The recent earthquakes in Haiti, Chile, Japan, Turkey and Mexico are a reminder that the continuous movement of the earth’s tectonic plates is always potential for disaster.

This month WWU is partnering with the City of Bellingham and others to exercise a community-wide damage assessment plan on Wednesday, April 21st. The exercise will begin at 9:45 a.m. to coincide with the statewide drop, cover and hold earthquake exercise.

A number of Western employees will participate in the campus damage assessment portion of the city-wide exercise. The exercise will simulate evaluation of damage to the WWU campus, and communication of WWU’s situation to the community’s emergency operations center.

During this exercise, WWU will test the Big Ole steam whistle and the Western Alert emergency messaging system. The steam whistle is the campus-wide signal to immediately find emergency information. WWU will provide Western Alert information via:

- Your e-mail
- A text message to your cell phone (if you previously subscribed on web4u)
- The following websites:
  - The university’s emergency communication webpage at www.emergency.wwu.edu
  - The WWU homepage at www.wwu.edu

The entire campus is encouraged to participate at some level during the exercise, even if you just drop, cover and hold. Perhaps take a few minutes to think about what you would do if this earthquake were real and not an exercise. Consider this your opportunity to evaluate your personal and departmental preparedness.

Receive Emergency Text Messages via Cell Phone

A text message is one of the most reliable ways to quickly provide you with emergency information. You are strongly encouraged to provide your cell phone number to WWU. Even if users do not regularly text on their cell phones, most cell phones are capable of receiving text information. To subscribe, students and employees should go to the web4u. Employees may also call Human Resources at x3774.
Practice Drop, Cover and Hold
For the April 21st exercise, please consider the steam whistle a reminder of the opportunity to practice your drop, cover and hold preparations. Plan where you will drop, cover and hold in all the places you spend time – classrooms, offices, walks, gyms, buses, etc.

Evaluate Your Personal Preparedness
Do you have an emergency kit? A 72-hour kit is the minimum needed. You can find suggested contents at the Washington State Emergency Management Division’s website by clicking on the Preparedness tab. You could store a pair of shoes, protective gloves and an old bicycle helmet or hard hat under or next to your bed to help reduce the chance of post earthquake injury. WWU Associated Students Bookstore offers an affordable emergency preparedness kit for individual preparedness which can form the basis for your 72-hour kit.

Review Your WWU Emergency Response Guide
Permanent employees at Western were given copies of the WWU Emergency Response Guide, a flip chart to be posted in work areas. Please review the information. If you don’t have a copy, please call EHS at x3064 to get one.

Faculty may wish to review the page toward the bottom of this guide called Faculty Information for Classroom. It would be timely to encourage students to take steps towards preparedness and/or hold a brief discussion of drop, cover and hold practice in the classroom setting.

Departments may wish to take this opportunity to discuss their specific emergency issues in conjunction with this exercise. Those conversations could occur either before or after the exercise itself. Planning will help keep those in your department safe and will help keep you able to care for those who may depend on you.

Have an Out of State Contact
If you are separated from your loved ones when a disaster strikes, you will immediately wonder how and where they are. Local phone systems may be shut down not because of damage, but because of the large number of people trying to call at the same time. Frequently, you can place a long-distance call, so it is recommended that every household have an out-of-area contact person that lives at least 100 miles away. The state supplies State Out-Of-Area Contact Cards. A limited supply is available from EHS by calling x3064. It is advisable that every household member should keep this card in a wallet, purse or backpack.

Visit Websites
WWU Emergency Communication: www.emergency.wwu.edu
City of Bellingham Emergency Management: www.cob.org/services/safety/emergencies
Whatcom County Emergency Management: www.co.whatcom.wa.us/dem