Get ready to Stop Drop and Hold On at exactly 10:20 this morning.

That’s when Highline joins hundreds of institutions across the state for the Great Washington ShakeOut earthquake drill. The event will be the largest earthquake drill ever, with people from all over the world taking cover.

This internationally recognized event will involve more than 53 million participants globally. The drill recognizes multiple regions; with Washington state being one of the many.

It is estimated that there will be more than one million participants in Washington, and more than 160,000 of those participants will be college and university students.

The drill is approximately two minutes long, but is of paramount importance for all individuals to be informed and prepared of an earthquake situation, said Francesca Fender, Highline’s Emergency Management coordinator.

This is Highline’s third year participating in the drill.

"Of the quarterly safety drills we do, this is one of the easier drills we do on campus,” Fender said.

Students should have been notified of the drill already if they are signed up for automatic text alerts from Highline’s emergency notification center. The drill will be directed through a multilayered communication strategy so that all students, staff, and faculty will be notified through the college’s Emergency Alert Systems.

"An emergency message will broadcast over indoor and outdoor loudspeakers, desktop computers, the office phones speaker system, text message, digital signage (TV screens), e-mail, and Highline social media sites," Fender said.

The message has been designed to get your attention by taking control of all mediums.

Upon hearing the emergency earthquake message, everyone on campus should stop, drop, and hold on, Fender said.

Then, "resume normal activities once the message has stopped playing," she said.

For the students not inside a building, they should move away from nearby and overhead structures, Fender said.

"Do not hesitate," she said.

This is good practice for individuals’ responses during an earthquake situation, Fender said. The ShakeOut drill doesn’t take a lot of time away from the classroom, and it is at the discretion of the staff and faculty to participate. The drill may involve further precautions, including evacuating the building, which you would want to do in a real earthquake situation.

Building 29 is the only building known to be practicing this step of the drill, which was a decision made by staff and faculty.

According to the Great ShakeOut website, most of Washington state is prone to earthquakes. In 2001, the Nisqually earthquake was a magnitude 6.8. The damage of that earthquake, on the Highline campus alone, was around $5 million, said Geology Professor Eric Baer.

"The top floor of the Library was a wreck, there were books everywhere," Dr. Baer said.

The Nisqually earthquake was a deep earthquake caused by the subduction of the Juan De Fuca plate 30 miles underground and its epicenter was located near Olympia, about 50 miles south of campus.

During the earthquake in 2001, Dr. Baer witnessed a lot of people unprepared and who didn’t know what to do. People were just standing around, he said.

"We will have more earthquakes," Dr. Baer said.

Highline's campus is also susceptible to damage from a smaller, but more local, fault zone. The small earthquakes from the Seattle Fault, can be more devastating because it is only six miles deep and the campus is sitting on top of it.

"[Magnitude five] and magnitude six on Seattle Fault would bring serious damage to Highline," Dr. Baer said.

The Great ShakeOut drill then, is important to help people prepare and could be the difference between someone being safe and getting seriously injured.

"Do not stand in a doorway, run out of a building, and be prepared to take care of yourself," Dr. Baer said. Standing in doorways or running out of buildings are old precautions that can give people a false sense of safety. Once all the shaking has stopped you should evacuate the building, just in case there has been structural damage that cannot be seen.

There is more information about the ShakeOut drill at (http://www.shakeout.org/), were you can find tips and guides for those with disabilities. Also, for those looking for further reading and preparedness, there is more information in various formats there, too. There will also be a following up message from the emergency management team, about safety preparedness at your home.