

## **AGENDA ITEM 4**

**REVIEW AND VOTE ON APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 15, 2025,  
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES.**



**DRAFT**

## **AD HOC DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE COMMITTEE MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**

**January 15, 2025**

### Committee Members Present

Richard Bookwalter, OT, Board Member/Chair  
Hector Cabrera, Board Member  
Mary Evert, OT

### Board Staff Present

Marc Mason, Executive Officer  
Jody Quesada Novey, Manager  
Austin Porter, Analyst  
Karina Clark, Analyst

**Wednesday, January 15, 2025**

**9:00 am – Committee Meeting**

1. Call to order, roll call, establishment of a quorum.

The meeting was called to order at 9:02 am, roll was called, and a quorum was established.

2. Committee Chair's Opening Remarks.

Chair Richard Bookwalter expressed his gratitude that the committee was able to meet and his concern for those affected by the fires in Southern California and the severe weather in the Eastern United States.

Chair Bookwalter welcomed the CA Board of Occupational Therapy's (Board) new Executive Officer, Marc Mason, to the meeting.

3. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda.

There were no public comments for items not on the agenda.

4. Review and vote on approval of the April 29, 2024, committee meeting minutes.

- Mary Evert moved to approve the April 29, 2024, committee meeting minutes.
- Hector Cabrera seconded the motion.

There were no additional committee member remarks.

### Public Comment

There were no public comments regarding the minutes. However, Emily Balog, PhD, OTR/L, was invited to introduce herself to the committee. Emily shared that she is an occupational therapist, professor at Rutgers University in New Jersey, and former emergency manager in the Air Force.

### **Committee Member Vote**

Richard Bookwalter	Yes
Hector Cabrera	Yes
Mary Evert	Yes

The motion carried.

5. Discussion and review of the CA Board of Occupational Therapy's "Disaster Preparedness Resources" webpage and the Department of Consumer Affairs' "Disaster Help Center" webpage.

Chair Bookwalter pointed out that the Board's website was updated to include a separate Disaster Preparedness Resources page for consumers and for licensees. The pages were made separate to allow for a more thorough scope of resources on either page without displaying too much information that would not be pertinent to either group. Some resources appear on both pages, but the consumer-facing webpage contains more surface-level information.

The committee also expressed their approval and appreciation for the Board's inclusion on the DCA's Disaster Help Center webpage.

There were no committee member requests for changes regarding the webpages.

There was discussion about the various possible definitions of a First Responder according to different organizations and whether there were any that could encompass occupational therapy practitioners.

Chair Bookwalter brought up the idea of recommending to the Board to reach out to occupational therapy advocacy groups, such as AOTA and OTAC, about putting forth a definition of "First Responder" that includes occupational therapists.

Emily Balog drew the committee's attention to the differences between "First Responders" and "Emergency Response Providers," as defined by the Department of Homeland Security.

Staff was directed to find out the definition of who a first responder is with the Red Cross, at a national and state level.

There were no further committee member remarks.

### **Public Comment**

Emily Balog thanked the Committee for the work put into gathering resources and presenting them on the website.

6. Discussion and review of the CA Board of Occupational Therapy's Disaster Preparedness and Response Survey results.

The committee discussed the survey's response rate and the helpfulness of the information within.

Mary Evert suggested making the survey shorter and narrowing down the questions to focus on the most important information for the committee.

#### Public Comment

Emily Balog was invited to make public comment. She asked if the committee would be willing to share some of the survey questions and if they were interested in possibly conducting a nationwide survey in the interest of a larger response.

The committee ultimately decided that the survey results were insightful, but that the sample size was not large enough to take informed action. The committee decided to recommend to the Board to send out another, shorter survey in the near future that could generate a better response rate while disaster preparedness was on the profession's mind (in light of the current fires in Southern California).

The committee also discussed partnering with professional associations and sharing first-hand accounts of occupational therapy practitioner's experiences with disaster preparedness and response to drive engagement within the profession.

Emily Balog offered suggestions for specific and direct questions to be considered for a future survey.

Chair Bookwalter directed Staff to collect the information and resources shared by Emily Balog during the meeting in a document for the committee's review.

Emily Balog provided the committee with her contact information.

There were no further committee member remarks.

#### 7. Discussion on scheduling time(s) for future meetings.

Chair Bookwalter suggested scheduling the next Disaster Preparedness and Response committee meeting after the March Board meeting.

The committee considered scheduling their next meeting for April 16<sup>th</sup> at 9am.

