

# News Release

Date: Sept. 13, 2004

Contact: Eric Holdeman, Director, 206-205-4060  
Office of Emergency Management

## The "Triangle of Life":

### Internet rumors and earthquake safety

While the Internet is a powerful tool for spreading information, it can also spread innuendo, rumor, and inappropriate advice. Recently, an email has been circulating alleging that the "Triangle of Life," a technique for utilizing "voids" as the best method for earthquake survival, is a better tool than "Drop, Cover and Hold." The King County Office of Emergency Management, in concurrence with the American Red Cross, FEMA, and the U.S. Geological Survey, **does not agree with this recommendation.** "Drop, Cover and Hold" is the correct method for earthquake safety in the United States.

"The Emergency Management community has worked for decades looking at earthquake response and recovery throughout the world. Someone coming up with a "patented" approach only muddies the waters. We know what works. In the urgency of disaster, people need to instinctively know what to do. And the right message is 'Drop, Cover and Hold'," Bill Steele, University of Washington Seismology Lab Coordinator.

Key Reasons the "Triangle of Life" is inappropriate for application within the United States:

- The "research" for this method was based on earthquake response and recovery in Turkey, a country very different from the United States when it comes to building standards, principles, and codes. The two cannot be compared with regards to construction and engineering techniques.
- As opposed to earthquakes in other countries, earthquakes in the United States do not typically result in total building collapse or "pancake."
- As a result, the safest method for children and adults to utilize in an earthquake in the United States is to "Drop, Cover and Hold" underneath a desk, table, or other sturdy strong surface. There isn't a need within the United States to utilize the "void" provided by an object like a couch, since there is little chance of a building collapse in the U.S.
- The "Triangle of Life" also advocates for getting out of bed if caught asleep during an earthquake. Again, this is incorrect for the United States, as one is more likely to be safer in bed during an earthquake, then rolling onto the floor beside it, where you could be injured by debris. The more one moves during an earthquake, the more potential there is for injury.

"While the 'Triangle of Life' *might* be a valuable method for earthquake survival in countries where building collapse is more probable, 'Drop, Cover and Hold' is still the best method for earthquake safety in the United States," said Eric Holdeman, Director, King County Office of Emergency Management. "It is unfortunate that misinformation can spread so quickly via modern technology. It is my hope that people will share the proper 'Drop, Cover and Hold' procedure with the same enthusiasm to get information to the people they care most about."

To learn more about earthquake safety and mitigation, please visit [www.metrokc.gov/prepare](http://www.metrokc.gov/prepare) to learn more about how you can help your family prepare.

###

King County Office of Emergency Management:

*Promoting disaster resistant communities through excellence in service and partnerships.*