

Emergency Procedures: Fires and Earthquakes

A major emergency affecting a large number of people may occur at any time. In case of a catastrophe, lives can be saved if people are prepared for emergencies and know what actions to take when they occur. The following emergency procedures are Claremont McKenna College's effort to provide guidelines to students, faculty and staff in case of an emergency.

Containment and Extinguishment of Fires

The primary concern in fire and other emergencies is the protection of life. The secondary factor in fire emergencies is the containment and ultimately extinguishment of the fire. Containment of the fire can often be accomplished by the closing of doors and windows. Extinguishment of fires should be considered the business of fire-fighting professionals. With the exception of very small, contained fires, do not attempt to extinguish fires yourself.

If you find yourself in a position to extinguish a small fire, use a fire extinguisher whenever possible. If the fire is large, spreading quickly, or if the capacity of the fire extinguisher is inadequate for extinguishment, fire-fighting personnel should be contacted immediately for assistance. Remember: portable fire extinguishers are first aid appliances designed to extinguish small, contained fires only. Never attempt to extinguish a fire unless there is no danger to yourself or others.

One should never attempt to extinguish a fire before assuring that all occupants of the building have been alerted and the fire department notified. However, immediate action toward extinguishment of small fires (i.e., wastebaskets) will prevent the spread of fire to other nearby objects or materials. A simple cover (towel, blanket, etc.) may be placed over a small fire to smother or at least contain the fire until the alarm has been sounded and an extinguisher is obtained. To most effectively control the fire, slowly slide the covering from the fire while applying the extinguishing agent. Never assume a fire has been extinguished—only fire department personnel may make that decision.

Portable fire extinguishers have been provided in all buildings of The Claremont Colleges. It is recommended that all members of the Claremont community take the time to familiarize themselves with their locations and proper use now, rather than to wait for an emergency situation.

1. If you become aware of smoke or fire

- a. Sound the alarm by activating the closest fire alarm station. Do not waste time by trying to locate someone in authority to report an emergency. A reprimand will never be given for activating an alarm in an emergency situation.
- b. Make an attempt to contact the Fire Department (911) or the Campus Safety Office (ext. 72000) by phone. The fire systems of The Claremont Colleges are connected directly to the Campus Safety Office, but as a precaution it is best to back up this system with a phone call if possible to provide the following information: your name, building name, name of college, and the situation as it exists (i.e., "There is a fire," or "There is smoke.").
- c. If you are unable to locate or activate a fire alarm station, locate a phone and contact the Fire Department or Campus Safety and report the emergency.

- d. Alert others in the area by any available means. All persons should be instructed to proceed immediately to the nearest outside exits.
- e. Always remain calm.

2. When the alarm sounds

- a. Evacuate the building immediately. Do not attempt to remove personal possessions.
- b. Close all exit doors after leaving. This will isolate the fire and prevent the spread of the fire to other parts of the building.
- c. Follow your assigned exit route. If you are unfamiliar with the exit route, follow the flow of traffic. Never attempt to exit against the flow of traffic. Walk rapidly and calmly to the exit. Do not run.
- d. Once outside the building, proceed to an area well removed from the fire location and remain there until permission to reenter is given by a fire department official.

3. If fire or smoke prohibit you from leaving your location

- a. Close the door securely and attempt to seal any openings through which smoke or gasses can enter.
- b. Open exterior windows and crouch close to the floor at the open window.
- c. Alert persons outside that you are unable to get out. Do not panic. Fire Department procedures require that rescue operation take precedence over other emergency activities.

IMPORTANT: ALL PERSONS WITHIN A BUILDING ARE REQUIRED TO EVACUATE WHEN AN ALARM HAS SOUNDED. PERSONS WHO DO NOT EVACUATE PRESENT A DANGER TO THEMSELVES AND A LIABILITY TO THE COLLEGE AND WILL BE REFERRED TO THE COLLEGE JUDICIARY BOARD.

About Fire Alarm Systems

The purpose of our fire alarm system is to signal the need for the evacuation of a building and to notify Campus Safety and the central telephone exchange automatically.

Through this system, The Claremont Colleges have planned for the evacuation of buildings and simultaneously furnished a means by which assistance can be summoned. Dependence on local signals (on campus only) to alert staff members may lead to misjudgment of the extent of the emergency and diminish effectiveness of their response.

The type of protective signaling (fire alarm) selected to best serve our Colleges' needs sends signals which are received at central supervisory stations where trained operators are on duty at all times to take whatever action is needed. The Claremont Colleges have two such central supervisory stations: Campus Safety and the Colleges' central telephone exchange.

