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A business built on shaky ground

- Bernadette Fay
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Dean Reese, president of QuakeHold, checks the stability of a large piece of art in Mary Jo Townzan's house.



Chronicle / Christina Koci Hernandez

In 1991, an entrepreneurial woman named Dean Reese had her collection of Swarovski crystal animals broken by a group of rambunctious kids. Upon these shards was a company born.

Reese began a search for a way to protect breakables, which led to QuakeHold and its first product: putty. The company is now the largest manufacturer of earthquake safety fasteners -- from putty to straps -- in the United States and Japan.

Brian Lowe, 48, marketing director, is the firm's interior mitigation specialist, which means minimizing and preventing injury and loss inside the home. He says the 100th anniversary of the 1906 fire and earthquake is the perfect time to get the message out on just how easy it is to mitigate risk.

"Any run-of-the-mill healthy person can do it -- it's just peeling and pressing straps into place," says Lowe, who co-authored the "What Should I Do" section in the "Putting Down Roots in Earthquake Country" booklet.