



# **BUILDING CODES BUREAU**

Montana Department of Labor & Industry

## **Building Safety Month**

*Building Codes: Driving Growth through Innovation, Resilience and Safety*

**Week Three – May 16-22, 2016**

*Learn from the Past, Build for Tomorrow*



### **Prepare Your Family**

Making sure your family is prepared for any natural disaster is important. Below are some of the steps you can take to prepare your family and protect your home from natural disasters. Your actions can ensure that no matter what Mother Nature brings, you, your family and your community will be resilient.

Here are a few tips to follow from the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes – (FLASH®) when preparing your family for any emergency.

- Develop a family disaster plan that includes a list of food and water supplies needed for each member of your family and supplies for your pets. Make copies of important documents like insurance policies, the deed to your home, and other personal papers, important phone numbers and a home inventory. Create a checklist of important things to do before, during and after a disaster.

- Review your [evacuation route](#) and emergency shelter locations with your family. Options for evacuation would include staying with friends and relatives, seeking commercial lodging, or staying in a mass care facility operated by disaster relief groups in conjunction with local authorities.
- Taking shelter is critical in times of disaster. [Sheltering in place](#) is appropriate when conditions require that you seek protection in your home, place of employment, or other location where you are when disaster strikes.

Review your plan regularly. If you make changes that affect the information in your disaster plan, update it immediately.

Visit [America's PrepareAthon!](#) to learn more about how to prepare for earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, and winter storms. Help prepare your family and community by [Taking Action to Prepare](#).

## **Protect Your Home**

The power of these natural disasters can be overwhelming. While you can't necessarily stop natural disasters from happening, there are steps you can take to increase your home's chance of survival, even in the face of the worst Mother Nature can dish out.

## **Build to Code**

Although you have little control over the occurrence of hazards in your community, mitigation efforts such as building code adoption and enforcement is one of the strongest strategies jurisdictions can take to protect a community against the effects of natural hazards. Mitigation increases occupant health and safety during a disaster, protects the local tax base, ensures continuity of essential services, and supports more rapid recovery from disasters.

The development and widespread adoption of building codes is beneficial in that it has created a uniform regulatory environment in which design professionals and contractors are held to a set of standards adopted by and applicable to the jurisdiction in which they work. More importantly, building codes provide you, your family, and your community protection in the event of a natural disaster.

## **What are Building Codes?**

Building regulation in the United States began in the late 1800s when major cities began to adopt and enforce building codes in response to large fires in densely populated urban areas. The primary intent of early building codes was to reduce the fire risk, but over time, their scope has broadened. Today, building codes are sets of regulations that address structural integrity, fire resistance, safe exits, lighting, ventilation, and construction materials. They specify the minimum requirements to safeguard the health, safety, and general welfare of building occupants.

The *International Code Council (ICC)* family of codes covers all aspects of construction. Specific products of interest may include:

- **ICC 500-2014 Standard and Commentary: ICC/NSSA Design and Construction of Storm Shelters**

For more information on building codes, see FEMA's [Building Code Resources](#) and [Building Codes Toolkit](#).

## **Earthquakes**

If the earthquake occurs in a populated area, it may cause deaths, injuries and extensive property damage. Here are some helpful tips to prepare your family and protect your home.

- Plan and hold earthquake drills for your family. To learn more about planned earthquake drills in your area, visit <http://www.ShakeOut.org>
- Identify two ways to escape from every room in the home.
- Keep a flashlight and sturdy shoes by each person's bed.
- Select a safe location away from the home where your family can meet after evacuating.
- Have an earthquake kit containing water, food, medicines and other necessities for at least three days
- Make sure your home is securely anchored to its foundation
- Strap water heaters, appliances and TVs to wall studs.
- Anchor bookshelves, heavy furniture, appliances and televisions to wall studs.
- Secure pictures, mirrors and ornaments to the wall with appropriate fasteners.
- Know where and how to shut off electricity, gas, and water services.