#### Public Comment

There was no public comment.

#### 8. New suggested agenda items for a future meeting.

Possible topics to be considered for future agenda items included:

- Promoting stories about occupational therapy practitioner's experiences with disaster preparedness and response in the media and press.
- Collaboration with Emily Balog and her efforts in disaster preparedness and response.
- Another survey to send to licensees.

There were no further committee member remarks.

#### Public Comment

Emily Balog thanked the committee for having her and signed off from the meeting.

**Meeting adjournment.**

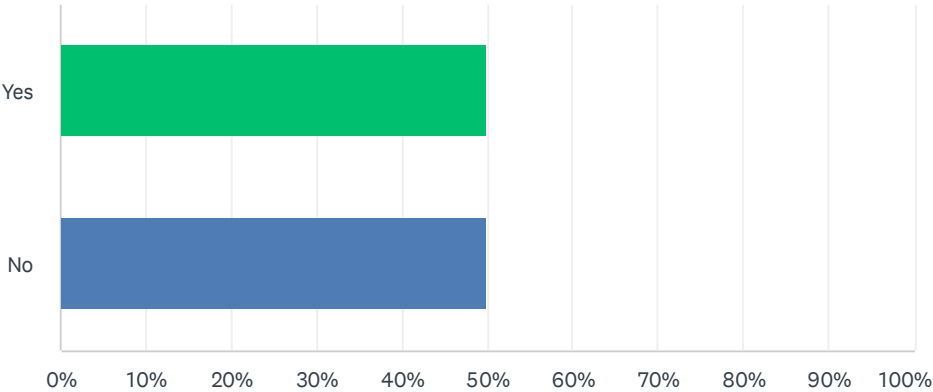
The meeting adjourned at 10:08 a.m.

## **AGENDA ITEM 5**

**DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATION(S) TO THE BOARD ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ADDITIONAL SURVEY ON DISASTER PREPAREDNESS WITH A FOCUS ON THE RECENT SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES.**

Q1 Do you address issues related to emergency response or what to do in the event of a disaster with your clients/patients?

Answered: 182 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	50.00%	91
No	50.00%	91
TOTAL		182

## Q2 List the topics you address or the information you provide:

Answered: 53   Skipped: 129

### Open Ended. Responses shown as written.

"Fire, earthquake, active shooter"

"Escape route and what to pack"

"how to call out for help in case of emergency, when to call for help/emergency, Personal emergency response system options"

"Fire, earthquake & flood"

"Plenty of food and water in the home. Contacts incase of emergency Educate patients on putting there name on a list with the local county that they would be someone in need in case of emergency. Using life alert."

"Escape plans and where to go in case of emergency"

"Earthquake Fire Another Pandemic"

"Help with fire, earthquake and other disasters at the school site"

"Types of possible disasters to prep for, where to go and what to take if possible, emergency phone list and medication mgmt, prn."

"Contact numbers, address, emergency contact person"

"Fire drill in facility home safety assessment prior to DC fall recovery training before DC"

"Exit doors Codes"

"An emergency contact and how they can access their communication tool if there was an emergency."

"med supply, evacuation plan if needed"

"Safety exiting the home/environment, if able"

"Escape route, medications, flashlights, exit rote, emergency contact"

"Safety in case of power outage, phones down, etc"

"Fire evacuation, earthquake protocol, lockdown safety"

"Fire Active shooter"

"Exit locations"

"Safety Awareness, Emergency Health Services, Haz Mat, Biomedical clean up , nutrition etc..."

"We complete fire drill/earthquake drills and lockdown drills in school campuses."

"School based issues and preparedness"

"Emergency exit, emergency evacuation plan, emergency contacts, garage door function with no power, emergency kit:food,water,medicine, clothing and shoes."



“Work place violence; escape routes; where to gather information”

“Escape strategies during fire alarms. What to do if there is an earthquake while we are in the Hand Center”

“Fire, floods,”

“Preparation food and medication Phone numbers and location emergency services”

“Health emergencies, medication shortages, earthquakes, supply line disruptions, pandemics”

“Do you have a plan?” Usually discussed close to discharge back to home.”

“Wildfire and Power Outage”

“Evacuation procedures Fire/earthquake/ external disaster procedures”

“Earthquake preparedness”

“General emergency preparedness- Toolkit of supplies. Family emergency plan and phone or social media tree. Neighborhood - available to support neighbors.”

