**Are your house foundations earthquake-ready?**

The Earthquake Commission (EQC) is encouraging homeowners to check their house foundations are earthquake-ready, and to do that safely.

The foundations are the primary connection between a building and the ground. Having them properly secured means the house is less likely to topple or slide in an earthquake.

EQC’s Research Strategy and Investment Manager Dr Richard Smith says the key things to look for are whether the piles are standing straight, that they’re in good condition, haven’t been exposed due to ground excavations, and the house is well connected to the piles. “Piles that have been infested by borer or concrete piles that are crumbling all need attention.”

While homeowners may be comfortable going under their homes, Dr Smith urges homeowners to be cautious particularly if the cavity is small or the area has been excavated.

“Always make sure someone else knows you’re under the house and the areas you’ll be checking, and that you’re wearing the appropriate safety gear including a hard hat and boots. If in doubt, get a license building professional to do the check for you – they know what to look for and how to do it safely.

“If you do find you need to replace or repair the piles, this isn’t a job for the DIY homeowner. It’s not easy work and you need to also make sure that the materials used are appropriate for the environment, such as if you’re close to the coast.”

If you’re getting a builder on site, it would pay to get them to check chimneys if you have them. Brick chimneys may collapse through the roof in an earthquake, so they may recommend you remove or replace them with a lightweight metal flue.

The good news is that there are some simple DIY steps that homeowners can take to fix and fasten their homes against earthquakes and other natural disasters. Make sure hot water cylinders and tall furniture are well secured, and moving heavy objects from being stored up high are some of these. Homeowners should also take a good look at the land around their property. Check the condition of existing retaining walls and if you’re on a slope, watch for cracks appearing in the ground as this could indicate the land is moving and needs to be retained.

To find out more, visit [www.fixfasten.co.nz](http://www.fixfasten.co.nz)