

An earthquake is a sudden shaking of the ground caused by movements of the earth beneath the surface. While the county has little significant seismic activity, earthquakes can occasionally be felt.

While earthquakes have been recorded throughout Mississippi, the greatest risk of earthquake damage in our state comes from the New Madrid seismic zone. The southern end of the 200 mile long zone is in Arkansas, about 40 miles from the northwest corner of Mississippi.

Earthquakes: Know the terms

Aftershock – An earthquake of similar or lesser intensity that follows the main earthquake.

Earthquake- A sudden slipping or movement of a portion of the earth's crust, accompanied and followed by a series of vibrations.

Epicenter – The place on the earth's surface directly above the point on the fault where the earthquake rupture began. Once fault slippage begins, it expands along the fault during the earthquake and can extend hundreds of miles before stopping.

Fault – The fracture across which displacement has occurred during an earthquake. The slippage may range from less than an inch to more than 10 yards in a severe earthquake.

Magnitude – The amount of energy released during an earthquake, which is computed from the amplitude of the seismic waves.

Seismic Waves – Vibrations that travel outward from the earthquake fault at speeds of several miles per second.

Earthquakes: What to do

If indoors:

- DROP to the ground; take COVER by getting under a sturdy table or other piece of furniture and HOLD ON until the shaking stops. If there isn't a table or desk near you, cover your face and head with your arms and crouch in an inside corner of the building.
- Stay away from glass, windows, outside doors and walls, and anything that could fall, such as lighting fixtures or furniture.
- Stay in bed if you are there when the earthquake strikes. Hold on and protect your head with a pillow, unless you are under a heavy light fixture that could fall. In that case, move to the nearest safe place.
- Use a doorway for shelter only if it is in close proximity to you and if you know it is a strongly supported, load bearing doorway.
- Stay inside until shaking stops and it is safe to go outside.

- DO NOT use elevators.

If outdoors:

- Stay there.
- Move away from buildings, streetlights, and utility wires.
- Once in the open, stay there until the shaking stops. The greatest danger exists directly outside buildings, at exits, and alongside exterior walls.

If in a moving vehicle:

- Stop as quickly as safety permits and stay in the vehicle. Avoid stopping near or under buildings, trees, overpasses and utility wires.
- Proceed cautiously once the earthquake has stopped. Avoid roads, bridges, or ramps that might have been damaged by the earthquake.

If trapped under debris:

- Do not light a match.
- Do not move about or kick up dust.
- Cover your mouth with a handkerchief or clothing.
- Tap on a pipe or wall so rescuers can locate you. Use a whistle if possible. Shout only as a last resort. Shouting can cause you to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.