Activities funded by the Disaster Relief Act of 2019

Summary of funding allocations through WTP grantee supplemental awards and contract mechanisms
February 2021

Overview
NIEHS WTP received $1 million from the Disaster Relief Act of 2019, to support training of workers and communities affected by a variety of natural disasters. NIEHS WTP used the funding in two ways:

1. $950,000 for training delivery grants
2. $49,991 for contract support

A summary of these activities is below. Information about NIEHS WTP can be found using the following links:

NIEHS WTP: https://niehs.nih.gov/wtp

NIEHS WTP Disaster Preparedness and Response: https://tools.niehs.nih.gov/wetp/index.cfm?id=556
Grantee Training Summary

A total of seven grantees received funds for training course delivery under the Disaster Relief Act of 2019. Six organizations were funded to complete work in the 2020 program year (August 1, 2019 – July 31, 2020), and three were funded to complete work in the 2021 program year (August 1, 2020 – May 31, 2021). Proposed training topics covered wildfires, floods, hurricanes, and typhoons (Table 1).

Table 1. Funded Organizations and Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Grant Number</th>
<th>WTP Program Year</th>
<th>Principal Investigator (PI) Name(s) All</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>International Chemical Workers Union Council</td>
<td>5U45ES006162-28S1</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Cyphers, Frank Stephen</td>
<td>Hurricanes in Texas, North Carolina, and Florida</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of California Los Angeles/Western Region Universities Consortium</td>
<td>5U45ES006173-28S1</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Riley, Kevin</td>
<td>Wildfires in California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas Southern University/Deep South Center for Environmental Justice</td>
<td>5U45ES010664-21S1</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Bullard, Robert / Wright, Beverly</td>
<td>Floods in Texas and Louisiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Brotherhood of Teamsters</td>
<td>5U45ES014084-15S1</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Byrd, Lamont</td>
<td>Wildfires in California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Partnership for Environmental Technology Education/Community Colleges Consortium for Health and Safety Training</td>
<td>5U45ES019337-10S1</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Mellecker, Margaret</td>
<td>Typhoons in Pacific Islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston/Texas-Utah Consortium for Hazardous Waste Worker Training</td>
<td>3U45ES019360-10S2</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Rios, Janelle / Emery, Robert</td>
<td>Flooding disaster response and preparedness in Public Health Regions 5 and 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California Los Angeles/Western Region Universities Consortium</td>
<td>5U45ES006173-29</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>Riley, Kevin</td>
<td>Wildfires in California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Minnesota/Midwest Consortium</td>
<td>ES006184-29</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>Raynor, Peter</td>
<td>Flooding disaster response and resilience in the Midwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Brotherhood of Teamsters</td>
<td>5U45ES014084-16</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>Byrd, Lamont</td>
<td>Hurricane and flooding disaster response and resilience in the Gulf Coast</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Training Delivery: Courses

In the 2020 program year (August 1, 2019 – July 31, 2020), 35 courses were delivered to 928 workers, with 5,158 contact hours (Figure A). These courses provided workers with increased knowledge and skills to help them safely respond to and cleanup after a disaster. For example:

The highest number of workers were trained in respiratory protection. These courses were all delivered in California, to support safety for workers responding to wildfires or those exposed to the smoke and ash as part of their jobs. Factsheets in English and Spanish were provided to responders and community to support this effort.

- Courses such as Disaster Site Safety Awareness and Emergency Response Awareness gave workers information on hazards to avoid and protect themselves from at a disaster site following events such as hurricanes and wildfires.
- General Construction Safety provided workers with a certification card for knowledge of safety at construction sites, which is important for cleanup and rebuilding after a disaster.
- Mold and Mildew classes helped workers address moisture damage with safe and proper cleanup after floods or hurricanes.
- Superfund Site Worker and Hazardous Waste Operations taught students how to safely handle hazardous waste, such as the waste remaining after a structure fire or hurricane.
- Adult CPR provided workers with increased knowledge about life-saving skills that can be used during a future disaster.
- Training Methods/Trainer Development instructed students how to become peer teachers, increasing the number of local trainers available to deliver disaster safety courses in the future.

Previous articles in the NIEHS Environmental Factor describe how these classes help workers and communities before and after wildfire, hurricane, and flooding events.

