

Montana Disaster and Emergency Services
PRESS RELEASE

For Release: September 8, 2009

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Vigilant Guard 2009 – Helena School District to Conduct Earthquake Drill

HELENA - Hundreds of students in the Helena School District will be practicing their Drop, Cover & Hold drill next week when Montana kicks off Vigilant Guard 2009, a full-scale earthquake exercise September 15-17, 2009.

The drill is typically held in October to support Earthquake Preparedness Month and commemorate the 1935 earthquakes that shook Helena and the surrounding area. This year, students will practice Drop, Cover & Hold in conjunction with Vigilant Guard, a simulated event similar to the 6.3 magnitude earthquake that occurred October 18, 1935.

"When the earth shakes, we want everyone to know what to do," says Paul Spengler, Lewis & Clark county disaster and emergency services coordinator. Spengler, who is responsible for coordinating these drills notes, "Each time we practice, we are more confident that people will be better prepared to survive a real event."

The Drop, Cover and Hold drill is effective and simple:

DROP down on the floor.

Take **COVER** under a sturdy desk, table, or other furniture. If that is not possible, seek **COVER** against an interior wall and protect and **COVER** your head and neck with your arms. Avoid danger spots near windows, hanging objects, mirrors or tall furniture.

If you take cover under a sturdy piece of furniture, **HOLD** on to it and be prepared to move with it. **HOLD** your position until the ground stops shaking and it is safe to move. Expect aftershocks.

"We hold these drills every year," Spengler says. He adds this time will be particularly beneficial as it will be conducted during a full scale exercise. "Practicing this drill in conjunction with other exercise activities will better test our system. It's an opportunity to involve kids and it will allow us to more realistically evaluate the effectiveness of our procedures.
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Note to Media: Helena schools will conduct their drill Wednesday September 16, 2009