“Helping children recognize and differentiate what an actual emergency would be, and when it is appropriate to reach out to emergency services”

“independent mobility, being able to walk or roll independently away from danger, place to go upon evacuation”

“Fire and Earthquake”

“Evacuation”

“Preparedness plan Safety CPR training”

“Work in a hospital so triage patients, help transport, assess safety with mobility, etc”

“Depending on where I’m working, I may provide shelter information or do home inspection to make sure a person can safely get in and out. I have discussed readiness to go bags for folks that need medication and I’ve discussed generators for folks on oxygen.”

“Plan for disaster Resources”

“Related to IEP, how the students services will continue and what they would look like (scheduled online appointments, etc)”

“fire safety, fall safety, medical alert devices, can they call 911, can they use a telephone, emergency bag with medications, water, food,”

“Access to water, transportation, etc”

“Safety transfers when in emergency response for disaster”

“I work in school based practice. We have emergency drills within the schools. During these times I discuss various types of emergencies and what disaster response might look like so that the students have an idea of what to expect in an emergency.”

“Resources in the community, etc”

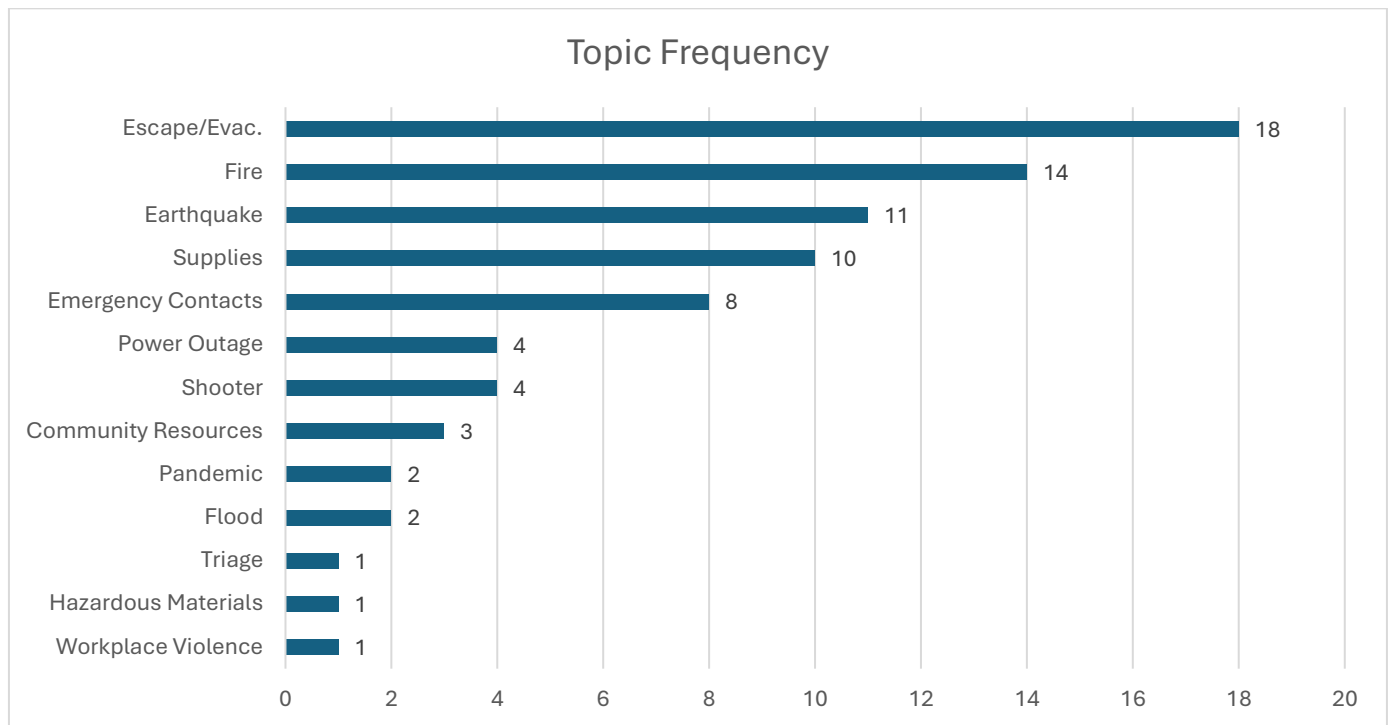
“Environmental safety hazards and community resources”

“Safety to leave the endangered areas with proper personal things needed in evacuations. Fall prevention safety, neighborhood preparedness, family communication links, food and medications cache contents.”

