

PRESS RELEASE

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In case of an earthquake stay away from the outer walls of building!

ZAGREB – If you happen to experience a strong earthquake while indoors, better run away from the outer walls of the house. Staying close to them can increase the risk of your getting killed or injured, warns a Turkish study published in the new, thematic issue of the *Croatian Medical Journal*.

However, even staying away from the outer walls will not be of much help if you are so unfortunate to find yourself in a collapsing building. In that case the risk of death or injury increases more than 20-fold.

The study was carried out in the Afyon city area, where a destructive earthquake, measured 6.1 in Richter scale, occurred on February 3, 2002. Overall, 42 deaths and 325 injuries were reported. The epicenter was in the town of Eber, where 14 people died, 18 were injured, and 60% of all buildings were heavily damaged.

Three months after the event, researchers interviewed members of 229 Eber families to learn about circumstances in which they found themselves when earth began to tremble. The data was then used to assess the risk factors for death or injury in case of an earthquake.

Nearly all of the buildings in which deaths occurred were completely destroyed. Most of the injuries occurred because of the destruction of the outer walls and most of them were bruises on the extremities.

The study found several risk factors for death or injury: structural type of the buildings, degree of damage and location during earthquake. Persons in wooden-type buildings had a 3.6-fold higher risk, compared with masonry or reinforced concrete buildings. Location inside collapsed or severely damaged buildings increased the risk 22.8 times. People who were near the outer wall at the time of the quake had a 6-fold higher risk, compared with other locations.

One of the main limitations of the study is that it was conducted on a relatively small number of people. Still, as data in this field are scarce, this study provides some key information which could help in preparing for future earthquakes.

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