

Basic School Earthquake Drill Ideas

The Great British Columbia ShakeOut

British Columbia is located in a seismically-active region where a few thousand earthquakes occur each year. Although only a small number of these earthquakes are large enough to cause damage, the threat of a major earthquake in the province is real. On the third Thursday in October, a locally-driven, province-wide “Drop, Cover, and Hold On” drill will take place called “The Great British Columbia ShakeOut.” All residents across British Columbia are encouraged to take part in this largest earthquake drill in Canadian history!

In addition to the “Drop, Cover, Hold On” drill, schools are encouraged to practise portions of their emergency plan, such as simulating an evacuation, involving parents in the pick-up of students and other emergency response drills. The ShakeOut BC drill is planned to occur during the morning; however, the drill can be carried out during the afternoon if it is more appropriate for your school schedule. **Schools are requested to register at www.ShakeOutBC.ca.**

Thank you for being a part in making your school a safer and better prepared place for students and staff and for expanding your efforts in emergency preparedness. The instructions on the following pages can be used or adapted for earthquake drills *anywhere* and *anytime*, not just for the annual ShakeOut BC drill. The following drill guidelines are designed for schools and using the general earthquake response of “Drop, Cover, and Hold On” (www.dropcoverholdon.org) as its foundation.

We are asking schools to join us in the basic ShakeOut earthquake drill – **Drop** to the ground, **Cover** (under a sturdy table or desk), and **Hold On** (to legs of desk until shaking stops) and count the duration of the earthquake; once it stops, count to 60 for safety.

Basic - Simple: “Drop, Cover, and Hold On” Drill and Building Evacuation

This standard drill and evacuation uses simple steps to inform all teachers and students how to perform “Drop, Cover, and Hold On” – a quake-safe action designed to protect lives and prevent

injuries from falling furniture and flying objects that can become projectiles during ground shaking. Teachers and students may then evacuate the building according to the school disaster plan, as required for an earthquake safety drill.

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BEFORE the Drill

1. Register your school at www.ShakeOutBC.ca as an official participant in the Great British Columbia ShakeOut (ShakeOut BC).
2. Instruct your teachers in how to lead their classes in the drill.
3. Encourage students' families to register to participate in the ShakeOut as individuals at www.shakeoutbc.ca/register so they can be counted in the drill and learn more about emergency preparedness.
4. (Optional) Download realistic sound effects and safety information to play during your drill by downloading recordings from www.ShakeOutBC.ca.

DURING the Drill

1. Via the public announcement (PA) system, alarms, or verbal direction (in the event of a real earthquake, your signal will be the beginning of shaking itself):

Announce that the earthquake drill has begun and instruct staff and students to “Drop, Cover, and Hold On” or play the audio recording on your PA or classroom computers.

Count seconds out loud for the duration of the quake. This will help keep students focused and calm and will allow you to identify how long the earthquake lasts. The longer it lasts, the more cautious everyone will need to be.

When the shaking stops (or when the all clear sounds) count to 60. Suggest that while under a sturdy desk or table, students and teachers look around at what might fall on them in a real earthquake. These should be secured or moved after the drill.

2. If not using audio tape, then after at least one minute, announce that the shaking is over.
3. Have teachers, students and staff follow school evacuation procedures according to the school disaster plan. (Evacuation may not be automatic after an earthquake.)
4. *If an aftershock occurs while exiting, “Drop, Cover, and Hold On” until the shaking stops. **Crouch rather than dropping to knees to avoid injury from debris.***
5. Take your classroom Student List and your Emergency Grab & Go Bag. Make sure these stay with the person actually escorting the class to the Safe Meeting Place.
6. Use the BUDDY SYSTEM. Classes should exit in pairs with one teacher in front and one in the back. Take a few seconds to check briefly with neighbouring teachers to see if they are in need. Escort your class(es) to their designated Safe Meeting Place.
Use suggested evacuation routes or an alternate route if yours is blocked or unsafe.
Use 4 Evacuation Rules – Don't Talk! Don't Push! Don't Run! Don't turn back!
Check that exit routes are clear. Move directly away from the building when exiting. Students should cover their heads with their bag or book. Do NOT use any elevators.
7. This is a teaching/learning moment!

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AFTER the Drill

1. Debrief together in your classes and again at staff meetings. Ask for feedback on the reaction of students, on how the drill went and any concerns. Drills are meant to suggest ways to improve.
2. Review your School Disaster Preparedness Plan and schedule your next earthquake drill. It is recommended that three (3) earthquake drills be held each school year (in addition to and separate from fire drills).
3. Discuss what might be different if this was a real earthquake rather than just a drill.

Brainstorm ideas on how schools may need to deal with these issues:

How will you direct students, teachers, and staff during and immediately following the shaking?

- Have emergency supplies and comfort kits for staff and students been updated?
- Do you have local emergency contacts/student release forms for most families?
How will you communicate with parents/guardians?
- Consider how your school will communicate with the school district. (Is there a communications plan?)
- How will you communicate your status (i.e. building condition, injuries, students not picked up)?
- Has staff been assigned emergency response roles? Who would be the Incident Commander? Who will be in charge of student release/family reunification? Who is the First Aid Manager?
- Does your community have a local emergency management office? If so, have you contacted them to find out what the community plan is?
- If your facility is in a coastal area, consider whether or not you will need to have plans to evacuate to higher ground.

Identify who is authorized to make and communicate post-earthquake/disaster decisions.

How will you utilize teachers and staff personnel for earthquakes especially if the school building cannot be immediately reoccupied?

What other emergencies or disaster could occur in your area of BC such as floods, forest fires, landslides, severe storms, etc.?

4. Encourage staff and students to prepare for emergencies/disasters at home using BC's by visiting www.preparedbc.ca.

Optional:

Conduct an evacuation of the school according to your emergency plan.

Add a student release drill – have parents participate.

Set-up an Incident Command Post.

Practice First Aid procedures.