

It's a disaster!

Will there be enough nurses?

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“For nurses working in a institutional setting that is affected by a disaster, what factors influence their decision to continue working during and immediately following the event?”

## Introduction

New Zealand is at risk of a number of natural and man-made disasters and other significant events. During and following a disaster there is likely to be an increase in the demands on health services, and a resultant need for sustained or increased staffing. Because of this, it is important that health managers recognise the factors that may influence the ability and willingness of nurses to work, and take steps to minimise these.



Staff working in a temporary hospital following the 2011 Christchurch earthquake (3 News, 2011)

### More likely to work

- Nurse feels a strong moral obligation
- Short duration events such as an aeroplane crash
- Natural or weather events
- Not personally affected by the event
- Childcare arrangements made
- Time allocated to contact family while working
- Feel that management understands their concerns

(Arbon et al., 2013; Chaffee, 2006; Martin, 2011)



### Less likely to work

- Events with a prolonged duration
- Bioterrorism, epidemics and other infectious events
- Perceived risk to nurse or their family either from the event or a lack of PPE provision
- Transport difficulties
- Responsibilities at home
- Feeling of lack of training and knowledge of facility expectations

(Arbon et al., 2013; Chaffee, 2006; Martin, 2011)

## Recommendations

- Provide disaster response awareness training for nursing staff as this increases levels of confidence working in adverse circumstances. This provides familiarity with expectations and the available support.
- Support nursing staff to create personal emergency plans which include relevant details such as care of children and animals. This demonstrates that management acknowledges their concerns and wants to work with them to overcome them.
- Have a facility wide transport plan, particularly for adverse weather events to ensure that nurses can get to work when their normal transportation is not available or appropriate.
- Demonstrate to nurses that there is sufficient PPE available to keep both the nurse and their family safe by preventing transmission of infectious agents.

## References

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PECOT model that developed the research question:

*“For nurses working in a institutional setting that is affected by a disaster, what factors influence their decision to continue working during and immediately following the event?”*

PECOT category	Information relating to question	Explanation
Population	Nurses working in institutional settings affected by a disaster (or other significant event such as a pandemic)	Health facilities such as hospitals and rest homes require constant staffing in order to meet their consumers medical needs. This requirement is not diminished in the advent of a disaster situation, and may be increased.
Exposure / Intervention	Factors that make it more or less likely the nurse will turn up to work	By focusing the literature search in this direction, both positive and negative influencing factors will be identified.
Comparison / Control	Factors that do no influence the likelihood that the nurse will turn up to work	By distinguishing factors that have an effect from those that do not, potentially modifiable factors will be identified allowing for effective health workforce planning to occur.
Outcome	Nurse being willing and able to work	The desired situation during and following a disaster event is the nursing staff turning up to work as expected. By focusing on this outcome any relevant factors can be identified.
Time	The immediate period during and after the disaster	The duration of each disaster event will be different depending on the type, location and severity of the event. Because the greatest need for health care is likely to be concentrated around the time of the event this is the time when it is important to ensure that nursing staff are available.

## Reference

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