


MEMORANDUM

TO: The USC Community

FROM: President Steven B. Sample 

DATE: October 21, 2008

SUBJECT: **Great Shakeout Earthquake Drill, November 13**

Steven B. Sample

President and
Robert C. Packard
Professor

On Thursday morning, November 13, millions of people in Southern California will “*drop, cover, and hold on*” as part of the Great ShakeOut. The ShakeOut will be the largest earthquake drill in U.S. history.

USC is a major participant in this drill. We are using it as an opportunity to test and rehearse our extensive emergency-preparedness systems and equipment. **At 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, November 13, I would like every staff member, faculty member, and student on campus to drop, cover, and hold on for 60 seconds.** The drop-and-cover procedure is a proven technique to stay safer during a major quake when heavy objects may be falling. Take cover under a sturdy desk or table as soon as the shaking begins, hold on, and simply ride out the shaking.

Hundreds of our colleagues on our campuses are active members of USC’s emergency teams, and you’ll see them in action on November 13. But each of us has an important role for the first seconds, and that is to drop, cover, and hold on.

Here are other steps for you to take:

- **Sign up for the earthquake drill at <http://shakeout.org>**
- **Visit <http://emergencyprep.usc.edu>**
- **Sign up for USC’s emergency notification system at <http://trojansalert.usc.edu>**
- **Sign up for automatic payroll deposit (after a disaster, this is the best way to make sure you get paid)**

You should know what to do during and immediately after a quake, and where to go, where your unit’s or building’s emergency supplies are, and what your role is if you are in charge of a class or a department. Faculty members will receive a checklist shortly from the provost’s office to help guide them through their responsibilities in an emergency and in anticipation of the ShakeOut drill.

Here is the reality: In any emergency we are almost always our own first responders. We've seen many examples of this in recent natural disasters in the U.S. Official help and relief cannot arrive quickly. Moreover, contrary to popular belief, in a catastrophe most people don't panic; instead, their reactions slow down. It may be necessary, however, to move quickly. That's why drills are important. They build "muscle memory." When a person is under extreme stress, the body has a way of remembering what to do when the mind can't consciously comprehend the situation.

USC's Southern California Earthquake Center has warned that a major earthquake is a virtual certainty for our region. The ShakeOut drill is a prime opportunity for our campus communities to practice our responses in the event of a disaster, and I hope you'll participate. Your life, and the lives of others, may depend upon it.