Our systems are elaborate local systems to which recording devices, at central supervisory stations, have been added. Specifically, there is a printout-recorder at Campus Safety and an illuminated-audible annunciator panel at the telephone exchange office. The operations of the systems are under supervision 24 hours a day. Any abnormalities or malfunctions occurring in the systems are also automatically registered and Physical Plant is summoned immediately to investigate and correct the situation. Physical Plant tests all systems periodically and corrects any abnormalities encountered.

While all the buildings of The Claremont Colleges are provided with the basic alarm system (manual pull boxes and alarm sounding devices), some of them also have the added protection of smoke detectors, heat sensors and fire sprinkler systems, all of which are integrated into the fire alarm system. This added protection will be found in some residence halls, laboratories, computer centers, libraries and areas deemed to be critical. Intrusion alarms are installed in areas where unauthorized entry is a critical factor. These alarms are also integrated into the master alarm system, but do not transmit to the Fire Department or initiate the local alarm of the building. The alarm is transmitted silently to the central supervisory stations where the necessary action is taken.

Each building's alarm system has been assigned a code number which is fed into the master alarm control console at the time an alarm is initiated. The alarm console then transmits this number to Campus Safety where it is transposed into print on a printout recorder. The number is preceded by the signal condition (alarm, trouble, testing) and followed by the time and date of the alarm. The signal is simultaneously transmitted to the central telephone exchange where it is transposed into an impulse which illuminates a lens engraved with the name of the building and also activates an audible signal to draw the operator's attention. This audible signal is terminated upon the activation of a "silence" switch at Campus Safety which confirms that the alarm signal is being received at that location also. If the audible signal is not silenced after four impulses, the telephone operator will contact Campus Safety for confirmation. Campus Safety always calls the Fire Department to confirm that department's receipt of the alarm.

Upon receiving the alarm signal, the Fire Department dispatch center immediately notifies the local fire station as well as four other stations in close proximity to the Colleges. This initial alarm will provide four engine companies, two patrol companies, one aerial platform truck, one paramedic unit and a chief officer. In addition, the local engine company will immediately establish two-way radio contact with Campus Safety, Physical Plant and the Safety Officer. This communication helps to expedite their response to the exact location of the emergency as well as to maintain voice communications on the fire scene.

As soon as the emergency alarm situation has been resolved the alarm system is silenced and reset to its normal position at the scene of the emergency by the Fire Department or Safety Officer.

False Alarms and Tampering with Fire Safety Equipment

False alarms and tampering with fire safety equipment diminish the value of fire drills and the effectiveness of fire-fighting equipment in emergency situations. The Penal Code of California provides that any person who violates the following provisions is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment:

1. It shall be unlawful for any person to give, signal, transmit or cause or permit to be given, signaled or transmitted in any manner a false alarm.
2. No person shall render any portable or fixed fire extinguisher system or device or any fire warning system or device inoperative or inaccessible except as may be necessary during emergencies, drills or prescribed testing.

The Los Angeles County Fire Department has expressed considerable concern over false alarms that occur on the campuses of The Claremont Colleges. False alarms are disruptive and dangerous. Fire fighting equipment is dispatched to the Colleges from Claremont and San Dimas and there is potential for a serious traffic accident in such circumstances. In addition, if equipment is summoned to the Colleges for a false alarm, that equipment is not available to respond to legitimate emergencies. Evacuation of buildings unnecessarily is inconvenient and carries with it potential injury to students.

The Colleges have agreed to cooperate with the Fire Department in an effort to reduce the number of false alarms. Steps toward this end include improvement of electronic alarm systems to eliminate false alarms caused by malfunctions, and taking more vigorous action against persons responsible for false alarms and tampering with fire safety equipment. Persons found responsible for false alarms or tampering with fire safety equipment will be disciplined by the college according to its judicial procedures, and will be identified to local law enforcement officials as violators of the state fire code. Such violations are typically considered misdemeanors, but should an injury or death occur as a result of a false alarm, the violation will become a felony.

To preserve the integrity of the fire extinguishers placed in residential buildings, residents, on the basis of the smallest identifiable group, will be charged a \$100 fine plus the cost of recharging the extinguishers should they be misused.

Earthquake Procedures

The actual movement of the ground in an earthquake is seldom the direct cause of injury or death. Rather, most earthquake casualties result from falling objects and debris. Panic or other unthinking actions may cause more injuries than an earthquake itself. If The Claremont Colleges are struck by a major tremor, you could be frightened by the swaying and jolting, and the noise of the groaning building or the earth itself, the shattering of glass and shifting of objects. Your instincts may tell you to "scream and run." These actions could be contagious. Disaster authorities stress that by allowing yourself time to regain your composure, you may find that the bedlam has exaggerated the actual danger.

