
CHAPTER V - NATURAL DISASTERS

1. EARTHQUAKES

Missions which could experience shocks of considerable magnitude are those situated on or near the world's earthquake belts which are located in the following areas:

- Pacific coasts of North and South America
- Eastern coast of Japan
- Mid Pacific
- East Indies
- West Indies
- New Zealand
- Southern edge of the Himalayas
- Greece, Turkey, Italy, Mediterranean to Central Atlantic

An earthquake is often announced by a loud noise like the rushing of a train. Initial earth movements and swaying of structures caused by an earthquake could be followed some time later (often hours or days) by aftershocks, usually decreasing in strength.

The actual movement of the ground in an earthquake is seldom the direct cause of death or injury. Most casualties result from falling objects and debris, because the shocks can shake, damage or demolish buildings and other structures.

Earthquakes can also trigger landslides and generate tsunamis (seismic sea waves) each of which can cause great damage.

Buildings do not automatically collapse in earthquakes. Some, such as timber frame houses, may withstand shock very well. However, chimneys, parapets, ceiling plaster and light fixtures may fall.

a) Be Prepared

- Review the Mission Personal Safety Contingency Plan and discuss procedures (which may vary from country to country) with your Mission Security Officer.
- Check your home for earthquake hazards. Bolt down or provide other strong support for water heaters and gas appliances, since fire damage can result from broken gas lines and appliance connections. Use flexible connections wherever possible. Place large and heavy objects on lower shelves of cupboards, bookcases, etc.
- Plan ahead and hold occasional home earthquake drills to ensure your family and household staff know what to do. This could avoid injury and panic during an earthquake.
- Teach responsible members of your family and household staff how to turn off electricity at the main switch and gas and water at the main valves.
- Ensure that responsible members of your family know first-aid techniques.
- Always have a battery-powered radio, a flashlight and fresh spare batteries for both handy.