

Disasters: A Safety Guide –Earthquakes–

1. Prologue

Japan has more earthquakes than almost any other country in the world.

An earthquake occurs very suddenly, with no warning. The most important thing to do if an earthquake strikes is to stay calm. But first you should be prepared.

2. At time like this... Go to nearest disaster shelter

Every community in Japan has an established system for earthquake preparedness. It is important to understand the disaster-prevention system in your area, including the precautions to take beforehand so that you and your family are fully prepared. Also, there are some basic rules for what to do during and after an earthquake. The information presented here may help to save your life.

If an earthquake strikes, your local government will initiate rescue operations, including the provision of food and drinking water for those who need it. Schools or other public buildings will be used as shelters for people whose homes or neighborhoods are unsafe. Please visit your town or ward office at your earliest convenience to obtain information about disaster shelters and evacuation routes, so you will know where to go if there is an earthquake.

3. At time like this... Call rescue

In case of fire or personal injury, or any other emergency, pick up the phone and dial 1-1-9.

After dialing 1-1-9, you will be asked if there is a fire, or if an ambulance is needed.

KAJI means fire.

Q-Q means emergency, and Q-Q-sha means ambulance.

Please respond by saying either KAJI or Q-Q. Then tell the operator your address, your name, and the number of the phone you are calling from.

It may be convenient to write out your address and phone number in Japanese, and place them on the wall next to your telephone, so you can stay calm and efficient in case of an emergency.

If you are using a public telephone, first push the red button, then dial 1-1-9.

If you have difficulty explaining the situation in Japanese, try to find someone nearby to help you.

In a large-scale disaster such as an earthquake, it may be impossible to reach the 1-1-9 operator. Also, fire and rescue teams may not be able to respond quickly because of damage to transportation routes or the large volume of calls. Therefore, it is up to each person to be prepared, and to know what to do in case an earthquake strikes.

4. Rules for Dealing with Earthquake

Here are some basic rules to follow.

If you are in a house or building that is shaking violently, get under a table or other sturdy piece of furniture. Wait until the shaking stops.

After the shaking has stopped, or if the building is shaking only slightly, open doors and windows. These are your avenues of escape if the building is damaged or a stronger tremor occurs.

A strong tremor will last no more than a minute. Do not rush outside. Keep away from anything that might fall, such as window glass, signboards, shelves, or roof tiles.

If you are cooking with a gas burner, turn it off immediately. If for any reason you cannot, then make sure you turn it off as soon as the shaking has stopped. Never leave the house with the gas on.

After an earthquake, walk slowly and carefully, as there may be broken glass or other objects on the floor.

5. Prepare for Earthquake

Earthquakes strike suddenly. The only way to be ready is to prepare in advance. Here are three simple precautions you can take to make your home more earthquake-proof. Please do these three things in the next few days.

First, clear bedrooms of all objects which could collapse or fall on a sleeping person.

Second, attach cabinets, shelves and other large furniture firmly to the wall, using bolts or bonding materials.

Third, check that your fire extinguishers are in working order.

If you are outside when an earthquake occurs, keep away from objects or structures that could collapse, such as walls made of concrete block or stone.

If you are near the seashore, remember that a tsunami wave could arrive at any moment. Move to high ground as soon as the shaking has stopped.

If you find a person trapped by fallen debris, do what you can to free them. Start by asking neighbors or passers-by to help. Work carefully and cooperatively.

When leaving your home after an earthquake, shut off all electric and gas lines. Switch off the main breaker, and close all gas valves.

Listen to radio or television broadcasts, and follow any evacuation instructions. Emergency information in English is broadcast on NHK Radio 2, and the audio sub-channel of NHK TV. For the audio sub-channel, press the button ordinarily used for bilingual broadcasts.

6. Epilogue

Thank you for your attention. These basic rules can help you and your family survive an earthquake, so please note them down and remember them.