

“THE BIG ONE”

It's 4AM, you and your family are huddled in your front yard, the shaking appears to be over. It's been an hour since you all fled your home, but only a couple of minutes since the last strong aftershock.

Everyone is still a little panicky and the kids are complaining that they are cold. The house looks like it will stay standing, although the chimney fell through your neighbor's roof. Their kids no longer live at home, so those bedrooms should be empty. Thankfully the car alarms have stopped. You marvel at how incredibly dark it is.

You decide to make a quick run into the house to retrieve a set of car keys. While inside you are astonished at the damage. Every window is either severely cracked, or just missing. While searching for the keys, you smell what you think is pine-sol mixed with ketchup. There is debris scattered everywhere, from picture frames to your wife's china hutch. You carefully head outside and pile everyone into the minivan to warm up.

After everyone is settled, you tune the radio to the local news stations. No one can tell at this point the magnitude or epicenter of the quake. The heaviest damage looks to be centered around Long Beach. Lots of collapsed buildings, fires and general mayhem. You look to the west and see a glow in the sky, “must be a big fire somewhere” you think to yourself.

Reports keep coming in as you listen. Little to no water pressure for firefighting. Freeway overpasses collapsed, spewing water mains, and lots of reports of buildings burning and or broken. Better turn off the gas to the house just in case.

You decide to take a look around the neighborhood now that your family has calmed down a bit. Dawn should break in a half hour or so. You can see flashlights coming from your next door neighbor Larry's house so you wander over. Larry is still a little freaked out, but his wife is keeping him as calm as she can. You are still surprised at how dark it is.

Finally the sky begins to lighten and the sun peeks over the horizon. The devastation you see takes your breath away. There is a lot of smoke to the west, that fire must still be going. Thankfully the smoke is blowing away from your home.

It has been a couple of hours since the world broke around you. The kids are finally asleep with your wife in the car. You talk yourself into going back into the house.

All the windows except a few will have to be replaced. There is a distinct breeze going through your once cozy home. You can see daylight through the cracks in your fireplace. Part of the kitchen ceiling collapsed. Any and all furniture taller than your waist are knocked over, including the entertainment center, china hutch and all the bookshelves.

In the master bedroom you are amazed that you and your wife escaped without harm. The large painting that once hung over the headboard is broken and laying on your pillow.

The kid's room, the dressers will have to be set upright and the windows repaired, but other than that their rooms don't look any messier than they always do.

A check on the bathrooms reveals one toilet laying on its side and two cracked sinks. The other toilet looks OK, thank goodness for small favors. There isn't much water pressure but the water looks clean. None of the lights work, the refrigerator is standing but the door is ajar and there is food on the floor. You put what you can back inside and close the door, trying to keep what cold there is left inside.

A check through the drawers gives you an old transistor radio and a couple of batteries. Tuning in a local AM station gets you a government recording. "Services may be interrupted for the next ten to fifteen days". The announcer/DJ comes on "Los Angeles, Ventura and parts of Santa Barbara Counties are in a state of emergency. The President has activated the National Guard. FEMA will start relief efforts within the next five days. Stay calm and shelter in place."

Time to wake up your family and figure out how you will get through this.

The point of the above story is to get you to imagine. What if....

- What if the gas was off for a week or more? How would you cook? How would you keep warm? How would you heat water?
- What if the electricity was down for 10 days? What would happen to all the food in your freezer? What would you use for lighting?
- What if the water to your home stopped? Where would you get your water from? How would you filter it?
- What if your home was open to the elements? How would you seal it? What do have now to seal it with? Could you heat it without gas or electricity?

Use your imagination now. Prepare while you have the time and resources are readily available.

Water, Shelter, Food, Energy, Security & First Aid

Tips:

- 72 hour kits are best for work and your automobile (situations where you may have to walk home.)
- At home you want your preparations to revolve around the following:

- **Water** – Store 1 gallon per person per day for drinking, washing and cooking.
 - **Shelter** – Store clear plastic sheeting, duct tape and a staple gun to weather seal your home.
 - **Food** – We all probably have two weeks of food in our pantries. Just remember, the food in your freezer/refrigerator will spoil quickly. The food on your shelves should be easy to prepare and nutritious.
 - **Energy** – This means: lighting (flashlights, lanterns, etc.) camp stoves, fuel for the above, a heater (propane or kerosene) etc. Don't forget to buy an AA operated Carbon Monoxide detector.
 - **Security and Misc. tools** – Security, meaning - keeping the outside – out, and the inside – in. Misc. tools would include: a battery operated radio, a deck of cards, gloves, safety glasses, dust masks, crow-bar,
 - **First Aid** – In a major catastrophe, you will be expected to take care of yourself. Do you really want to stand in an unmoving line outside the hospital for 7 hours or more? Prepare to treat all but the most serious wounds.
- Immediately following a major disaster, outside assistance will generally start at the epicenter and slowly work its way out. The firemen are at the largest fires. The search and rescue teams are at the largest piles of debris and rubble. The police officers are concentrating on keeping people calm and assured.
 - Eventually, the National Guard will be dispatched to help in the relief efforts. You might eventually get some bottled water; help with injuries and to get word out to relatives outside the effected area.

Prepare your home now for two weeks without outside help.

Tell your friends, family members and coworkers.

Help them understand.

HOME PREPAREDNESS PRODUCTS

Emergency products, Private consultations and Programs