

Earthquake coverage not included in homeowners insurance policies

Am I covered if an earthquake damages my home?

Unless you've purchased earthquake coverage, you are not covered by a standard homeowners policy. So, structural damage to the home and any loss of furnishings and personal possessions would not be covered.

How does earthquake insurance work?

Your homeowners policy excludes coverage to the dwelling for earth movement meaning earthquakes, and any other earth movement, including earth sinking, rising or shifting.

You can purchase an endorsement to a homeowners, renters or business policy or as a separate policy to cover your losses from earthquakes and aftershocks. Since different building materials react differently to earth movement (brick versus wood, for example), premiums vary by the type of construction of the building.

Earthquake insurance deductibles are considerably higher than standard deductibles. Usually they are determined by a percentage of the building's value, generally from 5 percent to 25 percent for homeowners.

Can I buy earthquake insurance at any time?

The only time you can't buy the coverage for a home is within 72 hours after an earthquake, since there may be damaging aftershocks within that period of time.

With earthquake coverage, am I covered for aftershocks?

Yes. With a homeowners earthquake endorsement, any damage from the earthquake and from aftershocks that happen within 72 hours of the earthquake will be considered one occurrence so you will pay your deductible only once.

I belong to a condo association. What if the common property is damaged?

If you belong to a townhouse or condominium association that has inadequate earthquake coverage or none at all, you could be charged for repairs to common property.

If you have earthquake coverage and loss assessment coverage on your unit-owners policy, you may be able to extend it to cover you for this liability to the association. Please check with our agency for more information.

Do I really need earthquake coverage in this area of the country?

Small earthquakes occur frequently in the Northeast. In fact, according to the Weston Observatory at Boston College, in 2009, there were 82 earthquakes. Most of these had a magnitude in the 2 range, and some in the 3 range.

Although recently a Northeast earthquake registered a 5.9 on the Richter Scale, earthquake hazard maps (e.g., the National Seismic Hazard Map developed by the U.S. Geological Survey in 2008) generally show that in most parts of New England, there is about a 2 percent chance, that in any given 50-year period of time, earthquake vibrations that are potentially damaging will strike.

