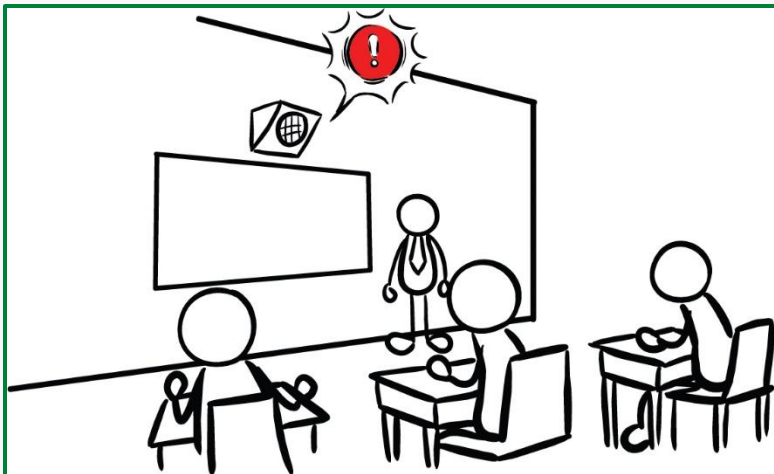




School Safety and Emergency Management

Monthly Minute: Earthquake Preparedness October 2025

Monthly Minute is a newsletter providing insight and tips on potential threats and hazards brought to you by the Oregon Department of Education.



Earthquake! Drop, cover and hold on! October is the month for **The Great Oregon Shakeout**: when we review and practice procedures for earthquake response. Even with the advantage of advanced warning systems like **ShakeAlert**, we will only get seconds or tens of seconds depending on location—not enough time to review what should be done to protect ourselves. Practicing today could save lives tomorrow.

When planning for your school's response to an earthquake, first consider the people and the spaces they occupy. All staff should know their evacuation routes, the vulnerabilities of their school building, and the exterior hazards that will inform their protective measures.

The most important considerations for earthquakes are:

- Keeping students and staff as safe as possible from building collapse and falling debris during the shaking.
- Keeping students and staff away from dangerous or compromised structures following an earthquake—which is why knowing the structural vulnerability of the school building is key.

The most common and default response to an earthquake is the drop, cover and hold drill. For this drill, students should DROP onto their hands and knees which will protect them from being knocked down or hit by falling or flying objects. They should then COVER their heads and neck with their arms. And finally, they should crawl underneath their desks and HOLD on for shelter while remaining bent over to protect the head and neck.

Identify spots in your usual instructional spaces where students and staff can take cover and hold on. This might be easy in a classroom with desks. But it might be challenging in a gymnasium. In these spaces, it is important to remember the purpose of the drill: find an appropriate place that minimizes the risk of falling debris. In a gym, that might be along an interior wall away from wall-mounted objects like scoreboards.

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This Month... Conduct an earthquake drill this month. If you are in a tsunami zone, consider your evacuation routes and review reunification through a tabletop exercise.



Conduct an earthquake drill in October.

Up Next... November's Monthly Minute will cover communications plans and also address considerations for communicable disease management plans ahead of winter weather.



Conduct a Secure Drill in November.



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Below are the steps to take during an earthquake: Drop! Cover! Hold on! Review and practice these steps—or your alternative protective measures—with your students and staff during the Great Oregon Shakeout on October 16th! Visit the [Oregon Shakeout site](#) for resources.



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If you consider evacuation as a response in vulnerable structures, they should have clear evacuation routes to safe areas and occupants must be capable of a swift and safe evacuation. Response procedures and plans for all spaces should consider:

- Potential early warning time such as ShakeAlert—more time means more opportunity to find safety or shelter.
- Location within the building, including interior sheltering locations that minimize injury from falling debris (Drop, Cover and Hold On).
- Structural vulnerability to seismic activity and location inside that could inform response; unreinforced masonry introduces the highest risk.

- Distance and safety of evacuation from interior location including complexity of, and hazards on evacuation routes.
- Individuals, classes and groups with access and functional needs.

If your school is in a tsunami zone, be sure to review evacuation and reunification procedures. Pull out your plans like you would your school team's playbook. Make sure people in **key positions** know how they will handle their part and make sure everyone knows who they report to. For more information on earthquake and other incident-specific planning, review the SSEM guidance document on **Incident-Specific Plans**.

Contact Information



Scan or click the QR code to visit the School Safety and Emergency Management website with additional school emergency preparedness resources, and to **sign up for the monthly training** and technical assistance sessions.

Resources

ShakeAlert: Information on the USGS early warning system.

ShakeAlert Educational Resources: for use in the classroom and informal environments.

Oregon Emergency Management **local contacts list**.