



American Red Cross: Nurses as a Vital Resource in Disaster Response

8-21-2024 California BON



**American
Red Cross**

American Red Cross: Nurses as a Vital Resource in Disaster Response

- History of Disaster Response
- California Emergency Services Act
- Nurse Licensure Compact
- Next Steps





At the onset of a disaster and even after, it is not clear how many healthcare staff will be needed.

In the past decade, 2.6 billion people around the world have been affected by earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, and other natural disasters. Public health crises following catastrophes don't usually herald their arrival with high winds, storm surges, and wildfire ashes; often they develop more insidiously over time.

Nurses have always been, and continue to be, pivotal in safeguarding the public during and after these disasters, as well as public health emergencies—most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. They educate and protect people, engage with and build trust with the community, help people prepare and respond, and foster resilience to help communities fully recover.

But fundamental policy reform is needed to ensure that nurses and other health and mental health providers can respond across state lines when disasters hit.

History of Disaster

Hurricanes, Typhoons, Wildfires, Atmospheric Rivers, and Other Assaults

Assaults by Mother Nature have taught policymakers and the public health community that what comes after the disaster can be as bad and far-reaching as the disaster itself.



Disasters: Public Health

- **In Texas**, federal and state government officials began highlighting the health consequences of exposure to floodwaters. Far from simple rivers of rain, those floodwaters became a toxic soup of sewage, chemicals, vermin, and other hazards, such as metal or glass debris, through which people had waded, often chest-high in the rancid cauldron
- **In California**, aside from immediate deaths and destruction, wildfires are also a serious, and long-lasting, public health threat. The effects of wildfires on humans are just as terrible and damaging. People with preexisting respiratory or cardiovascular issues can have those issues worsen after only brief exposure to the particulate matter in wildfire smoke. Many people end up hospitalized after breathing in wildfire smoke. Children and the elderly are the most vulnerable to the effects of forest fires on human health. Outside all other health concerns, the effects of wildfires on humans can often lead to premature death. According to a 2024 study published in *Science Advances*, wildfire smoke may have contributed to more than 52,000 premature deaths in California between 2008 and 2018.





California Emergency Services Act:
California Government Code 8.659 A

California Government Code 8.659

Available Resource

- **8659. (a)** Any physician or surgeon (whether licensed in this state or any other state), hospital, pharmacist, respiratory care practitioner, nurse, or dentist who renders services during any state of war emergency, a state of emergency, or a local emergency at the express or implied request of any responsible state or local official or agency shall have no liability for any injury sustained by any person by reason of those services, regardless of how or under what circumstances or by what cause those injuries are sustained; provided, however, that the immunity herein granted shall not apply in the event of a willful act or omission.
- Requires an emergency/disaster declaration.





NLC Compact:
An Answer to the Critical Need

Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC): A Vital Resource

- In response to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), both federal and state governments have enabled emergency powers and issued executive orders that ease state licensing restrictions to allow for adequate nurse staffing across state lines (NCSBN, 2020).
- However, short-term declarations of emergency, calls for disaster relief and executive orders, all expire and do not bridge the gap between an acute crisis response and the need for a more permanent resolution.

Compact licensure is a critical response in emergency disasters.



Next Steps:
Collaborative Action



The ability to quickly mobilize nurses and provide aid is critical, especially for the special needs population who require intensive care, but also necessary for longer term healthcare infrastructure recovery (Eisenhower, 2017).

Short-term declarations of emergency, calls for disaster relief, and executive orders expire and do not bridge the gap between an acute crisis response and the need for a more permanent resolutions.

How can we help?

- Implement the enhanced Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC). The state benefits as it enables prompt ***emergency and disaster relief***, supporting workforce mobility, providing for staffing shortages, and adequately responding to changing healthcare delivery models.
- Familiarize yourself with the California Emergency Services Act



Contact Information

Trisha Mims

Trisha.mims@redcross.org

THANK YOU



**American
Red Cross**

References

- Campaign for Action. (2018). Many states, one license: The enhanced nurse licensure compact is now live. <https://campaignforaction.org/many-states-one-license-enhanced-nurse-licensure-compact-now-live/>
- Eisenhower Health. (2017). The importance of nurses' help after a major hurricane. <https://careers.eisenhowerhealth.org/nursing-leadership/nurses-help-after-hurricanes/>
- Georgia Secretary of State. (2018). Nurse licensure compact. http://sos.ga.gov/index.php/licensing/plb/45/nurse_licensure_compact
- Jimenez, S. (n.d). Nurses called to help Hurricane Harvey relief efforts. <https://www.nurse.com/blog/2017/08/29/nurses-called-to-help-hurricane-harvey-relief-efforts/>
- Kacik, A. (2018) Providers welcome interstate licensing, while unions oppose it. <https://www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20181201/NEWS/181139996/providers-welcome-interstate-licensing-while-unions-oppose-it>
- Kappel, D. (2018). NCSBN news release: Enhanced nurse licensure compact (eNLC) implemented Jan. 19, 2018. <https://www.ncsbn.org/11945.htm>
National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (n.d.a). About U.S. boards of nursing. <https://www.ncsbn.org/about-boards-of-nursing.htm>
- National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2020). States changing nurse licensing for COVID-19 Response. <https://www.ncsbn.org/covid-19.htm>
New York State. (2018). Senate Bill S7579. 2017-2018 Legislative Session. <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2017/s7579?intent=support>
- Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability (OPPAGA). (2006). Nurse Licensure Compact Would Produce Some Benefits But Not Resolve the Nurse Shortage. <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/reports/pdf/0602rpt.pdf>
- Siow, E. & Ng, J. (2013). Internal migration of nurses in the United States: migratory prompts and difference in job satisfaction between migrants and non-migrants. *Nursing Economics* 31(3), 128-136.
- Steward, T. (2016). DFL Lawmaker Bucks Nurses' Union in Effort to Streamline Licensing. <https://www.americanexperiment.org/news/dfl-lawmaker-bucks-nurses-union-effort-streamline-licensing/>
- Qaulivis. (2018). Nurse Licensure Compact Analysis. https://www.qualivis.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Qualivis_WhitePaperUpdate_18.pdf