

Earthquakes

Under the surface of the Earth are huge blocks. These blocks are a little like puzzle pieces. The blocks are always moving, bumping into and sliding past one another. Sometimes, their edges get stuck. These edges are called faults.

When two blocks, called tectonic plates, get stuck, all the energy they used to move is stored. Then, when they finally move apart, the energy makes everything shake. This shaking goes all the way to the Earth's surface, and makes an earthquake.

During an earthquake, buildings can fall down and roads can buckle. Wide cracks can form in the ground. Most earthquakes are small and do not do any damage. Sometimes people do not even know there has been an earthquake until scientists report one. Some earthquakes, though, can be very strong. They damage buildings, roads and even injure people. For this reason, scientists are always looking for ways to make earthquakes less dangerous.

When people are hurt during an earthquake, it is usually because of buildings shaking or falling. Scientists have made special maps to help others know where and when strong earthquakes might happen, and how strong they might be.

Engineers have found ways to make buildings stronger.

For some buildings, a special kind of coating is used for the walls. Other buildings need more. Many tall office buildings are made of steel and concrete. One way that might make them safer is to put them on giant rollers. Another way might be to put a special covering on the buildings that will absorb the energy from an earthquake.

Until scientists and engineers can find the answers, builders must follow certain laws to make buildings safer.