“Household egress Equipment (wheelchairs, stairclimbers, and assistance”

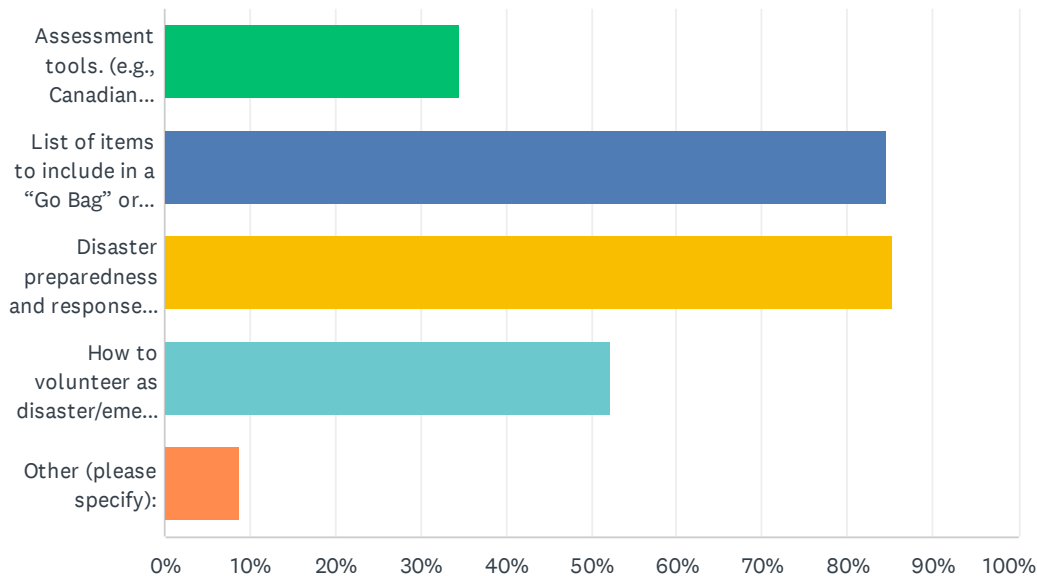
“Body mechanics; stress management; time management; emergency kit; list of meds; family evacuation plan; important numbers posted.”

“Ventilator back ups Back up caregivers Management of feeding and breathing supplies”



### Q3 What information would you be helpful to you? Check all that apply.

Answered: 136 Skipped: 46



Assessment tools. (e.g., Canadian Occupational Therapy Performance measure)	34.56%	47
List of items to include in a "Go Bag" or Emergency Kit.	84.56%	115
Disaster preparedness and response information.	85.29%	116
How to volunteer as disaster/emergency responder.	52.21%	71
Other (please specify):	8.82%	12
Total Respondents: 136		

#### "Other" responses, as written:

"None"

"Emergency phone list, meds list, various options to consider, is second and third alternatives for transportation and communication"

"Assistive tech recommendations"

"we are all set"

"California based resources for disabled people during emergencies"

"None, I work in a hospital and will get called on to help as they see fit"

"Identify local community resources and plan for communication etc"

"handicapped accessible preparedness and response info"

"other"

