



Home Fire Campaign

2019 Annual Update



**American
Red Cross**



Home Fire Campaign at a Glance

Response and Recovery

The American Red Cross responds to a disaster every eight minutes, and most of these responses are for single and multi-family home fires.

During calendar year 2019¹, our disaster workers:



Responded to **over 55,700 home fires**



Opened **nearly 82,000 cases** for affected families, helping **over 241,800 people**

Preparedness and Prevention

Seven people die in home fires each day, most in homes without working smoke alarms. Since we launched our Home Fire Campaign in 2014, we've accomplished so much—saving more than 770 lives.

To make communities and families safer, we have:²



Installed **more than 2 million smoke alarms** in **over 17,000 cities and towns**



Reached **more than 1.5 million children** through youth preparedness and education programs



Served **more than 2.2 million people** through home visits in 50 states, 3 territories and the District of Columbia

This work was made possible by our committed financial donors and volunteers, local fire departments, FEMA and thousands more community partners.

¹January 1, 2019—December 31, 2019

²Cumulative Home Fire Campaign totals as of December 31, 2019

Cover photo: After a two-alarm fire tore through an apartment building in Brooklyn on February 4, 2019, volunteer Phil Cogan works alongside fellow Red Cross team members to help dozens of residents forced from their homes. Photo by Kevin Suttlehan/American Red Cross.

Above: A volunteer visits with a child at a Red Cross shelter following a Christmas Day 2019 fire in Minneapolis that displaced more than 250 people. Photo by Lara Leimbach/American Red Cross.

Generous Donors, Partners and Volunteers Made a Meaningful Impact



A message from the senior vice president, American Red Cross Disaster Services

As I write this note, the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed our lives in innumerable ways. But amid these daunting challenges, the vital disaster relief work of the American Red Cross continues.

With tens of thousands of Red Cross responses over the 2019 calendar year, home fires remain our nation's most prevalent disaster. Thanks to generous donors who support our Home Fire Campaign, caring Red Cross workers are often among the first to arrive following these tragic events, providing relief and comfort to families with nowhere else to turn.

Because we see first-hand the devastating toll of home fires, we also continued our critical work to prevent injuries and deaths through the Home Fire Campaign's year-round preparedness efforts, including our signature *Sound the Alarm* events in spring 2019. During this 16-day period of heightened emphasis, more than 29,000 community volunteers visited homes door-to-door. They installed over 120,000 free smoke alarms and helped make more than 50,000 homes safer from this deadly threat.

The Red Cross Home Fire Campaign's response, recovery and lifesaving preparedness programs continued to make a powerful impact. In the 2019 calendar year, we brought immediate help and hope for recovery to heartbroken individuals and families following more than **55,700** single- and multi-family home fires. And by the end of 2019, at least **699** people were still alive because of the Home Fire Campaign preparedness work of the American Red Cross and our partners—a remarkable achievement.

As of June 30, 2020, I'm proud to report that we've added another **80** saved lives to that total! During the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency, we're still delivering home fire relief and recovery services daily for people in need, while adapting to provide aid virtually and shelter displaced residents in hotel rooms. And while our *Sound the Alarm* events for 2020 have been postponed until further notice due to this pandemic, our dedicated workers and volunteers will return to at-risk communities to carry on this lifesaving work when it is safe to do so.

The life-changing impact of our Home Fire Campaign would not be possible without the generosity of donors and community partners, as well as the selfless commitment of tens of thousands of volunteers. As we look back on the impressive results of these efforts in the past year, I want to thank all of you once again for your support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Trevor Rigger". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Trevor Rigger



We Provided Relief and Financial Assistance for Home Fire Survivors

In June 2019, Barbara Juris was preparing dinner for her husband in their Oak Lawn, Illinois, home. After briefly stepping outside, she heard her neighbor yelling—smoke was pouring out of Barbara’s kitchen window. Back in the house, she saw flames spreading from the stove up the cabinets and down to the floor.

As the fire department worked to extinguish the flames, Barbara and her husband helplessly watched as the blaze destroyed their kitchen and damaged parts of the roof. “We had no place to go,” Barbara said.

Arriving just after the fire department, Red Cross volunteers spoke to Barbara, made sure she and her husband had accommodations, and helped them plan their next steps. “They were just so supportive, and they told me I’ll get through it and they’ll find a place for me,” she said. “I cannot rave enough about the Red Cross.”

In 2019, Red Cross disaster workers responded to more than **55,700** home fires. In many cases, they arrived to find the affected families standing on the curb, left with little more than the clothes on their backs. Wrapping a warm blanket around their shoulders, our compassionate volunteers and employees offered thousands of survivors sorely needed emotional support and a sense of hope.

The Red Cross also provided impacted individuals and families with financial support to help with immediate needs like food, prescriptions and diapers, as well as secure a safe place to stay, empowering them to be an active part of their own recovery. And Red Cross caseworkers stayed in touch with home fire survivors, helping them plan their next steps and locate available resources to rebuild their lives.

