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Earthquake Preparedness: Even a Little Can Help a Lot

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While the tragedy in Japan is still fresh in our minds, all Lamorinda residents are encouraged to review their level of earthquake preparedness. After a large earthquake local supplies of food and water can be quickly depleted. Since roads and bridges are likely to be damaged or blocked, aid may not be able to reach you for 3-7 days or even longer, particularly if you live away from the town center or are in a remote area such as Moraga or Canyon. The good news is that by putting away some modest stores of extra water and food, as well as a few other emergency supplies, you can make a big difference for your family. By preparing now you can reduce your risks of deprivation after a quake.

This is a good time to check on your stored food and water supplies - you should have enough for at least 7 days. Experts recommend that you store 1 gallon of water per person per day which equates to 28 gallons for a family of four to survive one week. Check your stored emergency food as well. This is a good time to rotate out the old and purchase new, so your supplies stay fresh and palatable. Canned food is the logical choice for emergency supplies so remember to have an extra can opener nearby. Don't forget that your pets will need food and water for that same length of time!

Every family should have a first aid kit. Some of the contents may have expiration dates and need rotating just like your food stores. Also check that your emergency communication plan is up to date - have any family members moved or changed their telephone numbers in the past year? April is a good month to check emergency radio and flashlight batteries. Also check, shake and test fire extinguishers and if necessary, have them recharged or replace them. Finally, since earthquakes can cause gas line leaks that trigger fires, you should know where your gas meter is, how to determine whether you have a gas leak, and how to turn off your gas at the meter if necessary.

Each family should be as prepared as possible for the Big One. However, it is much easier to get and stay motivated if families join with others in their neighborhood to discuss these issues. Neighbors working together make this all more fun too. Emergency preparedness checklists are available on-line at www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/earthquake/info_homeowners.shtm. Check with your local chapter of CERT to find out what emergency training resources are available in your local area. In Moraga there is a dedicated group of CERT trained volunteers that help neighborhood groups in the town get organized. They'll even come to your house and give free presentations and provide other resource materials. Moraga residents can contact them at MoragaNEP@gmail.com.

It only takes a few hours to make a big difference in your level of preparedness. Don't delay!

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[back](#)

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