

**MEMORANDUM**  
**OREGON OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY**  
**OREGON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

DATE: September 20, 2004

TO: Local Oregon Emergency Managers

FROM: Jay Wilson  
Earthquake and Tsunami Program Coordinator

SUBJECT: **DROP, COVER and HOLD EARTHQUAKE SAFETY MEASURE**

There have been recent inquiries to Oregon Emergency Management regarding an article circulating on email promoting the “triangle of life” protective measure during earthquakes rather than using the Drop, Cover and Hold procedure recommended in Oregon and throughout the United States.

While the advice in the “triangle of life,” article is well intentioned; its prescribed actions are gleaned only from worst-case accounts from collapsed buildings outside of the United States. Because buildings in the United States are built to stricter codes and enforcement standards than those in other countries, including Mexico, and Turkey, collapses from earthquakes in the U.S. are rare.

Structural analysis and behavioral studies confirm that the use of Drop, Cover and Hold reduces the likelihood of serious injury, since most earthquake injuries are a result of falling nonstructural elements (lighting fixtures, ceiling tiles, windows) and contents (appliances, shelves, office equipment). Post earthquake investigations in recent California earthquakes have shown that most injuries occurred when building occupants attempted to exit buildings or move to a different location in the building.

Drop, Cover and Hold is the earthquake safety procedure recommended by Oregon Emergency Management, the Oregon Seismic Safety Policy Advisory Commission, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the US Geological Survey, and the American Red Cross.

Recent scientific research has found that Oregon will experience future earthquakes. Ultimately, Oregon residents should evaluate the earthquake readiness of their homes and work places and take appropriate steps to reduce their risk from structural and nonstructural building components.

Please share this information with the constituents in your areas of service. If you have any questions or need additional information, contact Jay Wilson, Earthquake and Tsunami Program Coordinator, at 503-378-2911 ext. 22237.

JW