

ARE YOU READY FOR THE BIG ONE?

"April is Earthquake Preparedness Month

by Ernie Johnson

If you are reading this, you probably live in an Earthquake Hazard Zone.

Did you know that there are over 200 Earthquake Faults in Southern California that are capable of a 6.0m or greater? And that most people in Southern California live within 30 miles of these faults.

Did you know that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is now requiring communities in southern California to prepare a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan? A Local Hazard Mitigation Plan is a new requirement from FEMA, which must be satisfied for jurisdictions to remain eligible for hazard mitigation funds and public assistance following disasters. Communities like Santa Monica have recently completed their plan and requiring Earthquake Activated Gas Shut-off Valves are part of the plan.

Here are some facts from the 1994 Northridge Quake:

- Over \$42 billion in property damage
- Over 20,000 left homeless
- Fire Departments reported over 50 gas related structure fires
- Southern California Gas responded to 14,062 consumer reported gas leaks (SoCal Gas 1994)
- FEMA processed over 400,000 claims for water heater damage and over 700,000 claims for all gas appliances (Honegger, 1995)
- In Santa Monica, a 10-unit building was declared a total loss due to a ruptured gas line explosion, causing 3 adjacent buildings to catch on fire.

As most of you know, LA City Ordinance 174478 requires that seismic gas shut-off valves be installed on designated buildings within the city. The provisions of this Ordinance apply to:

- All new buildings constructed after September 1, 1995
- Commercial buildings performing additions, alterations or repairs with a building permit issued after September 1, 1995 and a valuation of greater than \$10,000
- Residential buildings performing additions, alterations or repairs with a building permit issued after January 10, 1998 and a valuation of greater than \$10,000
- All buildings sold in the City after February 5, 1998. A seismic gas valve must be installed prior to entering an agreement for sale, or prior to the close of escrow when an escrow agreement has been executed in connection with the sale.
- Alterations or additions to the fuel gas piping system which involve the replacement of the gas meter

The City of West Hollywood has also adopted a similar mandate. More and more cities are beginning to implement Earthquake Activated Gas Shut-off valves. We expect soon it will become a statewide mandate, like the strapping of water heaters and the installation of smoke detectors.

Here are some things that can be done to prepare for an Earthquake:

Before the Earthquake:

-Update or assemble your emergency supply kit. Include the following supplies;

- Nonperishable food and drinking water (one gallon per person, per day)
- Foods for people with special needs (infants, seniors)
- Food/water for pets
- First Aid kit and special medications
- Flashlights & Battery operated radios
- Extra batteries
- Extra clothing, blankets, shoes
- Emergency cash
- Basic tools
- Whistle
- Manual can opener

-Identify Hazards in each room:

- Windows
- Mirrors

- Hanging objects
- Fireplaces
- Tall unsecured furniture

-Reduce Hazards

- Install Earthquake Activated Gas Shut-off Valves
- Brace water heater and other appliances
- Ensure smoke detectors are working
- Install flexible pipe fittings to avoid gas or water leaks
- Secure pictures, mirrors, and tall furniture
- Place heavy and breakable objects on lower shelves
- Brace overhead light fixtures
- Check and see if your structure is bolted

During an Earthquake:

- If indoors, stay inside. Duck, cover and hold. Avoid windows and outside walls. Do not use elevators.
- If outdoors, find an open area. Avoid trees, buildings, walls and power lines.
- If driving, pull to the side of the road and stop. Avoid overpasses, signs and other hazards. Stay in the car until the shaking stops.

After the Earthquake:

- Check yourself and those around you for injuries
- Prepare for aftershocks
- Check for utility problems
 - Gas leaks (Earthquake Activated Shut-off Valves reduce the risk of explosion)
 - Water Leaks (Strapping water heaters reduce the risk of water damage)
 - Broken wiring and sewage lines
- Turn off utilities only if there is damage
- Check your supplies
- Use the phone only for immediate, life-threatening emergencies. Advise any “out-of-state” contact of your condition.
- Check your structure for damage
- Listen to the radio for information and instructions
- Avoid unnecessary driving
- Leave a written message indicating where you are headed and your physical condition if you evacuate your home, work, or car.

Are you Ready For the Big One? Earthquake preparedness saves lives, property, and mitigates damages.

The above article was adopted by Ernie Johnson of SAFE GAS SERVICES from information provided by the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety and the Earthquake Survival Program 2001. SAFE GAS SERVICES, with over 25 years of actual Gas Co experience, provides reliable and economical Earthquake Valve Installations, Full Retrofitting Services, gas leak detection, appliance repair and gas main repair/repipe. For more information or to schedule a FREE Earthquake Valve estimate, give SGS a call at (866) SAFE-001 (723-3001) or drop him a line at ernie@safegasservices.com