



Disaster response: how can nurses help ensure they are ready?

The occurrence of disasters and emergency events throughout the world, caused by either humans, micro-organisms, geology or climate, often lead to mass casualties. Nurses play a vital role when these events strike. The International Council of Nurses (ICN) supports that, as disasters continue to occur throughout the world, it confirms the need for nurses to be ready to intervene with a common understanding of how to respond in these situations.

Recently, on World Tsunami Awareness Day, the ICN issued updated guidance on how nurses should respond in a disaster situation by releasing [Core Competencies in Disaster Nursing v 2.0](#). This new version outlines what nurses should know and be able to do for the effective prevention, preparedness, response and recovery from disasters. The framework provides a global consensus on nursing competencies, in relation to the professional nursing experience and expertise. Level I and II competencies are identified in the report; level I applies to the general professional nurse, and level II applies to the advanced or specialized nurse (designated disaster responder).

The ICN expects that the publication of these competencies is the first step of an ongoing process within the profession, at multiple levels and internationally, in the aim of building nursing capacity and improving disaster related interventions. As with any work prepared for the global audience of nurses, each country, nursing regulatory agency and employing institution should read and interpret the world-wide expectations within the legal, cultural and ethical framework within which they function (ICN, 2019).

As registered nurses are often called upon to respond in the event of a disaster, taking note of the ICN Core Competencies in Disaster Nursing, will help inform nurses globally on how they should prepare for such occurrences, and how they should respond, depending on their professional experience, if they find themselves in a disaster situation.

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International Council of Nurses (2019). *Core Competencies in Disaster Nursing Version 2.0*. Geneva, Switzerland: Author.

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