How To Prepare For An Earthquake

Read the Emergency Plan that you received at check-in. See your Resident Assistant if you did not receive a copy. Earthquakes occur without warning, therefore it is essential that you plan ahead of time what your actions will be if an earthquake strikes when you are in various locations, such as the dining hall, residence hall, an academic building, visiting friends or traveling. Anticipation of possible earthquake damage will be especially important when you begin to organize and decorate your residence hall room. Be cautious of placing heavy or breakable objects on high shelves or hanging them from the ceiling, particularly over areas where you sleep or study. You should have on hand for any emergency: 1) a flashlight with spare batteries, and 2) a portable radio with spare batteries.

Building evacuation routes are identical for earthquakes and fires; however, the timing of the evacuation differs. In a fire emergency, you evacuate immediately, while in an earthquake, you stay where you are. You should only move to shelter yourself or otherwise protect yourself from falling objects or debris. After the quake is over, you evacuate the building if necessary.

An earthquake may feel like rolling motion or a sharp jolt or series of jolts. These may last from one or two seconds to five minutes or more. Usually, the first shock or tremor will be the most severe while the following ones will diminish in intensity. These are referred to as “aftershocks.” Most damage will occur during the initial shock while damage from aftershocks will be limited to weakened structures or objects moved into precarious positions by the initial shock. Aftershocks may occur in rapid succession or they may be spread out over a long period of time.

What To Do During An Earthquake

When a quake hits, it may be strong enough to knock you off your feet. You have only seconds to react. Remain calm and think of the consequences of any action you may take. What you do during and immediately after a tremor may make a life and death difference for you or those around you. These rules will help you to survive:

1. Stay where you are.
2. If indoors, get under a desk, table or other sturdy object. If a sturdy object is not available, move toward an interior wall. A doorway may not be the safest place. Stay clear of windows, bookcases, light fixtures, mirrors and fireplaces. Assume a sitting position with your head between your knees. Protect your neck and head by folding or crossing your arms behind them. If you happen to be in a kitchen, turn off the stove at the first sign of shaking, then take cover under a table or other sturdy object.
3. If outdoors, avoid high buildings, walls, power poles, trees, and other objects which may fall. Do not run through streets. If possible, move to an open area away from all hazards. If you are in a moving car, stop as quickly as safety permits. Try not to park under or near power lines, tall buildings or other objects which could fall on the car. If power lines should fall over the vehicle, do not attempt to exit the vehicle until they are removed or you are absolutely sure no live power is being transmitted through them. As an extra safety precaution, do not touch any metal parts. If in a crowded public place, remain calm and seek shelter from falling debris. Do not rush for the exits as other people will have the same idea.
4. When the earthquake has passed, all students report to a safe area outside on the address side of your residence hall and check in with your RA. When instructed, you will proceed to Parents Field. Buildings must be inspected before you will be released.

Wohlford	Dean of Students	Boswell
Appleby	Apartments	Green
Beckett	Fawcett	Marks
Berger	Auen	Phillips
Benson	Stark	Off Campus



After An Earthquake

1. Put on shoes before evacuating the building.
2. Be prepared for aftershocks. These may be strong enough to cause additional damage.
3. The electrical system may fail. Recall the location of a transistor radio and flashlight.
4. Check yourself and others around you for injuries. Do not attempt to move a seriously injured person unless he or she is in immediate danger of further injury.
5. Check for fires or fire hazards and take necessary action.
6. Check for natural gas leaks. Do not use open flame (candles, matches, lighters) if a leak is suspected. If electrical service has not been interrupted, do not operate switches or appliances; an electrical arc can ignite gas from broken lines.
7. Elevators can be unpredictable and dangerous after a quake. Never use them until you have been assured by College officials that they are safe.
8. Wear shoes in all areas near debris.
9. Do not use telephones except for genuine emergency calls. Replace telephone handsets that may have been shaken off.
10. Turn on your radio or television (if conditions permit) to get instruction or bulletins.
11. Do not eat or drink from open containers that are or have been near shattered glass.
12. Do not drink water from fountains or sinks until notified it is safe.
13. If toilets are backing up, stop flushing.
14. Open closets and storage shelf areas carefully. Heavy objects may fall out.
15. Evacuate and stay out of severely damaged buildings. Aftershocks can shake them down.
16. Check in with your Resident Assistant or College official. This will enable College officials to ascertain your safety and well-being and report such to your family.
17. Do not spread rumors. Rumors can do great harm after an emergency.
18. Cooperate fully with public and/or College officials. Remember, public organizations (fire, police, etc.) may have their resources strained during emergency periods, so The Claremont Colleges may be on their own temporarily.

There is no way to eliminate all earthquake danger, but the chance of damage or injury can be greatly reduced by following the simple instructions offered here and thinking about necessary actions before disaster strikes.