![Figure A](image.png)

Figure A. Number of workers trained in NIEHS WTP courses through the Disaster Relief Act of 2019 (August 1, 2019 – July 31, 2020)
Training Delivery: Locations

The most workers were trained in California (564 workers in 18 courses). These courses were held in various locations throughout northern and southern parts of the state, including El Dorado, Los Angeles, Orange, and Riverside counties. Eight courses were delivered to 110 workers in Escambia County, Florida. Additionally, 1 course was given to 9 workers in Rapides Parish, Louisiana, and 4 courses were delivered to 53 workers in Robeson County, North Carolina.

Figure B. Numbers of workers trained by location of course through the Disaster Relief Act of 2019 (August 1, 2019 – July 31, 2020)
Effects of COVID-19

While WTP grantees were able to deliver 35 health and safety courses in the 2020 program year, 27 of the 35 (77%) occurred prior to mid-March 2020, before stay-at-home orders were issued around the country due to COVID-19. COVID-19 travel restrictions, limits on in-person gatherings, building closures, and quarantine requirements have led to a general decrease in our grantees’ ability to deliver training, particularly in-person training. Additionally, the immediate health and safety training needs of COVID-19 took priority for many worker populations. However, grantees are delivering virtual, online training when appropriate for the content and worker population. The training needs and challenges experienced by our grantees during COVID-19 are outlined in a needs assessment report.

In the end, most grantees delivered less disaster training than planned in the 2020 program year, and two grantees were not able to deliver their training due to the need to travel to their intended populations. All grantees are planning further activities.

Under separate funding, NIEHS WTP partnered with the American Industrial Hygiene Association to develop “Guidance to Protect Volunteers From COVID-19 During Natural Disaster Response and Recovery”, released November 2020. This guidance document, along with other COVID-19 resources developed by NIEHS WTP, can support the delivery of disaster training while still in the pandemic.

Grantee Summaries of Training Implemented and Planned, 2020 Program Year

Note: The following includes activities for the six grantee organizations that were funded to complete work in the 2020 program year (August 1, 2019 – July 31, 2020).

International Chemical Workers Union Council (ICWUC)

ICWUC trained 62 workers and community members in 5 courses for 704 contact hours. They delivered training with community organizations, primarily the Robeson County Disaster Recovery Committee in Lumberton, North Carolina where they had previously conducted mold and hurricane train-the-trainer programs. Under the 2019 Disaster Relief Act funding, ICWUC staff taught an adult CPR/First Aid and an OSHA 10-hour General Construction Safety class. Additionally, trainers in Robeson County delivered two mold awareness classes. ICWUC’s new partner, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees conducted a Disaster Train-the-Trainer course in Louisiana.

University of California Los Angeles/Western Region Universities Consortium (WRUC)

WRUC trained 536 workers and community members in 15 courses for 427 contact hours. WRUC delivered courses through two of its consortium members.

University of California, Los Angeles Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program (UCLA-LOSH) as the lead consortium institution, engaged in several activities related to protecting workers from the danger of wildfire smoke.

- UCLA-LOSH prepared staff and community-health promotoras from the Instituto de Educación Popular del Sur de California (IDEPSCA) to teach about wildfire smoke and the hazards of wildfire recovery work, using factsheets in English and Spanish. The staff and promotoras were then able to train domestic workers and day laborers at various hiring sites and food distribution events across the region, which led to a training for workers at the Pasadena Jobs Center in February 2020.

- UCLA-LOSH delivered awareness courses with the Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) in Ventura County, providing information about respirators and safety regulations to farmworkers affected by smoke and ash while working in the fields during massive wildland fires. UCLA-LOSH is working with partners to create educational materials for agricultural workers in multiple languages (Spanish, Mixteco, Purepecha, etc.).

- UCLA-LOSH’s partnership with the Ventura Farmworker Resource Program and the University of California (UC) Davis led to the development of an infographic on COVID-19 in English and Spanish for agricultural workers. The tool has been adapted and distributed to workers in five counties to date, and they are creating a wallet-card version of the tool.
One consortium member, the UC Berkeley Labor Occupational Health Program, had several meetings with staff from the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) and other stakeholders to establish partnerships in Butte and Lake Counties. They also conducted needs assessment interviews with the Hmong Cultural Center of Butte County, North Valley Community Foundation, and California Rural Legal Assistance. These activities were informing plans to offer a regional workshop model for community and business organizations, jointly sponsored with CalOES, but planned activities had to be put on hold due to the coronavirus crisis.