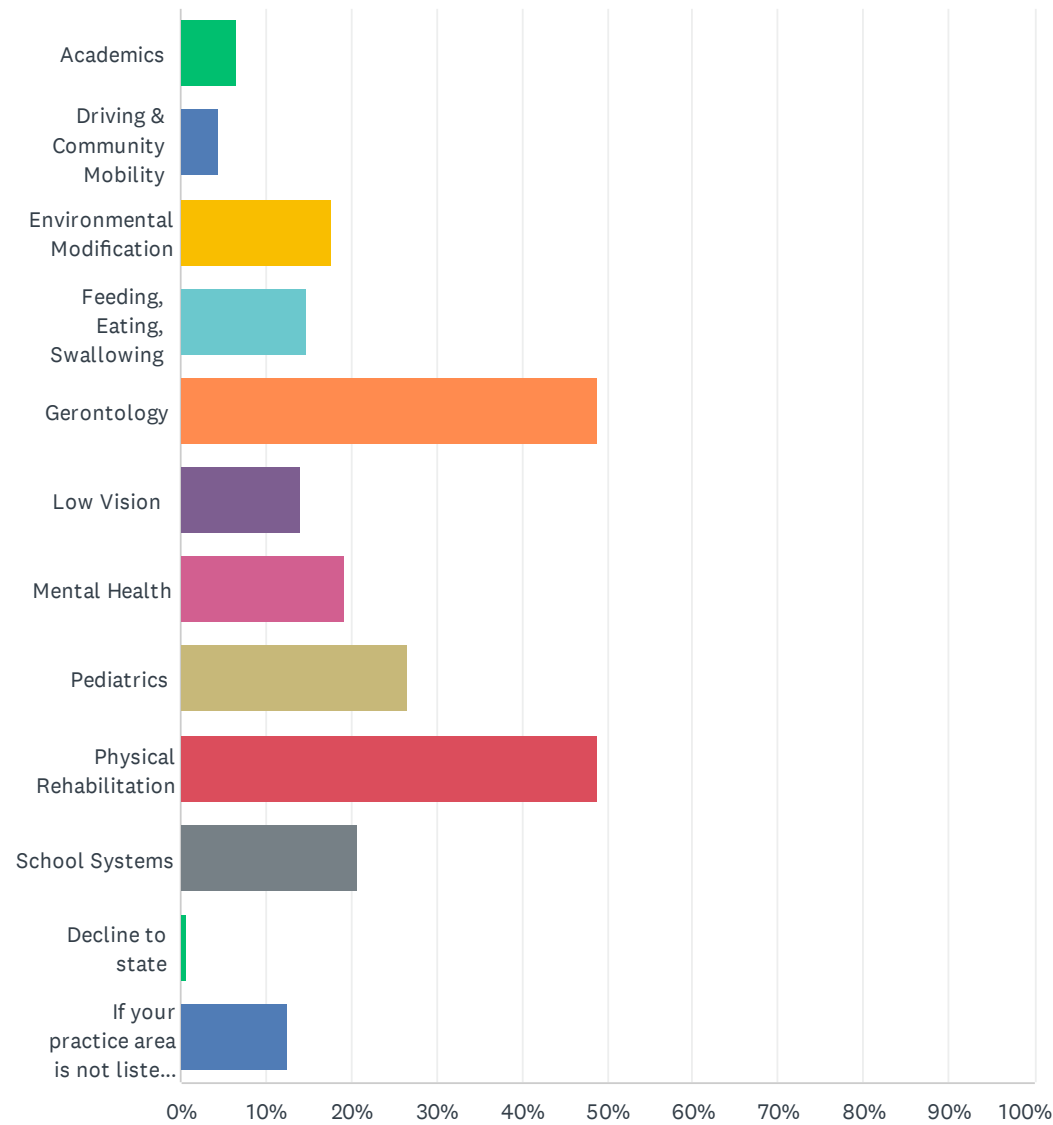
"I work at an elementary school-N/A"

"How or what practical advice to give to bariatric patients requiring Min assist in the case of a disaster"

"I teach these things at our CCRC community in Rancho Bernardo."

Q4 What population group do you treat? Check all that apply:

Answered: 135    Skipped: 47



# California Board of Occupational Therapy Disaster Preparedness and Response Survey

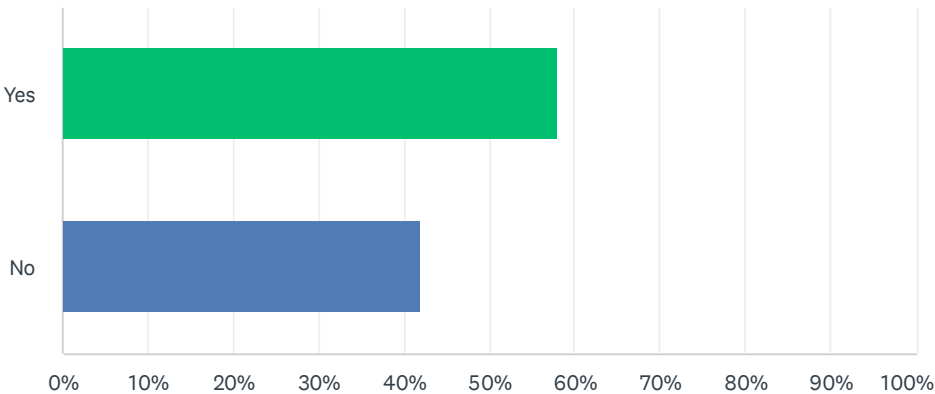
Academics	6.67%	9
Driving & Community Mobility	4.44%	6
Environmental Modification	17.78%	24
Feeding, Eating, Swallowing	14.81%	20
Gerontology	48.89%	66
Low Vision	14.07%	19
Mental Health	19.26%	26
Pediatrics	26.67%	36
Physical Rehabilitation	48.89%	66
School Systems	20.74%	28
Decline to state	0.74%	1
If your practice area is not listed above, provide here:	12.59%	17
Total Respondents: 135		

