

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VA Northern California Health Care System

Office of Public Affairs

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VA NorCal Wildfire Update

A summary of the VA Northern California Health Care System's response to the Carr Fire of Shasta County as of Tuesday, July 31, 2018

As most of you are aware, the Carr Fire has spread to more than 100,000 acres across the Shasta County region, forcing nearly 40,000 evacuations. Included in those evacuees are more than 2,000 Veterans and more than 50 VA Northern California Health Care System (VA NorCal) employees at the VA Redding Outpatient Clinic, several of whom lost their homes to the fire.

The VA Redding Outpatient Clinic (OPC) has served as the center of VA NorCal's response to the Carr Fire. Despite reduced staffing (approx. 70 percent), the Redding OPC has remained open to serve the approximately **11,000 Veterans that use the clinic each year**. Each of the 201 Redding OPC employees have been accounted for, many having reported to work despite having evacuated from their homes.

"I'm reminded daily of the compassion and selflessness that characterizes VA NorCal's employees, but never more so than during the Carr Fire," said VA NorCal Director David Stockwell. "The interagency and community coordination with our staff has been outstanding, and that's a good thing, because plenty of work remains."

VA NorCal personnel have **reached out to each of the 2,041 Veteran patients** forced to evacuate because of the Carr Fire. VA NorCal providers have also conducted regular check-ins with Veterans in need of home-based care, including dialysis, home oxygen needs, patients residing at the local state Veterans home, and those with prescription needs. VA NorCal also launched processes to address urgent Veteran concerns including a call center, walk-in appointments, telehealth, and services outside normal hours.

To **ensure air quality** inside the Redding OPC, VA NorCal placed **11 HEPA filters** across the facility. HEPA air purifiers force the clinic's interior air through a fine mesh that collects harmful particles such as ash, smoke, and pollen, preventing Veterans and staff from breathing in the materials. VA NorCal also transported **air-filtration masks** to the Redding OPC for distribution to staff and Veterans, as well as albuterol and other respiratory-related medications. VA NorCal staff continue to measure the clinic's air quality levels, which remain at levels suitable for a health care setting.

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To further serve displaced Veterans, VA NorCal **mobilized two Dual-Use Vehicles**, equipped with HEPA (High-Efficiency Particulate Air) filters and wheelchair access, to transport Veterans to and from evacuation shelters, and a **Multi-Use Vehicle**, equipped with a generator and a HEPA filter to serve as a mobile clinic should it be needed. In addition, **three Vet Center mobile units** have deployed to local shelters to provide social work and mental health services, and serve as liaisons to the Redding OPC.

Veterans seeking assistance should contact the Advice Line at 1-800-382-8387 and state they are from the Redding area. Outside normal work hours, please choose option No. 4 to speak to an advice nurse.

Media seeking information can contact Will Martin, VA NorCal Chief of Public Affairs, at 916-365-1590 (cell), William.Martin6@va.gov, or via Twitter at www.twitter/wmartin89.

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