

# CHA News Release

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Lessons from Wildfires, Mudslides, Floods Top Agenda at California Hospital Disaster Planning Conference

*Earthquake Early Warning System and Special Tribute to 18<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 9/11 Also on Tap*

**PASADENA (September 10, 2019)** – From wildfires and earthquakes to floods and mass shootings, what were once rare or infrequent events have now become regular occurrences in California. For California hospitals, disaster preparedness has become a way of life — because being prepared can literally mean the difference between life and death.

Recognizing the importance of learning from recent disasters and from one another, hospital and disaster response officials from across California have gathered in Pasadena to discuss hospital emergency preparedness in the Golden State.

More than 700 nurses, doctors, public health officials and disaster readiness experts are in attendance at the 2019 “Disaster Planning for California Hospitals” statewide conference, sponsored by the California Hospital Association (CHA). The two-day event, being held Sept. 10-11 at the Pasadena Conference Center is titled “The New Norm: Adjusting Our Strategies.”

“With every disaster that occurs lessons are learned, which in turn helps health care professionals and first-responders better prepare for the future,” said Mary Massey, CHA’s vice president of emergency management. “Hospitals devote extensive time and resources toward ensuring that patients, staff and visitors will be safe and well-cared for when disaster strikes. This unique conference brings together disaster preparedness experts from across the state to share best practices and real-world experiences that will benefit all Californians.”

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Kicking off the conference is a captivating series of short “Ted Style” talks followed by a panel discussion with five hospital executives who have found themselves on the frontlines of recent wildfires, floods and mudslides in different communities across the state. The speakers include Steve Stark, CEO of Orchard Hospital in Oroville (*the 2017 near collapse of the Oroville Dam*); Jenifer Nyhuis, CEO of Vista del Mar Hospital in Ventura (*the 2017 Thomas Fire*); Susan Stone, Senior Vice President & CEO of Sharp Coronado Hospital in Coronado (*a January 2019 flash flood*); Mike Wiltermood, President & CEO, Enloe Medical Center in Chico (*the 2018 Camp Fire*); and Steven Fellows, Executive Vice President & COO, Cottage Health in Santa Barbara (*the 2017 Thomas Fire and Montecito mudslides*). This opening session will take place on Tuesday, Sept. 10 from 8:30-10:30 a.m.

With earthquakes an ever-present threat in California, conference attendees will learn how the ShakeAlert® earthquake early warning system is now being tested in one major Southern California hospital. Ryan Tuchmayer, associate director of disaster preparedness at Cedars-Sinai and Robert de Groot, Ph.D., from the U.S. Geological Survey will share their experiences in implementing this innovative pilot program. This session will take place on Tuesday, Sept. 10 from 1:15 – 2:15 p.m.

Eyewitnesses to the devastating Camp Fire in Paradise will share their harrowing experiences during a compelling general session slated for Tuesday from 3 – 4 p.m. Three emergency response professionals from Adventist Health – Beth Neilson, Gary Miller and Tim Williams – will recount what it was like to live through the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in California history, and the heroic efforts of hospital personnel as they evacuated patients while flames roared onto the hospital campus.

And, in what is sure to be a very moving tribute on the 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, retired New York Police Department Emergency Services Unit Officer Glen Klein will recount how his teams rushed into the burning World Trade Center towers and worked for more than 800 hours trying to recover fellow officers and other victims lost on that tragic day. This session is schedule for Wednesday Sept. 11 from 7:45 – 8:30 a.m.

Other educational sessions at the conference will focus how hospitals can be better prepared to respond to the effects of climate change; lessons learned from hospital-based shootings; and effective workplace violence prevention training programs.

The conference is the largest gathering of hospital emergency preparedness professionals in California.

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