



A Project of the  
**CALIFORNIA RESIDENTIAL MITIGATION PROGRAM**

A Joint Powers Authority of the  
California Earthquake Authority and the  
California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

[www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com](http://www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com)

# Earthquake Brace + Bolt Program: Rules for Participation



## About EBB

Earthquake Brace + Bolt (EBB) was developed to help homeowners lessen the potential for damage to their houses during an earthquake. A residential seismic retrofit strengthens an existing older house, making it more resistant to earthquake activity such as ground shaking and soil failure. The seismic retrofitting involves bolting the house to its foundation and adding bracing around the perimeter of the crawl space.

Owners of houses in program ZIP Codes with house characteristics suitable for this type of retrofit in accordance with California Existing Building Code Appendix Chapter A3 (Chapter A3) are eligible for an incentive payment of up to \$3,000 to help pay costs associated with the retrofit of their houses.

Most homeowners decide to hire a contractor to do the retrofit work instead of doing it themselves. A typical retrofit may cost between \$3,000 and \$7,000 depending on the location and size of the house, contractor fees, and the amount of materials and work involved. If the homeowner is an experienced do-it-yourselfer, a retrofit can cost less than \$3,000.

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## Introduction

These Rules (“Rules”) govern the Earthquake Brace + Bolt program (“EBB”), a project of the California Residential Mitigation Program (“CRMP”). CRMP is a joint powers authority of the California Earthquake Authority and the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services.

These Rules govern the operations of EBB and are binding on all homeowners who apply to participate in EBB and on all Participating Homeowners and Participating Contractors in EBB.

These Rules may be amended at any time, and the amended Rules become effective upon being posted on the EBB website ([www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com](http://www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com)).

The definitions provided in these Rules apply to these Rules and to the EBB Program documents and on the EBB website.

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## Section 1 – Homeowners and the EBB Program

### 1.1 Official Source of EBB Program Information

The EBB program is described on its website, [www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com](http://www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com). Information about EBB may be available from other sources, but the website is the only official source of information about EBB.

### 1.2 ZIP Code Selection Process and Locations Where EBB Is Offered

The EBB website lists the ZIP Codes in which EBB currently operates. Houses located in ZIP Codes not listed on the EBB website are not eligible for EBB participation.

The ZIP Codes are selected from time to time using criteria approved by the CRMP Governing Board. Applying those criteria entails ordering all California ZIP Codes and then weighting them equally between two categories:

**1.2.1 Earthquake Hazard:** Higher-hazard areas were identified using the United States Geological Survey (USGS) earthquake-hazard map for California.

**1.2.2 Seismic Vulnerability of Structure:** The seismic vulnerability of houses located in California’s higher-hazard ZIP Codes was represented by the percentage of pre-1940 houses in each of those ZIP Codes—older houses are more likely to require seismically resistant bracing and bolting.

### 1.3 Incentive Payments

EBB offers an incentive payment of up to \$3,000 per house for seismic-retrofit work done in accordance with California Existing Building Code Appendix Chapter A3 (“Chapter A3”) on Qualifying Houses (see section 1.5) that are accepted for participation in EBB (see section 1.7), provided the Participating Homeowner sends EBB documentation as required by these Rules (see section 1.8).

The actual cost of qualifying seismic retrofit work may exceed the \$3,000 EBB incentive payment, but any expense that exceeds the EBB incentive payment is the sole responsibility of the Participating Homeowner.

### 1.4 Qualifying Seismic Retrofit Work

Only seismic retrofit work done in accordance with Chapter A3 qualifies for the EBB program incentive payment.

Chapter A3 allows for a seismic retrofit to be done by a contractor or by an owner-builder, either using a standard plan set for Type 1 Qualifying Houses (see section 1.5), or using plans prepared by a registered design professional (engineer or architect) for Type 2 Qualifying Houses (see section 1.5).