**Texas Southern University (TSU)/Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ)**

TSU-DSCEJ trained 207 individuals in 9 courses for 1,002 contact hours. Training courses occurred in Escambia County, Florida, and included community members from areas near Pensacola, including Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties. The courses helped workers prepare for hurricanes and floods and the hazardous environments that follow during cleanup. The courses delivered included emergency and disaster preparedness and hazardous materials safety. Outreach was also performed in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties in Florida, as well as Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana and Mobile County, Alabama. Due to restrictions imposed by COVID-19 pandemic, DSCEJ was only able to conduct training in Escambia County.

**International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT)**

IBT delivered 6 courses to 123 workers with 3,025 contact hours. The training included three 40-Hour Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) courses that trained workers involved in cleanup operations in response to the Mendocino, Carr, and Camp wildfires in California. The training allowed workers to gain employment on wildfire recovery operations and provided them with necessary skills to assist with future disaster response in the area.

A follow-up survey conducted by IBT found that many of the students were able to obtain temporary and permanent work in the hazardous materials field. One student stated, “These classes are a blessing in helping people to obtain knowledge and certifications to obtain a new career field or to expand what they might already be doing, while improving their lives. I have referred a good number of people to these classes and they were always grateful for the new learning opportunities through these training classes.”

**National Partnership for Environmental Technology Education (Pete) /Community Colleges Consortium for Health and Safety Training (CCCHST)**

Pete/CCCHST was scheduled to deliver courses at Guam Community College in March and planned on sending 3 instructors from their Disaster Preparedness Instructor Institute to disaster relief sites. This would have given the instructors up to one week of hands-on experience at a response site. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, building closures, and quarantine requirements, all activities were postponed until COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

**University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston/Texas-Utah Consortium for Hazardous Waste Worker Training**

The Texas-Utah Consortium was funded to deliver training across several sites: counties in Texas, Arkansas, Ohio, Minnesota, and Oklahoma; parishes in Louisiana; and the Navajo Nation Reservation in Arizona. Training was proposed for two topics: 1) selection and use of PPE among workers and volunteers who respond to disasters and 2) emergency management planning for laboratories and facilities where hazardous materials are stored. This supplemental grant began in June 2020 and was immediately affected by COVID-19 related travel restrictions and PPE shortages. The Consortium has been unable to deliver in-person training in the proposed counties or deliver PPE-based response kits but planning for future activities is underway.
Contract Support Summary

To support the work on disasters, $49,991 was awarded as part of a larger contract, the WTP Technical Support for the COVID-19 Pandemic Disaster Response in Disadvantaged Communities and Disaster Response Coordination Center. The primary task under the 2019 Disaster Relief Act funding was the development and implementation of Environmental Justice (EJ) and Natural Disasters Virtual Town Hall Meetings (Southeast, Gulf Coast, and West and Southwest). These were coordinated with the Interagency Federal Working Group on Environmental Justice. The contractor is providing administrative support for the planning and coordination of three virtual town hall meetings. The town halls will assist NIEHS WTP in gaining a better understanding of how natural disasters and COVID-19 impact minority, low-income, overburdened, and underserved communities, and how the federal government can support these communities to better prepare and respond to their needs before, during, and after natural disasters. The sessions will gather lessons learned and best practices from on the ground voices, as well as identify action steps which the federal government can work on to better assist overburdened and underserved communities.

Town hall meetings will have real-time translation in English and Spanish for all participants. While originally scheduled earlier in 2020, they were postponed due to COVID-19. The town halls are now planned as virtual meetings on the following dates:

- **Southeast Town Hall Meeting** (Florida, Georgia, Carolinas, Caribbean Basin (including Puerto Rico)), **January 27, 2021**
  Theme: Hurricanes, Major Floods, Tornadoes, and Earthquakes amidst COVID-19 and Impacts of Natural Disasters on Farm Workers

- **Gulf Coast Town Hall Meeting** (Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi), **February 24, 2021**
  Theme: Hurricanes and Major Floods amidst COVID-19

- **West and Southwest Meeting** (California, Arizona, New Mexico), **March 29, 2021**
  Theme: Impacts of Wildfires and COVID-19 on EJ Communities

Reports and recordings of the town hall meetings will be available.