## "Other" responses, as written:

"Autism"	"Mobile out-patients plus home and community"
"Developmentally disabled"	"dementia"
"Acute hospital"	"chronic/complex disabilities"
"research setting"	"Snf"
"Geriatric- skilled nursing"	"Community based pediatrics"
"Skilled nursing"	"Acute care"
"Critical access hospital, swing bed and soon long term care SNF"	"also home health, hand therapy"
"Occupational Manufacturing"	"Licensed in semiretirement"
"retirement community:independent living, assisted, living & memory care"	

Q5 Does your work setting provide you or provide access to Disaster/Emergency Preparedness or Disaster/Emergency Response education?

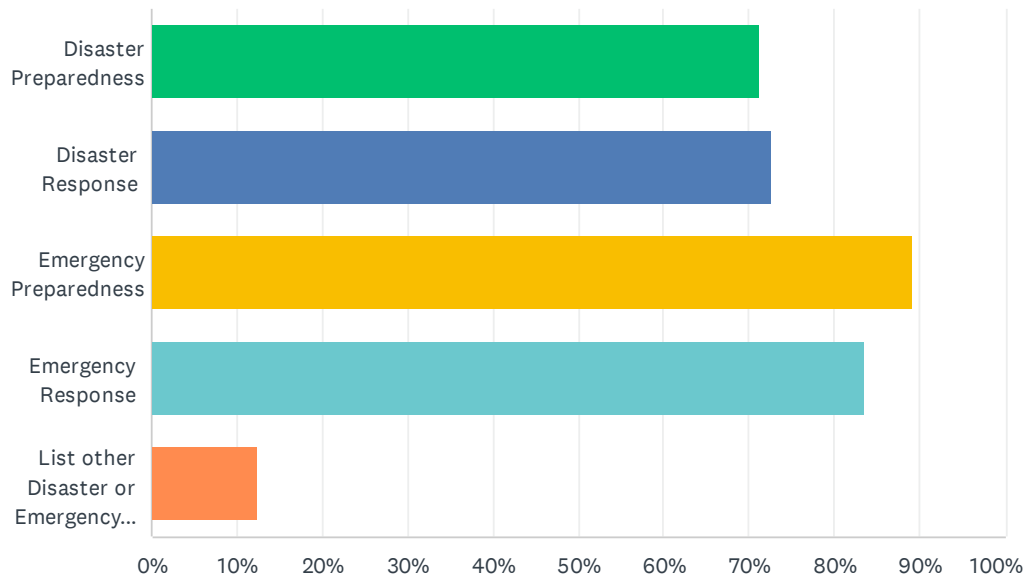
Answered: 133 Skipped: 49



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	57.89%	77
No	42.11%	56
TOTAL		133

## Q6 Check all educational opportunities provided by your work setting:

Answered: 73 Skipped: 109



Disaster Preparedness	71.23%	52
Disaster Response	72.60%	53
Emergency Preparedness	89.04%	65
Emergency Response	83.56%	61
List other Disaster or Emergency education topics here:	12.33%	9
Total Respondents: 73		

### "Other" responses, as written:

"As part of D/C planning, we have questionnaire which includes assessment queries about what they might do in hypothetical situations, calling 911, etc"

"Fire safety"

"Active shooter drills"

"various governmental agencies"

"Our hospital provides on line educational opportunities addressing these issues and others."

"Items needed"

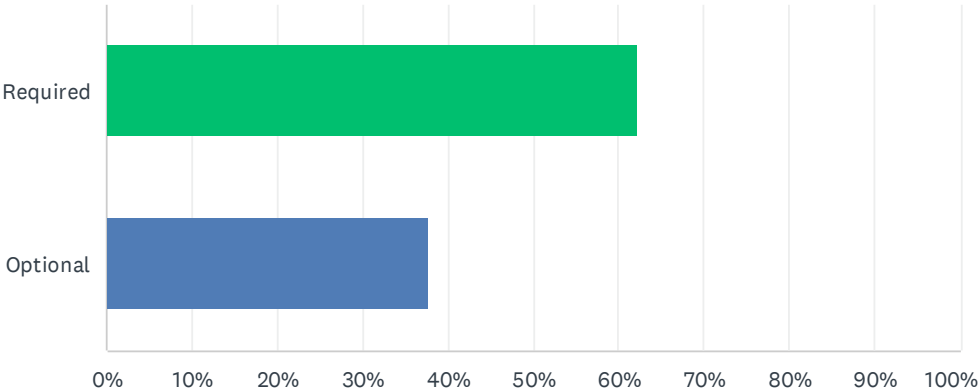
"I could definitely use more education in these areas"

"Earthquake"

"Evacuation prospects"

Q7 Is Disaster Preparedness or Response education (beyond fire drills or evacuation) Required by your work setting or Optional?

