



The Red Cross Disaster Services – Overview

The American Red Cross is part of the world’s largest humanitarian movement – a network of more than 185 Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and approximately 97 million members and volunteers. The Red Cross works with partner organizations and an extensive network to rapidly and efficiently scale up activities to achieve the greatest impact. Disaster Relief is guided by the seven fundamental principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.

What We Do

Red Cross disaster relief focuses on meeting the emergency disaster-caused needs of individuals and families. The Red Cross responds to disasters ranging from a single-home fire to national disasters. Emergency response activities are cost-effective and community-based.

When a disaster threatens or strikes, we provide food, shelter and health related services to address basic human needs. In addition, we help individuals and families to resume their normal daily activities independently. This may include a referral or a way to pay for what is needed most: groceries, new clothes, rent, emergency home repairs, transportation, medicines and occupational tools.



Red Cross Mental Health worker Helen E. Davis talks with an evacuee from Rancho Bernardo during the 2007 Southern California wildfires.
Talia Frenkel / American Red Cross

The Red Cross may also help those in need of long-term recovery assistance when all other available resources--including insurance, government, private and community assistance--are either unavailable or inadequate to meet the needs. All assistance is based on verified disaster-caused needs and all assistance is free—literally a gift as a result of the generous support of the American people.

The Red Cross also feeds emergency workers, handles inquiries from concerned immediate family members outside the disaster-affected area, and links disaster victims to other available resources.

Our Services

Mass Care - Emergency Relief to the Community

Through Mass Care, the Red Cross provides services and supplies to large numbers of people and to the community as a whole. These include sheltering, feeding, bulk distribution of items such as clean-up and salvage supplies and information about the availability of these services and recovery.

Individual Client Services

The Red Cross serves individuals and families with disaster-related needs through individual casework. These activities may include direct emergency assistance for replacement of essential items, counseling services, health-related services and reunification or welfare information services. After a disaster, the Red Cross continues to work with clients and community resources on longer term recovery needs.

Disaster Services Operations

The Red Cross mobilizes the people and material resources needed to respond to a disaster. These activities include staffing, logistics, warehousing, providing communications equipment, and operations management at the national Disaster Operations Center (DOC). Also, the Red Cross supports clients through the Response Center Enterprise, which provides emergency information during a disaster from the Red Cross, community partners, and government.

Disaster Readiness Programs

Red Cross readiness activities ensure that resources to respond to a disaster can be gathered quickly and effectively. Readiness activities include establishing baseline requirements for human and material resources and community relationships, identifying resource or relationship shortfalls, and designing plans to ensure effective service delivery.

How We Work

Although the American Red Cross is not a government agency, its authority to provide disaster relief was formalized in 1905 when the Red Cross was chartered by Congress to “carry out a system of national and international relief in time of peace and apply that system in mitigating the suffering and other great national calamities and to devise and carry out measures for preventing those calamities.”

To serve those in need, we work to build local capacities, mobilize and empower communities, and establish partnerships with other public and private organizations whose capabilities strengthen and complement disaster relief initiatives.

Our Team

Chapters

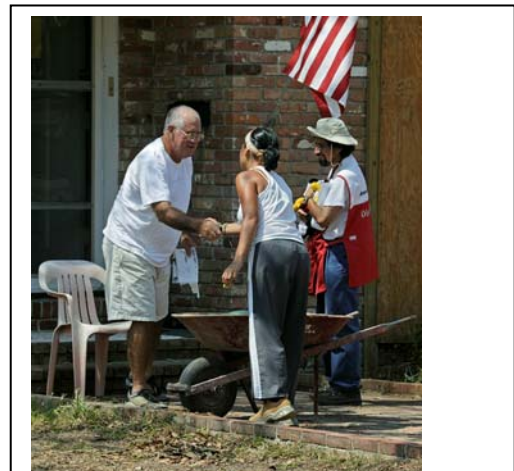
Chapters are the cornerstone of service delivery. Each chapter develops and maintains local disaster plans and identifies adequate resources to ensure the human needs within a community are appropriately met. Chapters conduct disaster training as well as planning and preparedness. Chapters provide the initial response (during the first 24-48 hours) to a national disaster and continue to provide essential services throughout an operation. Chapters respond to over 70,000 disasters per year.

State Consortia

Each state is in the process of identifying a State Coordinating Chapter and developing a state response plan. State Chapters coordinate on the local level with the goal of enhancing the disaster capacity, response, and coordination of Red Cross chapters within their states. This enables the positioning of resources closer to chapters and provides guidance, context and resources for disaster operations. State Coordinating Chapters also coordinate regional planning to ensure consistency and effectiveness in service delivery. For disaster events exceeding state response capabilities, State Coordinating Chapters notify the national headquarters DOC to ensure an appropriate and immediate response.

National Headquarters

National headquarters provides technical guidance, as well as resources to support the disaster response. During a national response, the DOC, located at national headquarters, becomes the central point for administration of the disaster response operating seven days a week, 24 hours a day, year-round.



Red Cross Mental Health volunteers speak with a Biloxi, MS resident following Hurricane Katrina.

Tim Leverett / American Red Cross