

Emergency Preparedness: Earthquake & Flood Risks in King County

How to prepare a kit, secure your home, and check hazard maps

1) Know Your Local Risk & Check Official Maps (neutral resources)

- **Earthquakes, liquefaction, landslides (statewide):** Washington Geological Survey hazard map portals (earthquake faults, liquefaction, landslide layers). dnr.wa.gov
 - **Seismic hazard areas (county GIS):** King County seismic hazards dataset for planning/general awareness. gis-kingcounty.opendata.arcgis.com
 - **Floodplains (county):** King County floodplain map hub, with links to FEMA products and local contacts. kingcounty.gov
 - **Flood maps (national):** FEMA Flood Map Service Center (enter address/parcel for official flood maps). msc.fema.gov
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2) Get Alerts & Warnings (opt-in systems)

- **ALERT King County (texts/emails/phone):** Regional emergency notifications for hazards and threats. kingcounty.gov
 - **Earthquake Early Warning:** USGS **ShakeAlert** delivers seconds-ahead alerts via Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) and compatible apps in WA. shakealert.org
 - **Weather & river warnings:** NWS Seattle/Tacoma forecast office (watches, warnings, advisories). weather.gov
 - **Real-time river levels & flood status (county app):** King County Flood Warning System (includes Flood Warning Center contact). flood.kingcounty.gov
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3) Build a "Two Weeks Ready" Kit (considerations)

Washington's emergency program encourages households to plan for **up to 14 days** of self-sufficiency. Consider:

- **Water & food:** As a planning benchmark, WA EMD notes **~1 gallon per person per day**; two weeks implies **~14 gallons per person** (plus pets). mil.wa.gov
- **Medications & health needs:** Keep a current medication list, essential medical supplies (e.g., for two weeks), and copies of vital medical documents. doh.wa.gov
- **Lights/communication:** Battery/hand-crank radio, flashlights, spare batteries; chargers.
- **Sanitation & safety:** Dust masks, gloves, wet wipes, garbage bags; first-aid kit.
- **Documents & cash:** Waterproof copies of IDs, insurance, deeds; some small-denomination cash.
- **Planning help:** WA's "**Be 2 Weeks Ready**" and preparedness pages offer checklists and step-by-step planning tools. mil.wa.gov

Note: Quantities and items vary by household; the above are planning **considerations**, not directives.

4) Secure Your Home for Earthquakes (nonstructural first)

- **Water heater bracing & flexible connectors:** Strapping and flexible gas/water lines are common mitigation measures referenced by WA agencies. Review state homeowner guides and WA DOH tips before deciding. dnr.wa.gov
- **Reduce falling hazards:** Secure tall bookcases, TVs, appliances; latch cabinets; relocate heavy items to low shelves. (See Seattle's nonstructural retrofit guide for general concepts.) seattle.gov

Structural retrofits (evaluate with pros)

- **Foundation anchorage / cripple walls / shear walls:** Cities provide technical handbooks and plan-set references; consult your local building department and a licensed contractor/engineer before any work. atcouncil.org
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5) Prepare for Flooding (planning considerations)

- **Know your local flood risk:** Review King County flood hazards hub (floodplains, channel migration) and FEMA MSC for official maps. kingcounty.gov
- **Stay situationally aware:** Use King County Flood Warning System and sign up for county flood alerts; note the Flood Warning Center numbers listed in county resources. flood.kingcounty.gov

- **Protect critical items:** Consider waterproof storage for documents/medications; elevate valuables and critical electronics where feasible.
 - **Property drainage & sandbags:** Review county guidance on sandbag distribution/use during events. (Linked within the Flood Warning System resources.) flood.kingcounty.gov
 - **Evacuation & access:** Plan routes that avoid low-lying or historically flooded roads based on local experience and official advisories (NWS/King County). weather.gov
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6) Practice & Refresh

- **Household plan:** Roles, out-of-area contact, meeting points (home/work/school).
 - **Drills:** Earthquake "Drop, Cover, Hold On" practice; review where to shelter in your specific rooms.
 - **Annual updates:** Revisit maps, alert subscriptions, kit contents, medication lists, and insurance details.
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Washington/King County Neutral Resource List (quick links)

- **WA Geological Survey - Hazard Maps (earthquake, liquefaction, landslides):** dnr.wa.gov
- **King County Floodplain Maps & Flood Hazards:** kingcounty.gov
- **FEMA Flood Map Service Center:** msc.fema.gov
- **ALERT King County (sign-up):** kingcounty.gov
- **USGS ShakeAlert (about/WEA):** shakealert.org
- **NWS Seattle/Tacoma (watches & warnings):** weather.gov
- **WA Emergency Management - Preparedness / 2 Weeks Ready / Kits:** mil.wa.gov