Answered: 77    Skipped: 105

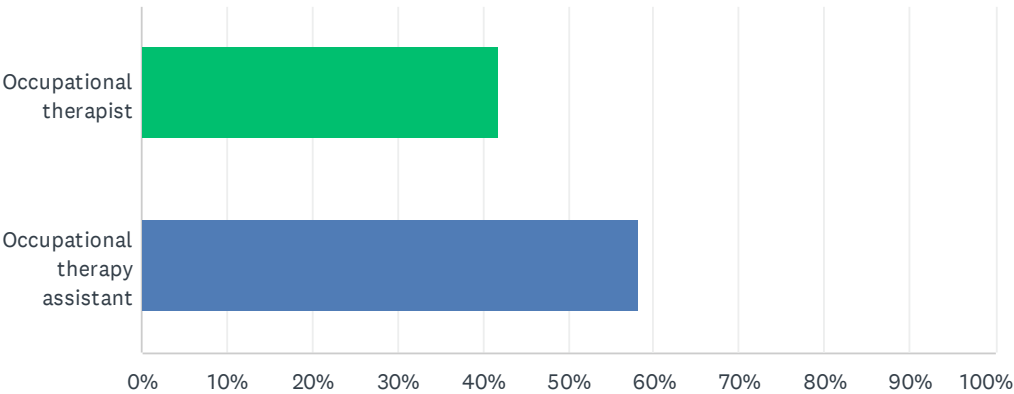


ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Required		62.34%	48
Optional		37.66%	29
TOTAL			77



Q8 Please select your licensee type.

Answered: 134    Skipped: 48



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Occupational therapist	41.79%	56
Occupational therapy assistant	58.21%	78

## **AGENDA ITEM 6**

### **DISCUSSION ON FIRST RESPONDER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES SHARED BY EMILY BALOG, PHD, OTR/L.**

Included are the following:

- Compiled Resources from Dr. Balog.
- Definitions of “First Responder.”

**‘FIRST RESPONDER’ INFORMATION AND RESOURCES FROM EMILY BALOG,**  
**PhD, OTR/L**  
[emily.balog@rutgers.edu](mailto:emily.balog@rutgers.edu)

**CA BOARD OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY**  
**DISASTER PREPAREDNESS MEETING January 15, 2025**

- “The term "First Responder" refers to those individuals who in the early stages of an incident are responsible for the protection and preservation of life, property, evidence, and the environment, including emergency response providers as defined in Section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. § 101), as well as Emergency Management, Public Health, Clinical Care, Public Works, and other Skilled Support Personnel (such as Equipment Operators) that provide immediate support services during prevention, response, and recovery operations.”
- *Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD-8)*
- Emergency response providers are defined by U.S. Code, Title 6, Chapter 1 § 101 as follows: (6) The term "emergency response providers" includes Federal, State, and local governmental and nongovernmental emergency public safety, fire, law enforcement, public safety telecommunicators/dispatcher, emergency response, emergency medical services providers (including hospital emergency facilities), and related personnel, agencies, and authorities.
- Ms. Balog noted that Catherine Kaminski, who is a National Mental Health and Wellbeing Program Manager for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, specifically works with indigenous communities following wildfires to support mental health and uses psychological first aid and trauma informed care to provide those services. This information is indicative of the fact that some occupational therapy (OT) practitioners have specific training to be a first responder.
  - <https://www.usphs.gov/professions/occupational-therapist/>
- Ms. Balog is developing training for occupational therapy practitioners to have a larger role in emergency management and disaster preparedness using all four areas of the federal emergency management agency cycle, which includes mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. She needs funding and is working on a proof of concept. Ms. Balog and Mary Schmitz, OTD, OT/L, ECHM are also currently editing a textbook on disaster preparedness and emergency management that will be published in May of 2027.

