

Earthquake Warning California For Higher Education Settings

Don't Get Caught Off Guard

Earthquakes can happen in California at any time. Higher education settings should be appropriately prepared to react and respond quickly when an earthquake occurs, including using earthquake warnings as part of their preparedness efforts.

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) invites faculty, staff, students, and school administrators to learn about important resources that can help them to prepare and respond when an earthquake happens. This fact sheet outlines some of the resources available through "Earthquake Warning California," California's statewide earthquake warning system, and how they can be applied in higher education settings.

This document is meant to supplement existing emergency preparedness procedures and help all Californians to learn about available earthquake warning tools and resources to help ensure their safety. Higher education settings should review existing campus earthquake preparedness plans for full information on what to do in an emergency situation.

Earthquake Warning California

Scientists are still unable to predict earthquakes, but thanks to new technology, individuals and organizations can potentially receive a few seconds notice to take appropriate safety precautions before an earthquake strikes. Earthquake Warning California is the first statewide earthquake warning system in the nation, and includes tools such as:

- **Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs)** that deliver no-cost text messages for emergency situations for earthquakes magnitude 5.0 and higher;
- **MyShake App**, a free smartphone application that provides users with an audio and visual warning for earthquakes magnitude 4.5 and higher; and
- **Android Alerts** that use the same ground sensor technology as the MyShake App and are automatically included in Android phones with updated operating systems.

Earthquake Warning California uses technology to detect earthquakes that have already started and ground motion sensors to estimate the earthquake size, location, and impact. When the estimate predicts a strong enough magnitude, the Earthquake Warning California quickly issues a warning through its various communication channels

(MyShake App, etc.) to warn mobile device users nearby that shaking is about to occur. When users receive a warning, they should immediately take steps to protect themselves, such as to drop to the ground, cover their heads with their arms, and hold onto their necks with both hands until shaking stops.

Benefits and Applications

Certain settings in higher education will post above-average risks in the event of an earthquake, including science labs, libraries, and buildings known to have structural hazards. Most higher education schools in California already conduct earthquake training and drills for students and staff on campus on an annual basis. Most campuses are also equipped with a Public Announcement (PA) system that can communicate verbal messages and announcements.

Higher education institutions can incorporate Earthquake Warning California resources as follows:

- Integrate a hard-wired interface between the earthquake warning system and the school's PA or alarm system, and in residential areas such as dorm rooms or fraternity / sorority houses
- For special needs students, consider additional warning tools such as television screens or blinking lights
- In the event of an earthquake warning, train teachers and staff to shout to students to drop, cover, and hold, and do the same themselves
- If possible, office staff should use the PA system to warn students and others on the premises to take cover if a warning is issued

Earthquake Warning California Benefits

- Reduce injuries and deaths
- Less stress among students when performing drop, cover, and hold on
- Allow emergency responders to focus on other high priority rescue efforts in event that injuries at higher education settings are minimal
- Student trained to respond to earthquake warnings can educate and benefit their own families and friends

Earthquake Warning California Costs

- Cost of interface between earthquake warning system and PA system
- Installation cost, including IT staff time
- Annual technology cost, such as internet
- Annual maintenance and service cost for equipment
- Limited staff time to teach students about warning system resources and how to take protective actions

Getting Your Campus, Faculty, Staff, and Students Prepared

Careful and thorough planning can help ensure the safety of students, faculty, and staff if an earthquake occurs. Below are a five tips that can aid in the preparation process:

- 1. Building Safety & Securing Furniture.** Ensure school buildings meet current earthquake protection standards. Anchor shelves, audio-visual equipment, and other heavy objects to the wall. Make sure no classroom wall hangings, plants, or other decorative items are in places that can fall and injure students or faculty. For at-home learning, ensure students are aware of places to take shelter in the event of an earthquake, such as under a sturdy table. Do not stand in doorways.
- 2. Create A Campus-Wide Emergency Plan.** Each higher education setting should have a clear campus-wide emergency plan and assign an emergency planning team to develop and finalize an emergency plan that is then shared with all faculty, staff, students, and community partners (e.g., first responders, local emergency agencies). [Campus Ready](#) offers disaster preparedness resources as well as information on campus-wide emergency planning and preparedness. Consider how to tailor instructions for at-home learning environments. All plans must comply with the American with Disabilities Act.
- 3. Implement and Maintain an Emergency Plan.** Administrators should designate a campus emergency planning team and know their roles and responsibilities before, during, and after an emergency. The planning team should hold an annual meeting to educate all stakeholders regarding the emergency plan and the necessary steps to take during a campus emergency, including earthquakes. The team should consider what actions should apply for students and faculty in at-home learning environments. Information should be displayed throughout buildings and/or distributed by email to all stakeholders on a regular basis.
- 4. Schedule Drills.** All faculty and staff should be appropriately trained on actions to take when an earthquake warning is issued through practice drills. These exercises provide opportunities to practice with community partners and identify gaps or weaknesses in the plan. Consider creating and distributing talking points for faculty to provide information to their students in the classroom or virtual class setting, including steps to take in an emergency situation and preparedness tips.
- 5. Download or Enable Earthquake Warning California Resources.** Schools typically have a strong warning system in place and are equipped with automatic alarms

to contact emergency services. Demonstrate to students what an earthquake warning sounds and looks like. Faculty, students, and staff with access to mobile phones should be familiar with enabling phones to sound a warning in an emergency situation, such as ensuring their phone location settings are set to “always on.” Warnings do not override silent and “Do Not Disturb” settings. Consider adding links to find and download the MyShake App to campus websites or in e-newsletters to students and staff

- 6. Encourage Faculty, Staff, and Students to Learn More.** Remind faculty, staff, and students that natural disasters in California can strike at any time. Individuals should know what to do during an earthquake whether they are on campus, at home, or in other settings. Additional resources and information are available at www.earthquake.ca.gov.

For More Information

Earthquake Warning California is a comprehensive program of earthquake warning services managed by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES). The goal of the program is to provide individuals, organizations, and communities with direct and easily accessible emergency preparedness information and resources to keep individuals and families safe in an emergency situation. Visit the Earthquake Warning California website for the latest tools, news, information, and resources: www.earthquake.ca.gov.

For information, questions, or comments relating to this fact sheet, email Cal OES at: earthquakeinfo@caloes.ca.gov