn medical personnel that may be performing surgery or other medical procedures, giving them time to protect themselves and their patients.

Medical facilities can incorporate Earthquake Warning California resources as follows:

- Integrate a hard-wired interface between Earthquake Warning California resources and the medical setting alarm system
- Consider additional warning tools such as television screens or blinking lights to help warn patients with disabilities
- In the event of an earthquake warning, train healthcare providers and staff to shout to others to drop, cover, and hold on, and to do the same themselves
- If possible, staff should use a Public Address (PA) system to warn patients and others on the premises to take cover if a warning is issued
- If possible, lock wheels on gurneys or wheelchairs and tell patients to protect their head and neck with a pillow.

Getting Facility, Personnel, and Volunteers Prepared

Careful and thorough planning can help ensure the safety of individuals during and after an earthquake or other natural disaster, and help medical personnel and volunteers move quickly after an earthquake to aid those in need.

Below are five tips that can aid in the preparation process:

- 1. Develop an Emergency Preparedness and Mitigation Plan.** All medical settings must have an emergency preparedness and mitigation plan to protect the safety of employees, volunteers, visitors, and patients. A comprehensive preparedness and mitigation plan must include pre-incident awareness and training for staff, building and equipment assessment, and sharing plan with key stakeholders and community partners (e.g. neighboring hospitals, outpatient overflow). In addition, medical settings must develop an emergency staffing and communication plan to enable leaders to make decisions about shifts, rotations, and coordination during and after an emergency. Review protocols early and often, and identify / remediate where gaps may exist.
- 2. Understand Equipment Functions and Capabilities.** Some medical machinery and other essential equipment have automated safety features to power down quickly in the event of an emergency. Discuss options for how to safely and quickly power down medical machinery, and secure equipment in place that could potentially fall and injure those in the immediate area. Determine which safety features are automated and which require a manual switch.
- 3. Download the MyShake App and Adjust Phone Settings.** The MyShake App, Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs), and Android Earthquake Alerts can supplement existing warning systems and give medical personnel time to take cover before shaking starts. Medical settings should demonstrate to employees and volunteers what an earthquake warning sounds and looks like. Ensure staff knows how to enable mobile devices to receive earthquake warnings.
- 4. Add Earthquake Warning to Emergency Response Plans.** Incorporate action items into emergency plans for when an earthquake warning is issued. This may include putting equipment into safety mode or assisting patients to take cover. Medical facilities should include earthquake warnings into emergency drills and consider what actions should be taken for all settings that staff might be in, including in the office, an operating room, in transit (e.g., ambulance, helicopter), or in the field.
- 5. Spread the Word.** Medical facilities should consider posting information about actions to take in places where employees and volunteers can regularly review them, such as break rooms, company newsletters, bathrooms, or other highly trafficked areas. Remind medical staff and volunteers to have a plan for their households in addition to the workplace. Encourage community partners, social services, and other organizations that regularly interact with personnel and patients to adopt Earthquake Warning California into their own emergency response plans.

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For more information:

Earthquake Warning California is managed by Cal OES. It provides individuals, organizations, and communities with easily accessible earthquake warning and emergency preparedness information, as well as resources. For the latest news and resources, visit earthquake.ca.gov. Send questions or comments regarding this fact sheet to earthquakeinfo@caloes.ca.gov.

For information, questions, or comments relating to this fact sheet, email Cal OES at: earthquakeinfo@caloes.ca.gov.