- Regarding additional survey questions, Ms. Balog suggested helping the practitioners understand that disaster preparedness is within the OT scope of practice as an Instrumental Activity of Daily Living (IADL) in emergency maintenance and then to help them understand the various levels of interaction and finally to answer whether they are addressing the IADL of safety and emergency maintenance in their evaluations. Additionally, she thought it a great idea to survey practitioners regarding whether they have an employer requirement to respond to facility specific emergencies.
- Ms. Balog wrote an article for the American Occupational Therapy Association's Developmentally Disabled Special Interest Section where she provided information on how to start planning for emergencies as well as what should be in a kit. She is willing to share all of her documentation as long as it is understood that it is in draft form.
- Ms. Balog mentioned that she is always happy to involve others, so if folks are interested in being a part of Project Protect or the textbook to please reach out to her.

# DEFINITIONS OF “FIRST RESPONDER”

## “FIRST RESPONDER” AS A TERM OF POPULAR USE

Although no definition of “first responder” was found in looking at the laws and regulations that govern federal grant programs; in describing its programs and activities on its website, FEMA does use the term “first responders.” FEMA describes its agency mission as “to support our citizens and first responders to . . . build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.” No description or definition of the term is given, however. In another example of this “popular” use, press releases put out by FEMA and DHS about agency activities use the term to refer to members of local and state police and fire departments and emergency medical personnel. In a June 23, 2003, press release, “Kentucky First Responders Honored by FEMA, Commonwealth” this statement appears: “The honors were part of a nationwide effort to recognize first responders by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. First responders are those involved in life safety emergencies and rescues, such as fire and police departments, and water rescue teams.”

- *National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2013. The Legal Definitions of First Responder. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.*  
<https://doi.org/10.17226/2245>

## HOMELAND SECURITY

The term "First Responder" refers to those individuals who in the early stages of an incident are responsible for the protection and preservation of life, property, evidence, and the environment, including emergency response providers as defined in Section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. § 101), as well as Emergency Management, Public Health, Clinical Care, Public Works, and other Skilled Support Personnel (such as Equipment Operators) that provide immediate support services during prevention, response, and recovery operations.

- *Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD-8)*

## 6 U.S. CODE § 101

(6) The term "emergency response providers" includes Federal, State, and local governmental and nongovernmental emergency public safety, fire, law enforcement, public safety telecommunicators/dispatcher, emergency response, emergency medical services providers (including hospital emergency facilities), and related personnel, agencies, and authorities.

## **34 U.S. CODE § 10705 – DEFINITIONS**

In this subchapter:

(1) The term "first responder" includes a firefighter, law enforcement officer, paramedic, emergency medical technician, or other individual (including an employee of a legally organized and recognized volunteer organization, whether compensated or not), who, in the course of his or her professional duties, responds to fire, medical, hazardous material, or other similar emergencies

## **CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT CODE § 8562**

(a) "First responder" means an employee of the state or a local public agency who provides emergency response services, including any of the following:

(1) A peace officer, as defined in Section 830 of the Penal Code.

(2) A firefighter, as defined in Section 50925.

(3) A paramedic, as defined in Section 1797.84 of the Health and Safety Code.

(4) An emergency medical technician, as defined in Sections 1797.80 and 1797.82 of the Health and Safety Code.

(5) A public safety dispatcher or public safety telecommunicator. For the purposes of this paragraph, "public safety dispatcher or public safety telecommunicator" means an individual employed by a public safety agency, as the initial first responder, whose primary responsibility is to receive, process, transmit, or dispatch emergency and nonemergency calls for law enforcement, fire, emergency medical, and other public safety services by telephone, radio, or other communication device, and includes an individual who promotes from this position and supervises individuals who perform these functions.

## **FEMA**

Clarifying Misconceptions:

FEMA is not a first responder agency. It works in collaboration and under the guidance of local governments. Recovery involves all levels of government and nonprofit organizations.

*- Fact Sheet: FEMA 101: Getting to Know the Agency*

## RED CROSS

### First Responder Training Courses

For a full listing of courses [click here](#) or click on one of the below professions to view a selection of associated courses.

Note: Course and program training requirements may vary by state, city and county. Course and programs are listed to address all possible training needs. American Red Cross courses meet resuscitation training and continuing education requirements throughout the US.



Police



Fire



EMS

***\*\*Board staff found through research that First Responder and Emergency Response Provider designations are generally determined on an individual basis through completion of training, registration, and certification by various emergency response organizations. \*\****