

Motion

CIVIL RIGHTS, EQUITY, IMMIGRATION,
AGING AND DISABILITY

Human trafficking is often prevalent in the aftermath of natural disasters. Traffickers prey on vulnerable individuals to take advantage of their circumstances, offering fraudulent employment, housing, or other forms of assistance that ultimately entrap individuals in exploitative conditions.


There is a large body of academic studies that address this troubling phenomenon. A 2024 study found that up to 32 percent of workers engaged in post-disaster recovery construction efforts had experienced labor trafficking. These workers were paid illegal fees, had their pay withheld, and faced threats of violence or denunciation. After the 2017 Hurricane Harvey in Texas, several studies and reports showed that up to 70 percent of workers experienced some form of labor exploitation, with a third of the workers having experienced outright labor trafficking. One of the largest labor trafficking cases in the U.S. came in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, in which nearly 500 men were trafficked into the U.S. where they were forced to live in substandard conditions and paid sub-par wages.

To ensure that in the wake of the January 2025 wildfires and rebuilding of the Palisades, recovery efforts should not inadvertently enable exploitative labor practices, the City must learn from prior disasters. The City must disrupt the conditions that allow for labor abuses to thrive by taking a multifaceted approach. The City must collaborate with community based organizations to educate workers and the community on what human trafficking looks like, and enhance our enforcement mechanisms. We must review the City's disaster relief policies to ensure that recovery workers are trained to address human trafficking. Finally, the City should ensure that it tailors its procurement policies to protect workers from trafficking locally and globally.

The County has already started this work in the aftermath of the Eaton Fire and the City has the opportunity to take their lead.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Council direct the Chief Legislative Analyst in coordination with the Bureau of Contract Administration, the Chief Legislative Analyst, the City Attorney and any other relevant departments to review the reports relative to Preventing Human Trafficking in the Wake of Natural Disasters by the Los Angeles County Department of Consumer and Business Affairs and Department of Internal Services, transmitted recently to the County Board of Supervisors, provide recommendations on how those best practices can be implemented at the City, and provide recommendations on how the City can coordinate with the County's existing efforts to combat human trafficking in the wake of the January 2025 wildfires.

PRESENTED BY:


HUGO SOTO-MARTINEZ
Councilmember, 13th District

SECONDED BY:



13
C
D
B
O

JUN 27 2025


JUN 27 2025