

ISSUE BRIEF

Residential Care Disaster Preparedness

February 13, 2018

BACKGROUND: *2017 Was a Record Year for Natural Disasters* – The number of meteorological disasters in 2017 was unprecedented. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) estimates the total cumulative damage of last year’s flood, fires and other weather events was \$306.2 billion, a new record for the U.S.ⁱ The California wildfires, which burned more than 9.8 million acres, destroyed over 15,000 homes and businesses, and caused 44 deaths, cost \$18 billion alone. California also grappled with drought conditions, significant flooding, as well as the devastating mudslides in Montecito and Santa Barbara County in early 2018.

In 2017, many LeadingAge California members experienced the devastation of these disasters first hand. Senior housing and care providers face unique challenges in preparing for and responding to natural disasters. Senior communities serve residents with a wide range of needs, from active and independent seniors to bedbound patients who require 24-hour care.

Current RCFE Disaster Preparedness Requirements in California – RCFE licensing rules require providers to implement emergency and disaster plans. In 2008, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed AB 749 (Wolk), which required residential care facilities for the elderly (RCFE) to have an emergency plan in place that included evacuation procedures, facility self-reliance plans, transportation plans and other various elements in case of an emergency. In addition, the California Department of Social Services released a technical support guide for providers to self-assess their readiness to respond to an emergency or disasterⁱⁱ

ISSUE: 2017 underscored how critical it is for providers to have sufficient emergency and disaster plans in place. To ensure that communities are able to effectively implement their disaster plans, existing disaster planning requirements in RCFEs should be updated to ensure that communities, and their staff, are well-trained and well-prepared on their current disaster plans should disaster strike again.

RECOMMENDATION: Support AB__ that would require RCFE’s to provide annual training to staff on the RCFE’s disaster preparedness plan, hold specified drills quarterly on varied emergencies and review the disaster plan on an annual basis.

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ⁱ NOAA, <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/blogs/beyond-data/2017-us-billion-dollar-weather-and-climate-disasters-historic-year>

ⁱⁱ CDSS, Self-Assessment Guide for Emergency and Disaster Preparedness: <http://www.cdsscounties.ca.gov/coplanners/res/pdf/doc28.pdf>