

Many Lamorinda Residents Lack Earthquake Preparedness

Prepared for the Big One? If not, you're in good company.

By Jennifer Wake



Brothers Jefferson, 7, and Jonny Wake, 5, know to stay under a table or desk during an earthquake

Photos Jennifer Wake

Although the recent 5.6 tremor was felt throughout the area and was the topic of conversation for a lot of Lamorinda residents, the likelihood of a small quake pushing people into action to prepare for a larger one is surprisingly low, says Orinda resident and psychiatrist Dr. Harvey Widroe.

Although the U.S. Geological Society says there's a 62 percent chance that at least one 6.7 magnitude quake will hit the Bay Area by 2032, only 17 percent of people in California are prepared for the next big quake. An even lower number of homeowners have earthquake insurance, topping out at only 12 percent.

"Most people don't look at reality objectively because it causes anxiety," Widroe said. "If someone asks if you'll make a plan for what you'd do in an earthquake, they'll say, 'Oh yeah. I'll take care of that tomorrow.'"

Orinda resident Sandy Barnett says she has some water set aside in her home, but that's about it. After the recent quake, a friend of hers gave her information about how to prepare for an earthquake, but all of it seemed overwhelming.

"Where do you put all the stuff?" she said. "Here's my thought: What if I put it all in my garage, and my garage gets crunched? My house has many supplies where I could get them if

I needed to."

During the 1989 Loma Prieta quake, Barnett was standing with her daughter in the near-empty parking lot of the Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church. "I had just shut my door and thought, 'Wow. I'm really strong,' because the car was rocking from the force. Then I looked up and saw the light post swaying and the pavement sort of waving like surf and I said to my daughter, 'We're in the perfect spot.'"

A self-professed optimist, Barnett says she's banking on being in the perfect spot again.

"We all gamble every day. I'm on the highway. I'm in the stock market," Barnett said with a smile. "There are too many variables that you don't know. It's hard to cover all the bases."

Widroe agrees.

"It's a kind of circumscribed reality testing deficit based on denial," he said. "If we really looked at the chance of an accident on the highway, we'd all have one anxiety attack after another. Denial averts anxiety and fear. You couldn't live without those mechanisms."

He recommends keeping it simple.

Lafayette resident Marti Kohen, who has now lived through two major earthquakes in California, took advantage of earthquake preparedness talks at Burton Valley Elementary and purchased ready-made kits sold at the presentation.

"I have an earthquake kit in the house plus we have a Jacuzzi and a water purifier, too," she said. "We also have a generator – just in case – and I have a blanket, water and first aid kit in my car."

Kohen said they bought the



Wind-up flashlights, blankets, water, a hammer and first aid kit are a few recommended items.

generator after enduring a category 5 hurricane with no electricity for three days in the Caribbean.

According to the Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the best defense is to plan ahead, starting by identifying the safe places in every room of your house.

"During a large earthquake, get under a sturdy table or desk and hold on to it," they state on their Web site. "If you're not near a table or desk, cover your face and head with your arms and stand or crouch in a strongly supported doorway, or brace yourself in an inside corner of the house or building, but stay clear of windows or glass that could shatter or objects that could fall on you."

They also advise if you're inside, stay inside. "Many people are injured at entrances of buildings by falling debris."

For most people, a little planning can go a long way.

"We should have a general, one-size-fits-all disaster plan," Widroe said. "Don't task the imagination. Keep a few simple things in mind. Once you start amplifying the list, you get scared, you start using denial, and you toss the list and forget it."

For information on earthquake preparedness plans, you can visit the CDC's Web site:

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/earthquakes/prepared.asp>

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<http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/html/read.html>

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Jefferson Wake, 7, practices "Under, Cover, and Wait" in earthquake drill at his home

Edy Schwartz: Working Together to Find Solutions

By Sophie Braccini



Edy Schwartz, Person of Year

Edy Schwartz is the new "Person of the Year" elected by the members of the Chamber of Commerce of Moraga. Chamber President Jenny Boyd presented her with a certificate on Thursday November 8th, at the end of Mayor Metcalf's "State of the Town" address.

Schwartz's recognition was due to her role in expanding the reach of the Chamber of Commerce and starting the "Shop Moraga First" movement. Schwartz and colleague Ellen Bean personally visited all the town's retailers to urge them to join the new Chamber. The re-

sults speak for themselves; over a one-year period the Chamber membership increased from 40 to 100 members.

Schwartz moved to Moraga with husband Jeff, her high school sweetheart, in 1967. Here she raised her two children, John and Cathy. An educator by training, she substituted both at Rheem and Los Perales. She was involved in the incorporation of Moraga, the founding of the library and many of the groups that make raising children in Moraga such a great experience:

Brownies, Lafayette-Moraga Youth Association, and the School Site Committee. She got involved as well with citizens' movements in the Bay Area that work on educating people on sociological and global issues. There she refined her organizational skills and developed her vision of the power of education to make the democratic process effective.

In 1985 she went back to school and got a Masters degree in Psychology and Counseling and operated a private practice for five years in Lafayette. After twenty years of intense activity, Edy decided to take a break.

She wanted to bring balance to her life and assimilate what had been learned along the way. Three years ago, she heard President Bush talk about the importance of democracy in the world and asked herself how participative democracy was doing at home. She contacted a core group of twelve friends and formed the Moraga Citizens Network, an association that aims at disseminating information about town's issues and encourages Moraga residents to get involved and let their voices be heard. MCN has now more than 500 members and can be credited for improvements in the participative process in Moraga politics.

During one of the meetings Edy attended, she learned about the sales tax deficit Moraga suffers from and decided to join the Chamber of Commerce as a private member. She was struck by the small number of retailers that were members at the time, and thought that creating a more vibrant business community around the Chamber would help. But that wasn't enough.

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