



Residential and Commercial
Property Inspections

Earthquake Proof Your Home

How well your family and your residence will do in a major earthquake will be a combination of factors such as the strength of the quake and your proximity to the epicenter, however the number one factor is how well the structure and its contents are prepared for a major shaking. And, that is directly related to how well a building is constructed and how well all the contents are braced. That is it. The 1994 Northridge Earthquake proved that for us.

I was hired as one of the inspectors to investigate the deadly collapse of the Northridge Meadows apartment complex. In that investigation we saw that there were many buildings adjacent to that collapsed building that were less damaged or hardly damaged at all. That pretty much rules out location since all of those buildings were sitting directly over the epicenter of the quake. The major factor that caused that particular building to collapse was its inability to withstand the shaking. Frankly, that building was poorly designed and built.

Consequently, the best way to earthquake proof your residence is to see to it that the structure is reasonably well designed and built to withstand a seismic event.

The first thing to do is to have the property inspected by an experienced property inspector or structural engineer. Once the building is found to be up to a good standard and then follow the next steps.

Install a seismic shut-off valve on the main gas line. Understand how it works and gather any tools needed and keep them handy.

Know where and how to operate the main electric and water services, and gather any tools needed and keep them handy.

Have the water heater properly braced and learn how to drain drinking water from it if needed.

Secure all tall and heavy objects so they will not topple and fall such as bookcases and hanging plants.

Place breakable and heavy objects on lower shelves.

Secure all smaller objects such as valuable knickknacks or vases.

Install latches that keep upper cabinet doors from swinging open during seismic shaking.

Know the safe spots in each room such as corners and away from window glass.

Have a secondary exit worked out from the upper floors in case the staircase is blocked, damaged or burning.

Look at the garage for things that could fall and damage the vehicles and secure them.

Create a Disaster Plan including a designated meeting place outside the residence. Train and drill the family on all aspects of the plan so it can be executed in the dark under stressful conditions.

Create a disaster kit with water and medical supplies. Organize a packet with cash, copies of all valuable documents and emergency phone numbers. There is more to know about this, so for more information and a list of links to very helpful sites on earthquake preparedness and disaster assistance visit the “Earthquake” page at LaRoccaInspect.com.

Get prepared now; be at cause over your environment so you will be less the effect of it.

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