



Air & Surface Transport Nurses Association Position Statement

Disaster Response

Background

Critical care transport programs across the world are called upon to provide assistance during times of community need and are a foundation of initial disaster response in local communities. Because disasters or incidents of significant scale can occur in any community at any time, transport programs must be prepared to provide immediate response to both natural and man-made disasters. Transport nurses should understand the levels of response available in their community and the command structure that helps guide this response.¹

Because transport programs are integrated into local, state, regional, and federal responses to disasters and emergencies, a culture of preparedness must be cultivated that allows for a scalable, flexible, and adaptable response during times of community need. Not all calls for assistance will escalate beyond a local response. Transport programs must be prepared to respond to disasters of all forms.

The United States relies on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Preparedness System to ensure readiness by focusing on the following six components: identifying and assessing risk, estimating capability requirements, building and sustaining capabilities, planning to deliver capabilities, validating capabilities, and reviewing and updating.² This system can be used as a guide for transport programs to assess their individual and system readiness, as follows:

- What do we need to prepare for?
- What level of capability is needed?
- What are our current capabilities?
- What gaps exist between desired and current capabilities?
- How should these gaps be addressed?

Preparedness is accomplished through proactive planning and education. Transport programs should ensure personnel have completed education programs that provide standardized curricula

related to disaster response and preparedness, such as the following FEMA independent study courses:

- IS-100.c An Introduction to the Incident Command System
- IS-200.b ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents
- IS-700.b An Introduction to the National Incident Management System
- IS-800.c National Response Framework, an Introduction
- IS-5.A An Introduction to Hazardous Materials

For transport program leaders, the following courses are highly recommended:

- ICS-300 Intermediate ICS for Expanding Incidents
- ICS-400 Advanced ICS for Command and General Staff – Complex Incidents

Transport programs should actively participate with their EMS and preparedness community partners to help build a culture of preparedness.³ Because disasters always begin at the local level, and often occur without warning, an organizational preparedness program with the following attributes is needed: a clear vision, actionable objectives and goals, defined deliverables and timelines, and a schedule of regular review.

Responding to a disaster can be a fulfilling endeavor, but these experiences also take a toll on the mind, body, and spirit of team members.³ It is important to remember all who may be impacted by the stress of a disaster response and have in place education and resources that address stress and the possibility of physiologic and psychological consequences of unprocessed, unmitigated trauma. Programs should provide education and training on how to identify stress reactions and offer processes and resources to assist affected individuals.

ASTNA Position

- ASTNA supports the FEMA National Incident Management System (NIMS) as the standard to preventing, protecting, mitigating, responding, or recovering from a disaster.
- ASTNA believes transport programs must build and maintain a culture of preparedness with guidance from FEMA's National Preparedness System.
- ASTNA believes planning and education are the best means to ensure preparedness and that education programs should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.
- ASTNA believes transport programs should be active and collaborative in their integration with local, state, regional, and federal partners and that program affiliation never impact or influence decisions during a disaster response.

References

1. Wanner GK, Loyd JW. *EMS, Care Teams in Disaster Response*. In: StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island, FL: StatPearls Publishing; 2019.
2. Department of Homeland Security. *Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR) Guide. Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 201*. 3rd ed. Washington DC: Author; 2018.
3. Treadwell DT, Santiago JP (eds). *Standards for Critical Care and Specialty Transport*. 2nd ed. Aurora, CO: Air & Surface Transport Nurses Association; 2019, pp. 147, 150-151.

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