*(Note: The value of the labor provided by an owner-builder is not a recoverable cost under the EBB program and is not considered a reimbursable out-of-pocket expense.)*

In addition to the seismic retrofit, the water heater must also be properly strapped. In the event of an earthquake, strapping the water heater will reduce the likelihood of water and fire damage (note that incentives for water heater strapping are only eligible under the Program when bracing and bolting are also being performed on the house).

### 1.5 Qualifying Houses

There are two types of Qualifying Houses. Each Qualifying House must satisfy the following requirements: (1) located in a ZIP Code listed on the EBB website; (2) comply with all of the EBB Rules; (3) owner-occupied; (4) be a detached residential building composed of one to four dwelling units with a continuous raised perimeter foundation; and (5) the legal parcel has not previously received any incentive payment from EBB, the California Earthquake Authority Brace + Bolt Program, or any other earthquake retrofit incentive grant program.

#### 1.5.1 Type 1 Qualifying House

The Type 1 Qualifying House has a “cripple wall” that does not exceed 4 feet in height in any part of the crawl space. A cripple wall is a wood-stud wall extending from the top of the foundation to the underside of the lowest-floor framing. In addition, the house must not:

- (a) have a lateral-force-resisting system that uses poles or columns embedded in the ground;

- (b) exceed three stories in height or be a three-story house with cripple wall studs exceeding 14 inches in height;
- (c) be constructed in whole or in part on concrete slab(s) on grade\*; or
- (d) be classified by the local building department as a house required to be retrofitted with plans prepared by a registered design professional.

The local building department can approve a Type 1 Qualifying House retrofit to be performed using a standard plan set for Chapter A3 retrofits, such as the Los Angeles Standard Plan Number One or the ABAG (Association of Bay Area Governments) Plan Set A.

\* *The local building department may determine that a house can qualify as a Type 1 Qualifying House if a portion of the house is constructed on a concrete slab on grade and the retrofit work is limited to the remainder of the house.*

### 1.5.2 Type 2 Qualifying House (Plans Prepared by Registered Design Professional)

The Type 2 Qualifying House is required by Chapter A3 to be retrofitted with plans prepared by a registered design professional, who must sign the plans and certify in writing that the plans conform to Chapter A3.

The Type 2 Qualifying House has a cripple wall that exceeds 4 feet in height, or:

- (a) has a lateral-force-resisting system using poles or columns embedded in the ground;
- (b) exceeds three stories in height or is a three-story house with cripple wall studs exceeding 14 inches in height;
- (c) is constructed in whole or in part on concrete slab(s) on grade; or
- (d) is classified by the local building department as a house required to be retrofit with plans prepared by a design professional.

### 1.6 Registering for EBB

The homeowner must either register through the EBB website or request a paper application during the 30-day application period stated on the EBB website for the ZIP Code in which the house is located. No incomplete, early, or late registrations will be considered.

By answering the EBB qualification questions on the EBB website, the homeowner can determine whether the house is a Qualifying House (see section 1.5). The person registering and answering the EBB qualification questions must be an owner of record and live in the house.

If the house is a Qualifying House, the homeowner will be permitted to complete registration, add contact information, and authorize EBB to send text alerts when important email communications are sent.

If the house is not a Qualifying House, the homeowner may sign up for future EBB mailings and program updates but is not eligible to receive an EBB incentive grant.

Houses are often owned by more than one person. EBB does not undertake and is not responsible to confirm that a house is owned by the person applying to EBB or whether that person is authorized to perform seismic-retrofit work on the house. It is the sole responsibility of each Participating Homeowner to make sure that any co-owners have been notified of, and agree to, the EBB seismic retrofit work.

At the time the EBB eligible ZIP Codes are selected, EBB also determines in its sole discretion the number of Participating Homeowner incentive payments it will award.

### 1.7 Acceptance as an EBB Participating Homeowner

Once homeowner registration closes for a ZIP Code, an electronic system will randomly select Participating Homeowners.

