

After the Shaking Stops

An Immediate Ham Radio Post-Earthquake Protocol

When a major earthquake hits, commercial power and cellular networks often fail instantly. As amateur radio operators, your primary goal immediately following an earthquake is to establish safety, assess local conditions, and open communication channels without creating spectrum chaos.

Phase 1: Local Safety & Personal Preparedness (Minutes 0–3)

- **Check yourself and your household:** Ensure you and your family are safe and unharmed before touching any equipment.
- **Inspect hazards:** Check for gas leaks, structural damage, exposed electrical wiring, and downed power lines near your station and antennas.
- **Inspect radio equipment:** Confirm battery backup integrity, check antenna coax connections, and ensure lead-acid/LiFePO4 batteries are secure and not damaged or shorted.

Phase 2: The 3-3-3 Rule for Emergency Operations

The **3-3-3 Rule** is a standard survival and communication protocol designed to save battery power, ensure predictable check-ins, and keep frequencies open for emergency traffic during catastrophic events.

Interval	Action
Every 3 Hours	Turn on your radio for 3 minutes on the designated local primary repeater or simplex frequency starting on the hour (e.g., 09:00, 12:00, 15:00, 18:00).
Channel 3 / Sub-Code 3	Listen on FRS/GMRS Channel 3 (or local emergency club primary VHF/UHF frequency) to hear local neighborhood reports or offer assistance.
3-Minute Transmit Limit	Keep all transmissions strictly under 3 minutes (or transmit only during the top 3

	minutes of the hour) to conserve battery power and keep the airwaves open for high-priority emergency traffic.
--	--

Crucial Rule: Listen for at least 30 to 60 seconds before transmitting to ensure you are not stepping on active emergency or welfare traffic.

Phase 3: Network Operations & Traffic Handling

1. **Monitor standard club repeaters:** If local repeaters are operational on emergency generator/battery power, monitor the primary club frequency.
2. **Switch to Simplex if repeaters are down:**
 - **VHF Primary Simplex:** 146.520 MHz (National Calling Frequency) or your club's designated local simplex frequency.
 - **UHF Primary Simplex:** 446.000 MHz.
3. **Follow Net Control instructions:** If a formal Emergency Net is established, transmit **only** when called upon or if you have **Emergency (Life-Safety) Traffic**.
4. **Use standard message formatting:** Keep transmissions brief, concise, and clear using standard Plain Language (avoid obscure jargon or unnecessary chatter).