



Two International Medical Corps nurses view the destruction created by the Eaton Fire in Altadena, CA.

On January 7, a series of wildfires broke out across Los Angeles County, burning more than 16,000 homes, businesses and community centers over 40,000 acres. The fires were responsible for at least 29 deaths and displaced at least 200,000 people. Though the fires were fully contained on January 31, entire neighborhoods have been demolished and others left uninhabitable due to the toxic contaminants and damaged water systems.

The fires have upended the lives of many Los Angeles residents and families, leaving them to navigate the complex aftermath of insurance paperwork, housing instability, loss of wages, reduced access to essential services and resources such as potable water and healthcare, and increased mental stress. Long-term housing solutions remain scarce amid the backdrop of Los Angeles' high-cost housing market; and there has been a notable increase in the number of unhoused individuals in Skid Row. Needs remain significant among affected residents, people at risk of or experiencing homelessness and the most vulnerable.

Impacted parts of Los Angeles County are working to rebuild, but many community-based organizations and local health centers that participate in these efforts have also been affected by the fires. Some organizations have experienced direct infrastructure damage to their facilities, and many organizations have staff who have personally experienced the impacts of the fire and have lost homes in the fire—ultimately impacting their organizational capacity to provide care for the community.

FAST FACTS

- The wildfires that affected the Los Angeles area in January have ended, but the long-term impact on many community members is far from over. The fires have damaged more than 16,000 homes, schools, businesses and community centers across the region, and have left many remaining structures and areas uninhabitable.
- The physical and emotional needs of impacted community members remain significant, as they navigate housing and financial changes, reduced access to essential services and compounded emotional and mental stress.

OUR RESPONSE

- In partnership with local and regional partners, International Medical Corps is supporting housing costs for affected staff of federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), providing coverage for patient costs and copays at FQHCs, supporting long-term mental health programming and providing emergency management support and training to FQHCs, health centers and social-service organizations.
- From January 17 to February 16, we deployed 58 medical and mental health professionals to deliver direct medical and mental health services to residents within two regional shelters, and in various community centers and distribution sites.
- Teams conducted 872 medical consultations and provided 632 residents with primary nursing care, conducted 1,248 mental health consultations and provided 3,145 people with mental health outreach services. The mental health team developed [mental health resources](#) for families and individuals affected by the fires, with referrals to free helplines, phone applications and exercises to process the change and loss.
- We distributed more than 40,000 response, recovery and medical items; 5,856 hygiene kits, 4,903 wound-care kits, 35,600 face masks; and equipment for internet services.
- International Medical Corps continues to coordinate closely with local, state and regional agencies, including the Los Angeles Mayor's Office, California Department of Public Health, California Emergency Medical Services Authority, California Primary Care Association, California Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County, the Red Cross, and local organizations, shelters and health centers serving low-income and other vulnerable groups to support ongoing recovery efforts.

As Los Angeles looks toward long-term recovery, local organizations and health centers are continuing to serve a critical role, ensuring that the County's most vulnerable are able to access the care they need.

International Medical Corps' Response

In response to the fires, International Medical Corps deployed an Emergency Response Team within 24 hours of the first outbreak. We immediately began working closely with national, state, county and local responders—including the American Red Cross, the California Department of Public Health, the California Primary Care Association and the Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County—to meet the needs of many vulnerable community members. We are continuing to partner with them to provide long-term recovery services.

From January 17 to February 16, International Medical Corps deployed 58 medical and mental health professionals, including 34 nurses and 15 mental health professionals—many of whom are California and Los Angeles locals—to provide critical medical and mental health care in shelters, and at community distribution centers and re-entry points. Our teams conducted 872 medical consultations and provided 632 residents with primary nursing care, conducted 1,248 mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) consultations and provided 3,145 people with mental health outreach services.

Additionally, we partnered with 16 different organizations and health sites to provide urgently needed medical and non-medical supplies to support their response to the community. These supplies include more than 39,000 hygiene products, 35,600 KN95 and N95 face masks, 244 air-quality items (including nebulizer compressors and air purifiers), and 4,903 wound-care kits, among other items. International Medical Corps also provided housing vouchers to a health center with more than 15 staff who lost homes in the fires, to enable the staff to find housing and continue providing care.