All homeowners who have applied will be notified by email whether they have been selected as a Participating Homeowner or whether they have been placed on a waiting list for possible eligibility for EBB incentive payments as spaces become available. Being placed on a waiting list, however, does not guarantee eligibility for future EBB incentive payments.

Following notification, Participating Homeowners must visit [www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com](http://www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com) within 30 days of the notification date and log in with the user credentials set up during registration. Each Participating Homeowner will have an online "Homeowner Dashboard" to upload all required documentation and photographs.

Participating Homeowners will also receive a Homeowner Packet by mail with detailed program instructions, including specific information to give to the contractor doing the work.

### 1.8 Required Documentation for Incentive Payment

Participating Homeowners are required to submit documents described in Sections 1.8.1 and 1.8.2 to EBB via the Homeowner Dashboard to qualify for the incentive payment.

- A Participating Homeowner may authorize his or her licensed contractor to submit retrofit documentation on behalf of the Participating Homeowner by following the instructions on the Homeowner Dashboard.

### 1.8.1 Before the retrofit work begins

Within 60 days of receiving the program-acceptance email from EBB, the Participating Homeowner **must do the following via their online Homeowner Dashboard:**

- (a) Indicate whether the project will be constructed by the Participating Homeowner as an owner-builder or by a licensed contractor (and give EBB the name of the contractor).
- (b) Obtain a building permit from the local building inspection department (actual names of these departments vary from locality to locality) and submit the permit details and upload a copy including:
  - If the house is a Type 1 Qualifying House, the building permit must state that the work is to be performed in accordance with Chapter A3 or in accordance with a standard plan set.
  - If the house is a Type 2 Qualifying House, the building permit must state that the work is to be performed in accordance with Chapter A3 using plans prepared by a design professional.
  - The wording on building permits varies, but the criteria immediately above apply to every permit for every Qualifying House.
- (c) Take and upload six photographs:
  - Three in the basement or crawl space showing the cripple walls and the foundation.
  - Three of the exterior of the house (one showing the front and one side of the house, one showing only the front of the house, and one showing only the other side of the house).

### 1.8.2 After the retrofit work is complete

The seismic-retrofit work must be completed within six months after the building-permit-issuance date. Within 30 days after completion of the retrofit, the following items must be submitted to EBB via the online Homeowner Dashboard:

- (a) Building Permit
  - A copy of the building permit as signed by the building inspector after final inspection.
- (b) Photos (six total):
  - Three showing the completed retrofit work: in the crawl space from the same locations as the “before” photos and showing the cripple walls, the foundation, and the completed retrofit work. Photos must clearly depict the completed retrofit work.

- Three of the water heater strapping: Taken from the front and then each side at an angle showing the strapping around the heater and the attachment to the wall.

### (c) Invoices and Receipts for Retrofit-Related Expenses

- If a licensed contractor performed the work, the contractor must submit a final invoice for all work performed (not the contractor’s initial bid or proposal). The final invoice must be broken out by labor, materials and overhead and profit. Additionally, the final invoice must include the business name, address, phone number and contractor license number.
- If the Participating Homeowner performed the work as an owner-builder, the homeowner must submit receipts for “House-Retrofit Expenses,” which are out-of-pocket costs such as the building permit fee and the cost of materials and rented equipment used for the retrofit project. *(Note: The value of the labor provided by an owner-builder is not a recoverable cost under the EBB program and is not considered a reimbursable out-of-pocket expense.)*
- If the house is a Type 2 Qualifying House, the design professional and the contractor must submit a final invoice (not the initial bid or proposal).

### (d) IRS Form W-9 and Payment Authorization Form

- The Participating Homeowner must complete, sign, and submit IRS Form W-9.
- The Payment Authorization Form, completed and signed by the Participating Homeowner, must request payment of (1) \$3,000 or (2) the Participating Homeowner’s total, allowable House Retrofit Expenses, whichever is less. The form must indicate whether the incentive payment should be sent to the Participating Homeowner or to the Contractor.

