



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Taylor Gonsalves
(916) 319-2053

Assemblymember Rodriguez Advances Legislation to Clarify Media Access to Closed Disaster Areas

(Sacramento, CA) – Today, Assembly Bill (AB) 750 unanimously passed out of the Assembly Committee on Public Safety. This legislation would clarify that a representative of a press organization is not authorized to transport a civilian into a closed area, such as areas under evacuation. This bill would allow members of the press to maintain access to these areas but would ensure the general public is kept safe from closed areas.

“Allowing members of the media to access closed areas is essential to ensuring the public is accurately informed during an emergency. However, an unnecessary risk arises when this access is abused and civilians are transported into a closed area. AB 750 would clarify existing law to ensure only authorized media personnel are gaining access to these closed areas,” **stated Assemblymember Rodriguez.**

Under current law, peace officers may close an area where a disaster, such as a flood, storm, fire, earthquake, explosion, accident, or disaster, creates a public health or safety hazard. [Senate Bill \(SB\) 98 \(McGuire, Chapter 759, Statutes of 2021\)](#) permitted members of the press to enter an area closed following a disaster.

While that legislation only provides access to members of the media, the existing law needs to be made more explicit as to transporting civilians into the secured area. AB 750 would clarify that representatives of the press are prohibited from transporting unauthorized civilians into the area with them.

Following the recent enactment of SB 98, there have been several reports of media personnel transporting non-authorized civilians into these closed areas. The Siskiyou County Sheriff’s Office [reported](#) an investigation of reports that the media brought civilians into evacuation zones during the 2022 McKinney Fire. Trespassing into this disaster area, or any, not only puts the trespassers at risk but also poses a risk to the integrity of each scene for investigation. AB 750 would ensure these closed-off areas are not disrupted by the public.

“As a career first responder, I have experience responding to all types of natural disasters and understand the risks of entering an area closed due to disaster. Members of the media need to appreciate these risks when visiting a disaster site to evaluate and report on the situation. Disaster areas are closed as they have been deemed dangerous, so we must ensure access is not extended beyond those intended to eliminate unnecessary risk,” **added Assemblymember Rodriguez.**

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Assemblymember Rodriguez ([Twitter](#)) represents the 53rd Assembly District which includes the cities of Chino, Montclair, Ontario, Pomona, and Upland. He is Chair of the Assembly Committee on Emergency Management.