



Disaster Relief Donations: Ways to Help

Thank You

The worst moments often bring out the best in people. The American Red Cross has the privilege of witnessing this often, as it provides emergency relief assistance after disasters. If you are reading this fact sheet, you have probably already decided you want to help others recover from one of their worst moments—no matter what caused it. We are honored that you are considering reaching out to help through the Red Cross and want to thank you and let you know the most effective ways you can help.



The American Red Cross can provide assistance to those affected by disaster free of charge because of the generosity of people like you. Some donate money, some give blood, others give their time to volunteer and still others do most or all of the above. Additionally, both local and national companies can assist those in need through donations of goods and services.

Which way is right for you, only you can decide. This fact sheet can help you make an informed decision about one of the ways you can support disaster relief activities.



MONEY MATTERS

Financial donations to the American Red Cross are the best way to assist those affected by disaster.

Monetary contributions enable the Red Cross to purchase the most urgently needed items as close to the disaster site as possible. Purchasing near the disaster site ensures supplies get to those affected as quickly as possible, without delay and hefty transportation costs. Because communities hit by disasters generally experience significant economic loss, buying goods locally also helps to stimulate a weakened economy by supporting area businesses.

You can help victims of thousands of disasters across the country each year by making a financial gift to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund, which enables the Red Cross to provide shelter, food, counseling and other assistance to those in need. If you wish to designate your donation to a specific disaster please do so at the time of your donation. The American Red Cross honors donor intent. Monetary contributions can be made to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund by calling **1-800-Red Cross** or **1-800-257-7575** (Spanish). Contributions to the Disaster Relief Fund may also be sent to **your local American Red Cross chapter** or to the **American Red Cross, P.O. Box 37243, Washington, DC 20013**. You can make a secure online credit card contribution by visiting: www.redcross.org.

GOODS & SERVICES

These gifts, known as in-kind donations, can be very valuable for relief operations, but restrictions apply to what, where and how such gifts can be made.

Because the American Red Cross wants to treat all people equally, we can only accept products donated in quantities large enough to ensure we can distribute similar items to everyone we are assisting. In this way, the Red Cross may only accept bulk donations of products that are expressly needed on a disaster relief operation, such as bottled water, toiletries and food products.

Bulk donations consist of a single product, packaged in large quantities on pallets. This makes them easy to ship, warehouse and process, all critical activities in a disaster environment. Corporations supply the majority of in-kind donations used by the Red Cross because of the quantities needed. Donors are asked to cover the shipping of in-kind donations directly to disaster sites.

If you have a bulk donation that you think would be appropriate for Red Cross relief operations, please contact your local Red Cross chapter.





American Red Cross Mission Statement

The American Red Cross, a humanitarian organization led by volunteers, guided by its Congressional Charter and the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Movement, will provide relief to victims of disasters and help people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies.

Some donations, though well-intentioned, have hidden costs and pose many complications. These include such items as clothing, furniture, toys and canned goods or small, individual donations of items of any sort. The Red Cross can't accept these unsolicited, spontaneous donations because:

- There needs to be enough of a particular item supplied for it to be distributed equitably. Small donations and collections don't meet these criteria.
- The Red Cross makes every attempt to procure items locally to help the economy of the area affected, ensure the cultural appropriateness of the items, save transportation and storage costs and keep the roads clear for priority items and travel.
- The Red Cross can't guarantee the usability and safety of such products. We don't know the origins, conditions and expiration dates of collected items.
- Collections require time, money and personnel to process, all precious resources in disaster relief. Following disasters, all relief workers and resources focus on the people affected and meeting their emergency needs. There are no resources available for examining, sorting and cleaning.

If you have collections of goods and individual items, these have the greatest impact when they are donated to charitable organizations within your own community. Local agencies not operating in disaster relief will have the time to sort, clean and repair goods and identify how and where they can be most beneficial.



For more information on what you can do to help following any disaster, please visit www.redcross.org or contact your local chapter.



A Note about International Disaster Relief Operations

The International Red Cross and the Red Crescent Movement is the largest humanitarian network in the world. It conducts activities in almost every country to help—without discrimination—those who suffer during conflict and disasters or from conditions of chronic poverty.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation) comprise the Movement. The founding body, the ICRC, coordinates international relief activities in conflict situations. National societies provide disaster relief and other services based on local needs. The International Federation coordinates international relief and development efforts in response to natural disasters, health emergencies and refugee crises.

When emergency needs exceed local capacities, national societies may request international assistance. Movement coordination leverages the strengths, abilities and resources of all national societies able to respond. This targets aid appropriately; avoids duplication of efforts; encourages collaboration; and results in needs-based programming, transparency and adherence to standards.

If you want to help those affected by an international disaster, conflict or health emergency, contact your local chapter to see if the American Red Cross is providing assistance.