### 1.8.3 Additional conditions regarding documentation

- (a) The Participating Homeowner must confirm that he or she has reviewed—and is fully responsible for the accuracy of—all the documentation submitted to EBB (including documentation submitted by a licensed contractor on behalf of the Participating Homeowner).
- (b) EBB will reject incomplete documentation and will endeavor to promptly advise the Participating Homeowner to complete and re-submit the required documentation.
- (c) Failure to submit complete, required documentation to EBB may render the Participating Homeowner ineligible for an EBB incentive payment.
- (d) The Executive Director or Managing Director of CRMP, in their sole discretion, may waive any requirements or extend any time limits stated in Sections 1.7 or Subsections 1.8.1 or 1.8.2.

## 1.9 Retrofit Inspections

As a condition of payment approval or for quality assurance purposes, EBB reserves the right to inspect, upon reasonable notice to the Participating Homeowner, the seismic-retrofit work performed on any Qualifying House.

## 1.10 Payment and Tax Reporting

Incentive payments will be mailed within 4 weeks following final approval by EBB.

The incentive payment will be reported as taxable income to the Participating Homeowner on IRS Form 1099-G.

Participating Homeowners are responsible for the payment of all taxes related to or arising from the incentive payments made under EBB. Each Participating Homeowner is encouraged to seek appropriate professional advice on the federal and state tax implications of their receiving the EBB incentive payment and whether the incentive payment will affect eligibility, income thresholds or limitations, or other issues relating to any health-care or other program of interest to the Participating Homeowner.

## 1.11 Program Communications

EBB communications will be delivered by email, with the exception of the Participating Homeowner Packet, which will be sent by U.S. Postal Service mail. Participating Homeowners may also opt-in to receive text alerts to alert them to important email communications.

Neither CRMP nor EBB is responsible or liable for any email communications that are missed, scrubbed, or filtered by anyone's computer system or email functions, or responsible or liable for any communications that are missed, lost, damaged, misdirected, or otherwise not delivered or received through use of U.S. Postal Service mail. EBB has no obligation to provide other forms of communication.

## 1.12 Personal Information, Privacy Policy, and Terms of Use

- (a) The information that EBB and CRMP collects, maintains, and uses includes, but is not limited to:
- personal information about homeowners, Participating Homeowners, contractors (and their employees and subcontractors), and design professionals;
  - applications for building permits and building permits;
  - documentation of costs and materials associated with the seismic-retrofit work;
  - information about houses belonging to homeowners and Participating Homeowners; and
  - photographs of houses and of the seismic-retrofit work.

- (b) Any homeowner who does not agree that the information described in Subsection 1.12(a) may be collected, maintained, and used for the purposes described in the Privacy Policy and Terms of Use referred to in Subsections 1.12(c) and 1.12(d) may not become or remain an EBB Participating Homeowner.
- (c) The Privacy Policy posted on the EBB website [www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com](http://www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com) pertains to the information described in Subsection 1.12(a); that Policy is part of and is incorporated into these Rules by this reference. The Privacy Policy may be amended at any time, and any amendment becomes effective when posted on that EBB website.
- (d) The Terms of Use posted on the EBB website [www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com](http://www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com) are binding on homeowners, Participating Homeowners, contractors, Participating Contractors, and design professionals hired by Participating Homeowners; those Terms are part of and are incorporated into these Rules by this reference. The Terms of Use may be amended at any time, and any amendment becomes effective when posted on that EBB website.

## 1.13 Contractors and Design Professionals

Contractors and design professionals hired by Participating Homeowners are not selected by, approved by, governed by, or in any way the responsibility of CRMP or EBB. The Contractor Directory on the EBB website, referred to in Section 2.1, is not an endorsement or approval of any Participating Contractor. EBB has no obligation to maintain, keep current, or monitor the Contractor Directory or monitor the licensing, financial condition, contracts, or competence of any Participating Contractor listed on the Contractor Directory or any other contractor or any design professional hired by a Participating Homeowner.

