

How much damage earthquake shaking will cause depends on a lot of factors. For example:



The kind of building: Some types—such as “soft story” homes with all or part of the house on top of a garage, or a house built of unreinforced masonry (URM)—can be more prone to damage than others.



The age of the building: In places that now enforce seismic building codes, newer structures will be more resistant to shaking; older buildings may be prone to damage unless they’re retrofitted. Ask your local building department about your house’s age and relevant codes.



The ground the building sits on: For example, shaking can cause severe damage to unanchored houses on hillsides and to buildings on soft soils, such as artificial fill or loose sediments found in valleys and around estuaries. Landslides, rockfall, and liquefiable soils are other hazards that may increase your risk. Your local building department or state geological survey may have soil maps that reveal this hazard.

Now let’s look at a few examples of common kinds of damage. . . .

BUT consult a structural engineer or qualified contractor to learn how *your* home could be damaged in an earthquake.

What could an earthquake do to your house?

See examples and learn what you can do beforehand to reduce or prevent damage:

“Protect” chapter of FEMA’s Earthquake Safety at Home (fema-eqsafety.crew.org)

Earthquake Country Alliance: Step 4 (eq-country-4.crew.org)

CEA: Earthquake Structural Risks by House Type (cea-risks-by-type.crew.org)

CA Residential Mitigation Program: Strengthen Your House (crmp-house.crew.org)

Utah Guide for the Seismic Improvement of Unreinforced Masonry Dwellings (ussc-urmguide.crew.org)

How can you protect your home?

- Consult a structural engineer or qualified contractor to learn how an earthquake could damage your house.
- Retrofit to strengthen your house and prevent damage.
- Ask your insurance agent about your earthquake insurance options.

Retrofit grants are offered in

- **California: Brace + Bolt (brace-bolt.crew.org) and Soft-Story Retrofit (crmp-soft-story.crew.org)**
- **Salt Lake City, Utah: Fix the Bricks (slc-fixbricks.crew.org)**

I Own a House in Earthquake Country

What kind of damage could an earthquake do?

And how expensive will it be to repair?



Photo: Christopher Merritt | Utah Division of State History