



Worker Training Program: California

A National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) Superfund-Related Activity

The NIEHS Worker Training Program (WTP) annually funds training for more than 6,700 workers through about 400 health and safety courses in California. Recipients of NIEHS WTP grants lead trainings to prepare workers to handle hazardous materials and respond to disasters in their communities.



Courses include:

- Asbestos Abatement
- Basic Superfund Site Worker and Site Worker Refresher
- Emergency Response
- Respiratory Protection
- Hazard Communication
- Heat Illness
- Infectious Disease Awareness
- Environmental Justice

Training Highlights

Wildfire Emergency Preparedness and Response Training

Due to increasing wildfires in California, WTP grantees continue to develop important training initiatives to raise awareness and prepare workers for the accompanying hazards. Grantees deliver critical emergency preparedness and response training to first responders, construction workers, day laborers, and volunteers who are exposed to wildfire dangers or are responsible for cleaning up hazardous ash and debris.

In Southern California, the Western Region Universities Consortium (WRUC) delivered training to help day laborers and domestic workers protect themselves from respiratory hazards associated with wildfire smoke, including ash and fine particulate matter. These trainings were delivered in English and Spanish and were conducted in collaboration with Instituto de Educacion Popular del Sur de California and the National Day Laborer Organizing Network.



Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

In response to the Mendocino, Carr, and Camp wildfires, International Brotherhood of Teamsters trained workers in cleanup operations using funding from the Disaster Relief Act of 2019. The training included four 40-hour Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) courses for more than 60 workers. The trainings enabled workers to gain employment on wildfire recovery operations and provided areas with people who have necessary skills to assist with future disaster response.



Photo courtesy of WRUC

About the Worker Training Program

WTP funds nonprofit organizations to provide health and safety training for workers who may be exposed to hazardous materials and waste at work or while assisting with emergency response. WTP was initiated under the Hazardous Substance Basic Research and Training Program authorized by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (42 USC 9660a).

Under these NIEHS Superfund-related activities, WTP grantees provide trainings across the country through the [Hazardous Waste, Hazmat Disaster, and Environmental Career Worker Training Programs](#).

For more information, visit www.niehs.nih.gov/wtp.

Job Training and Economic Impact

The Environmental Career Worker Training Program (ECWTP) offers job training for disadvantaged and underrepresented workers, many from communities with environmental justice concerns. This program has a nationwide **economic impact** through pre-employment and health and safety training in underserved communities. A unique aspect of the ECWTP is its focus on life skills, mentorship, and career guidance for participants.

In Los Angeles, WRUC consortium member UCLA Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program, delivered trainings on environmental hazards, life skills, and construction. The trainings were delivered in collaboration with partners like the Women in Non-Traditional Employment Roles and the Los Angeles Black Worker Center. On average, 73% of students that complete the programs obtain full-time employment or pre-apprenticeship positions in construction.

Nuclear Worker Training

CPWR – The Center for Construction Research and Training and other grantees prepare workers for jobs at U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear weapons sites and nuclear waste sites, with funding from the **NIEHS/DOE Nuclear Worker Training Program**. In California, CPWR provides courses to DOE workers on general construction safety, confined space rescue, and asbestos abatement.

NIEHS/DOE grantees also conduct courses for workers at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Santa Susana Field Laboratory, and SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory. They provide safety and health training for cleanup activities, waste management, and hazardous materials response.



Photo courtesy of CPWR

Infectious Disease Response and Biological Hazards Training

WTP provides training on COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, teaching workers the importance of infection control and hazard recognition in health care and non-health care settings.

In recent years, infectious disease awareness training and COVID-19 virtual train-the-trainer courses were delivered to over 970 students in California by the American Federation of State, County, Municipal Employees, a partner with WTP grantee International Chemical Workers

Union Council Center for Worker Health and Safety Education. The classes were taught in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The students included home health care providers and union staff representatives.

Community College Training

Every year, nearly 150 students participate in Hazardous Waste Operations, General Industry Safety, and Industrial Emergency Responder Technician courses through Cuyamaca College in El Cajon, part of the California Community College system. The training is sponsored by WTP grantee the Community College Consortium for Health and Safety Training/National Partnership for Environmental Technology Education.



Photo courtesy of Charleston Keislerson

Cuyamaca College delivers courses to students seeking an Associate Degree or a Certificate of Achievement in environmental management, occupational safety and health management, and HAZWOPER. The Environmental Health and Safety Management program was recognized as a **California "Strong Workforce Star"** for monumental job placement and wage growth for graduating students.

Overall Training

The following **WTP grantees** trained workers in California:

- Alabama Fire College Workplace Safety Training
- Community College Consortium for Health and Safety Training/National Partnership for Environmental Technology Education
- CPWR – The Center for Construction Research and Training
- Emory University
- International Association of Fire Fighters
- International Brotherhood of Teamsters
- International Chemical Workers Union Council Center for Worker Health and Safety Education
- LIUNA (Laborers' International Union of North America) Training and Education Fund
- Nova Southeastern University
- OAI, Inc.
- United Steelworkers Tony Mazzocchi Center for Health, Safety, and Environmental Education
- Texas-Utah Consortium for Hazardous Waste Worker Education and Training
- Western Region Universities Consortium