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## Section 2 – Participating Contractors

### 2.1 Contractor Directory

- 2.1.1 The “Contractor Directory” on the EBB website is a list of California-licensed contractors in good standing that have one or more employees, workers, or other associated personnel who have (a) successfully reviewed the six FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) training videos for seismic retrofit work and (b) passed all related quizzes associated with each such video. Those contractors who have done so are called “Participating Contractors”.
- ***EBB offers the Contractor Directory on its website as a convenience and a resource for Participating Homeowners—the listing in that Directory of a contractor who has become a Participating Contractor does not constitute CRMP’s or EBB’s endorsement, approval, or recommendation of that Participating Contractor.***

2.1.2 To be included in the Contractor Directory, a licensed contractor must:

- (a) have one or more employees, workers, or other associated personnel who have successfully completed the FEMA training videos and quizzes offered on the EBB website;
- (b) register on the EBB website as a “Participating Contractor” and maintain an online EBB account via the EBB “Contractor Dashboard”;
- (c) affirm on the Contractor Dashboard that the contractor is a California-licensed contractor in good standing in a field reasonably related to residential-retrofit work on dwellings in California and have that standing accurately reflected on California’s Contractors State License Board website;
- (d) agree that neither CRMP nor EBB will have any liability or responsibility for any work bid or performed by the contractor; and
- (e) affirm by signifying on the Contractor Dashboard, that the contractor is not currently barred by the State of California or the federal government from bidding on, accepting, or performing any State of California or federal-government-funded public works contracts, either as a contractor or subcontractor.

2.1.3 To remain listed in the Contractor Directory, a Participating Contractor must:

- (a) comply with all applicable EBB rules and requirements;
- (b) perform all EBB retrofit work in accordance with Chapter A3 and ensure that an employee, worker, or other associated person who has taken and successfully completed the FEMA training videos and quizzes offered on the EBB website, oversees and approves all EBB retrofit work performed by the Participating Contractor;
- (c) provide Participating Homeowners with invoices that clearly and separately show charges for materials, taxes, labor, and overhead, profit, or margin;
- (d) ensure that each and every building permit for EBB retrofit work includes the required references to Chapter A3 or a standard plan set (for a Type 1 Qualifying House) or the required references to plans prepared by a registered design professional (for a Type 2 Qualifying House);
- (e) provide on the Contractor Dashboard, upon EBB request, evidence of 1) a current California contractor’s license and (2) a current Contractor Bond or Bond of Qualifying Individual, or both, that meets the statutory requirement, and retain evidence of current workers’ compensation insurance for all employees;

- (f) not be barred by the State of California or the federal government from bidding on, accepting, or performing any State of California or federal-government-funded public works contracts, either as a contractor or subcontractor; and
- (g) demonstrate a commitment to work within the local jurisdiction’s building-construction permitting and inspection processes.
  - In its sole discretion, EBB may remove a Participating Contractor from the Contractor Directory in the event EBB determines that the Participating Contractor has failed to meet all of these requirements.
  - In its sole discretion, EBB may remove a Participating Contractor who is using EBB’s trademark or EBB’s phrase “Brace + Bolt” —or any mark or phrase that is, in EBB’s sole opinion and discretion, reasonably similar to EBB’s registered marks—in any manner that implies that the Participating Contractor is affiliated with EBB in any manner beyond its status as a Participating Contractor.
  - EBB has no obligation to maintain, keep current, or monitor the licensing, financial condition, contracts, or competence of any Participating Contractor listed on the Contractor Directory or any other contractor hired by a Participating Homeowner.

## 2.2 Advertising

Participating Contractors are permitted to use language in their marketing and sales materials that describes their successful completion of the FEMA training videos and testing offered on the EBB website. In no instance and under no circumstances may a Participating Contractor use language indicating “approval”, “endorsement”, “qualified”, or “referred” by EBB in marketing or sales materials.

