

Opinion: Time to be earthquake prepared

By Sam Rohn

With April recognized as national Earthquake Preparedness Month, Liberty Utilities would like to remind customers about steps they can take to ensure their safety during a natural disaster such as an earthquake.

While most of Liberty Utilities' service territory does not typically experience the magnitude of earthquakes recently seen in Southern California, it is always best to be prepared for any type of natural disaster.

Just like customers should do with their own families, Liberty prepares for potential disasters by having a plan and practicing it with our employees as well as first-responders and others in our community.

Liberty Utilities offers the following safety tips to help customers develop a disaster preparedness plan:

Before:

- Have an emergency plan and conduct drills with your family and childcare providers.
- Know how and when to turn off electricity, water and gas at the main switch or valve.
- Have an emergency supply kit that includes water, food, a first aid kit, blankets, a supply of needed medications, a portable radio, flashlights, a battery powered mobile phone charger, fresh batteries and a crescent or adjustable pipe-type wrench for turning off gas and water mains if necessary.
- Securely anchor water heaters, heavy appliances and heavy furniture that could topple.

- Keep flammable liquids away from water heaters, furnaces, stoves and other potential ignition sources.
- Know the safe spots in each room, like under a sturdy desk or table. Remember to stay away from windows, mirrors and heavy objects that can topple over.
- Plan evacuation routes from home, work, school and other places you frequent.

During:

- If you are indoors, stay inside. Get under a sturdy desk or table.
- If you are outdoors, get into the open, away from buildings, trees, walls and power lines. Be alert for falling debris.
- If you are driving, pull to the side of the road and stop. Do not park under overpasses, power lines, light posts, trees or signs. Stay in your car until the earthquake is over.

After:

- Check for injuries and ensure that everyone is safe.
- If the power goes out, unplug major appliances to prevent possible damage when the power is turned back on. Keep a light on to let you know when power is restored.
- During a power outage, use battery-operated flashlights instead of candles due to the risk of fire. If you must use candles, keep them away from drapes, lamp shades and small children and never leave them unattended.
- Treat all downed power lines as if they are energized and extremely dangerous. Keep yourself and others away from them. Call 911, and then notify Liberty Utilities at 800.782.2506.
- If you smell or hear escaping gas, get everyone outside to a safe location away from the building and upwind where you can no longer smell natural gas. Once outside,

use your phone to call 911 and your gas company (Southwest Gas at 877.860.6020 or PG&E at 800.743.5000).

- If you smell or hear gas escaping, and are able to do so safely, shut off the gas at the main gas service shutoff valve using a suitable tool like a 12 to 15 inch adjustable pipe or crescent-type wrench. The valve is normally located near your gas meter. Do not shut off the valve unless you smell or hear gas escaping.

Once you shut-off the gas, do not turn it back on. If the gas service shutoff valve is closed, contact your gas company or another qualified professional to perform a safety inspection before the gas service is restored and the appliance pilots are lit.

If you suspect a gas leak, do not use electrical switches, appliances or telephones, because sparks can ignite gas from broken lines. Do not check for a gas leak with a match or an open flame. For more safety and readiness information, visit Liberty Utilities' website.

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