Moving Forward

Though the direct medical and mental health services we provided within the shelters have concluded, International Medical Corps is continuing to work in Los Angeles. We are partnering with federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), free and charitable clinics, and social-service organizations reaching people at risk of or experiencing homelessness to identify and meet the needs of populations who have been most heavily impacted by the fires and remain the most vulnerable. However, many of our partner organizations have been impacted themselves in a number of ways, including suffering damage to facilities, equipment and supplies; experiencing a reduced workforce (as many staff have been directly impacted by the fires); and interacting with patients who do not have the time or financial means to prioritize medical care or other administrative needs. For FQHCs, a decrease in patient visits also decreases revenue, jeopardizing each health center's capacity to keep their doors open in the long run—a critical concern, as FQHCs provide care to the most underserved and vulnerable communities.

Moving forward, International Medical Corps is working to fill these gaps and will 1) provide ongoing funds to address housing needs; 2) cover health visit and prescription copays for patients; 3) support mental health programming; and 4) facilitate and hold emergency management training sessions to ensure access to care and necessary resources.

Because partners have expressed a significant need for housing support for staff and healthcare workers who were directly affected by the fires, International Medical Corps is providing allowances to stabilize housing situations for affected health workers, helping them remain on the job so that the care that these organizations provide to the community can continue. Additionally, health center partners have repeatedly reported that patient visits have decreased as clients struggle to afford health visits, given strained resources. To ensure that clients are able to keep medical appointments amid any increased financial or logistical barriers, International Medical Corps is providing funds to local health facility partners to cover copays, helping ensure that clients can continue to access regular healthcare.

As affected community members continue to process the enormity of the rapid change and loss, there also is a significant need for mental health support. International Medical Corps is working with health centers and social-service organizations to develop and support long-term mental health programming. We continue to provide materials and goods to these organizations to support their efforts in serving the most vulnerable communities.

Building upon our previous work, International Medical Corps is expanding our existing training programs to increase the capacity of FQHCs, health centers and social-service organizations to prepare for and respond to future disasters, given that they operate on the frontlines in emergencies. We will provide staff from some 30 partner organizations with training, practical tools, equipment and technical assistance to be best equipped, leveraging our robust suite of training curriculums to deliver business continuity planning, hazard vulnerability assessments, extreme weather preparation and mitigation, psychological first aid and more. We are collaborating with regional partners, including the Community Clinic Association



An International Medical Corps volunteer social worker shares resources and talks with an Altadena community member at a resource fair.

of Los Angeles County, to support these county-wide capacity strengthening efforts, ensuring both the reach and sustainability of these activities.

Though the fires are no longer burning, many families and individuals in Los Angeles will continue to feel the effects for months to come as they navigate through housing and financial changes, mental and emotional stress and increased vulnerability to potential future events.

International Medical Corps in the US and Territories

International Medical Corps has been an emergency responder in the United States and Caribbean since 2005, when we partnered with local community clinics overwhelmed by Hurricane Katrina. In the US, International Medical Corps works with national, state and local partners and agencies to deploy emergency response teams in response to disasters and address the significant challenges that face domestic healthcare services.

In the last seven years, we have engaged and supported a partner network of more than 275 hospitals, clinics, health and health-related facilities, and non-profit organizations across 18 states and territories in the United States, delivering health resources, services and training to more than 6 million patients and providers. We have collaborated since 2020 with the LA County Department of Public Health Services, LA Homeless Services Authority and local partner organizations.

In 2020 and 2021, International Medical Corps implemented a robust response to the COVID-19 outbreak nationwide. In the greater Los Angeles area, we deployed emergency medical field units and equipment to seven LA-area safety-net hospitals, delivered training and personal protective equipment to 51 LA-area long-term eldercare facilities and 176 LA-area health workers, managed a vaccination site at Kedren Community Health Center in south LA that delivered more than 140,000 vaccinations, and distributed 305 pieces of medical equipment and more than 2 million pieces of personal protective equipment to LA-area hospitals, health facilities and emergency medical services. In 2021, International Medical Corps conducted a multi-component project in California's Central Valley to build the capacity of vulnerable populations in wildfire-impacted communities to better withstand and recover from wildfires.

Response to LA Wildfires

16 sites supported	58 medical and MHPSS professionals deployed
5,856 hygiene kits distributed	1,280 first-aid kits distributed
39,049 hygiene products distributed	35,600 masks distributed
1,583 medical supplies distributed	3,623 wound-care kits distributed
1,194 other relief & recovery supplies distributed	244 air purifiers and air-quality items distributed
1,261 MHPSS consultations	3,145 participants in MHPSS outreach
872 medical consultations	632 patients given primary nursing care
47,573 direct beneficiaries	140,658 indirect beneficiaries