



## **Understand the Context**

The number of global disaster events has been increasing steadily—45 percent over the last 20 years (The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, 2017). Further, these disasters are growing in intensity and impacting more people. For example, between 2006 and 2015, more than 15 million U.S. adults were affected by disasters, a 43 percent increase over the prior decade (World Disaster Report: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2016). These disasters aren't just high-profile events like hurricanes. Winter storms and floods rarely make headlines or attract donations, but they can still devastate lives.

No disaster response organization can predict or budget for major disasters that cost millions of dollars in response from any one organization. Having a plan in place to activate your company and employees following disasters, to support this incremental need, is going to have increasing importance.

## **True Need Might Not Be Communicated in the Media**

As we see an increase in the number of disasters and people being impacted, we have seen a decrease in media coverage for these disasters. Ask the American Red Cross what disaster response level a disaster is to get an objective view of the need. The American Red Cross uses factors, including but not limited to, the following to determine a disaster level ranging from Level 1 to Level 7:

- Number of people impacted
- Number of homes damaged or destroyed
- Number of Red Cross workers required to support the response
- Number of relief supplies like comfort and clean up kits needed
- Geographic scope
- Duration of Service Delivery

## **Be Conscious of the Disaster Cycle**

The disaster cycle is continuous and includes preparing communities, responding to a disaster and helping the community recover. The American Red Cross and other disaster agencies seek to build resilient communities, which requires extensive work and investment not only following disasters, but also helping communities prepare for and recover from disasters. Consider investing in preparedness programs, as studies have shown that investing in preparedness is one of the most sustainable ways to mitigate the impact of disasters.



**Disaster Cycle**

A resilient community is one that is prepared for, can respond to, and recover from disasters.

## **It Takes a Village**

No one organization or agency can make a community whole following a disaster. Disaster preparedness, response and recovery is a collaborative effort, including resources and support from the private sector. Any disaster response effort is led by the government agency leading the response. The American Red Cross has a unique role in that we have an unfunded congressional mandate to respond

to the needs of people impacted by war or disaster. Because we are at the table of the government-led response, we are often a convener with other community organizations that have expertise in other areas. For example, when feeding communities, the American Red Cross works with the Salvation Army and Southern Baptist as in the photo.

## Stuff May Get in the Way

Collections of household goods, non-uniform items, used clothing, etc. can be costly to manage and disruptive to relief efforts and should be avoided. Many people don't have homes or storage mechanisms for additional stuff. It takes time and money to sort, process, transport, and then distribute donated items.

For more information:

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/best-intentions-when-disaster-relief-brings-anything-but-relief/>

Did you know that response organizations rely heavily on uniform and bulk quantities of items like water, food, clean-up and other supplies? These need to be truckloads of the same item, pre-palated with the company able to provide delivery to the requested location. It is best to speak about these donations prior to a disaster so they can be quickly coordinated during a disaster.



*Southern Baptists Convention volunteers and Red Cross volunteers prepare the containers that store hot meals. Photo credit Daniel Cima/American Red Cross*

## Volunteerism and Employee Engagement

Highly trained volunteers, who have volunteered and received training prior to disasters occurring are the majority of volunteers supporting any disaster event. Encourage passionate employees to volunteer and get trained for the next disaster: [www.redcross.org/volunteer](http://www.redcross.org/volunteer)

The best engagement opportunities during a disaster are fundraising, advocacy and blood donations:

- Fundraising: The Red Cross can support your employee fundraising campaign with online giving tools for your company to track the total number and amount of donations.
- Advocacy: Did you know that your employees could become a digital advocate of the Red Cross? Learn more here: <https://www.redcross.org/volunteer/volunteer-opportunities/be-a-digital-advocate.html>
- Give blood: Find your local blood service provider or if you have locations where the Red Cross collects blood encourage employees to sign up for a blood drive: [www.redcross.org/give-blood](http://www.redcross.org/give-blood)

## Be Creative About Financial Donations

After a disaster, financial donations are the best way to help those who need it most, because: they can be accessed quickly and put to use right away; they allow response agencies to be flexible in the help that we provide and ensure we can provide what people need most and; they allow the Red Cross and disaster victims to purchase items locally, stimulating the economy of the disaster-affected area.

Be creative with your employees about raising financial donations: host a bake sale, jeans day, encourage employees to donate money to "pie an executive". Build engagement to raise financial donations.

Questions? Call Jenni Gasbarro, Red Cross Regional Philanthropy Officer at (303) 607-4794