## 2.3 Personal Information, Privacy Policy, and Terms of Use

- (a) The information that EBB and CRMP collect, maintain, and use includes, but is not limited to, information regarding:
  - personal information about homeowners, Participating Homeowners, Participating Contractors, contractors (and their employees and subcontractors), and design professionals;
  - applications for building permits and building permits;
  - documentation of costs and materials associated with the seismic-retrofit work;
  - information about houses belonging to homeowners and Participating Homeowners; and
  - photographs of houses and of the seismic-retrofit work.

- (b) The Privacy Policy posted on the EBB website [www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com](http://www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com) pertains to the information described in Subsection 2.3(a); that Policy is part of and is incorporated into these Rules by this reference. The Privacy Policy may be amended at any time, and any amendment becomes effective when posted on that EBB website.
- (c) The Terms of Use posted on the EBB website [www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com](http://www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com) are binding on homeowners, Participating Homeowners, contractors, Participating Contractors, and design professionals hired by Participating Homeowners; those Terms are part of and are incorporated into these Rules by this reference. The Terms of Use may be amended at any time, and any amendment becomes effective when posted on that EBB website.
- (d) Any Participating Contractor who does not agree that this information may be so collected, maintained, and used for the purposes described in the Privacy Policy and Terms of Use referred to above may not become or remain a Participating Contractor.

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## Section 3 – Dispute Resolution

By applying to participate or participating in EBB, homeowners, Participating Homeowners, Participating Contractors, and contractors agree to resolve any dispute or controversy with, or claim against, CRMP or EBB according to the Terms of Use posted on the EBB website.

### 3.1 Informal Procedure

In the event a controversy or claim arises out of the use of the EBB website or participation in EBB, a homeowner, Participating Homeowner, Participating Contractor, or contractor may contact EBB and discuss the matter informally with the Managing Director or a designee. If the controversy or claim is not resolved through that discussion, any party who still feels aggrieved may send a letter to the Managing Director.

The Managing Director or a designee will meet, in person or by telephone, or both, with the parties within 10 business days of receipt of the letter or such longer period as may be mutually acceptable.

The Managing Director will provide a written statement within 20 days of the conclusion of the meeting.

Homeowners, Participating Homeowners, and Participating Contractors, and contractors are not required to follow this informal dispute-resolution procedure, and following this informal dispute resolution procedure does not prevent them from initiating the arbitration procedure described in section 3.2.

### 3.2 Mandatory Arbitration

By using the EBB website or by participating in any way in any EBB program, homeowners, Participating Homeowners, Participating Contractors, and contractors agree that any claim or controversy arising out of their use of the EBB website or participating in EBB—that is not settled or resolved by use of the Informal Procedure in Subsection 3.1—must be settled solely by arbitration administered by the American Arbitration Association in accordance with its Home Construction Arbitration Rules, and judgment on the award rendered by the arbitrator(s) may be entered in any court having jurisdiction.

In doing so, homeowners, Participating Homeowners, Participating Contractors, and contractors, and each of them, acknowledge that (1) each is giving up the right to sue in court, including the right to trial by jury, except as provided by the rules of the American Arbitration Association; (2) arbitration awards are generally final and binding, and the ability to have a court reverse or modify an arbitration award is limited; (3) the ability to obtain documents, witness statements, and other discovery is generally more limited in arbitration than in court proceedings; (4) the arbitrators do not have to explain the reasons for their award; and (5) the rules of the American Arbitration Association may impose time limits for bringing a claim in arbitration. The costs of the arbitration, including any American Arbitration Association administration fee, the arbitrator's fee and costs for the use of facilities during the hearings, shall be borne by the least prevailing party to the arbitration as determined by the arbitrator.

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## Section 4 – Contact Information

Please contact EBB if you have questions.

California Residential Mitigation Program  
801 K Street, Sacramento, CA 95814  
Toll free: (877) 232-4300

For general questions about EBB, email to: [info@EarthquakeBraceBolt.com](mailto:info@EarthquakeBraceBolt.com)

Or visit the EBB website at: [www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com](http://www.EarthquakeBraceBolt.com)