“I cannot rave enough about the Red Cross.”

Barbara Juris, home fire survivor

Home Fire Financial Assistance

During calendar year 2019, the Red Cross provided:



approximately **\$52.1 million** in financial assistance to home fire survivors.

Above: The Red Cross helped Barbara Juris, 93, and her husband after a kitchen fire badly damaged their home of 64 years. Photos by American Red Cross



We Helped Make Communities Across the U.S. Safer

The Red Cross is committed to helping people with a wide range of needs, and we know that the elderly and lower-income families are among those most vulnerable to home fires. In the United States, seven people die and 36 more suffer injuries due to these fires every day, most of them in homes without working smoke alarms.

To make families and communities nationwide safer and better prepared for the country's most frequently occurring disaster, the Red Cross uses data and mapping technology to identify and target communities where home fires pose the greatest risk.

After identifying these high-risk areas, local volunteers join fire departments and community groups at *Sound the Alarm* events all over the U.S., visiting homes to provide free smoke alarms, conduct fire prevention and safety education, and help families make an escape plan together.

Working smoke alarms help alert residents to this immediate danger, even when they're asleep, reducing the risk of fatalities in a home fire by 50 percent.³ And escape plans help ensure that families, especially children, know what to do if a smoke alarm sounds in the middle of the night.

Just a few simple steps can make households safer:



Install and maintain smoke alarms.



Talk with loved ones about fire safety.



Create and practice a home fire escape plan.

Today, at least 779 people are still alive because of smoke alarms and safety information provided by the Red Cross and our partners. This total includes more than 200 children, who are a special part of the campaign's preparedness outreach and education.

³National Fire Protection Association Smoke Alarms Fact Sheet. September 2015.

Above: At *Sound the Alarm* events across the country in 2019, Red Cross volunteers installed free smoke alarms and helped families make home fire escape plans. Photo by Dennis Drenner/American Red Cross



The Red Cross Home Fire Campaign Saved Lives

In 2019, the Red Cross was once again proud to celebrate the stories of lives saved through the Home Fire Campaign. In California, Alabama and communities across the U.S., survivors told us how smoke alarms and home fire preparedness planning made a lifesaving difference for their families.

‘You can replace things, but you can’t replace a life’—Jack Reider, Santee, California

Alerted by smoke alarms on the morning of May 29, 2019, Jack and Shirley Reider, of Santee, California, escaped their burning home with their dog, Zoe. Less than six months earlier, the Red Cross had reviewed a home fire escape plan with Jack and installed three free smoke alarms during a *Sound the Alarm* home fire safety event held in their community. The Red Cross also responded to the fire, providing the Reiders with financial assistance and one-on-one support to help speed their recovery.

“The important thing I take away from this is we were able to get out with our lives and our pup,” Jack said. “You can replace things, but you can’t replace a life.”

‘If I didn’t hear that smoke alarm, we probably wouldn’t be with each other right now’

—Jackie Sturdivant, Birmingham, Alabama

When an electrical fire broke out in the middle of the night in her Birmingham, Alabama, home, Jackie Sturdivant was alerted by smoke alarms installed just three days before, during a May 2019 Red Cross *Sound the Alarm* visit. Jackie and her three children safely fled through the front door with their dog, Ruby—just as they had discussed when making their home fire escape plan. That night, Red Cross volunteers also provided the family with financial assistance to help with urgent needs like lodging.

“If I didn’t hear that smoke alarm, we probably wouldn’t be with each other right now,” said Jackie, whose youngest son had also recently learned about fire safety at school through The Pillowcase Project, a Red Cross youth preparedness program.

Above left: Jack and Shirley Reider escaped a fire in their Santee, California, home, after being alerted by smoke alarms installed by the Red Cross. Photo by Emily Cox/American Red Cross Above right: Jackie Sturdivant and her daughter, Tiara, escaped an electrical fire that destroyed her family’s home in Birmingham, Alabama, thanks to smoke alarms installed during a Red Cross *Sound the Alarm* event. Photo by Brad Zerivitz/American Red Cross



Community Volunteers and Partners Once Again Sound the Alarm for Home Fire Safety

Last year, employees from our 2019 national partners—Airbnb, Delta Air Lines, Farmers Insurance and Nissan—joined with local sponsors and more than 29,000 community volunteers nationwide to make our *Sound the Alarm* spring push another resounding success. Together, we installed over 120,000 smoke alarms and helped make more than 50,000 homes safer from home fires over a 16-day period—significantly exceeding our goals.

Through the end of the 2019 calendar year, the Red Cross Home Fire Campaign had reached more than 2.2 million people with home visits in over 17,000 cities and towns. Generous and compassionate support from the public enables the Red Cross to carry out our vital mission. We especially thank our dedicated Home Fire Campaign volunteers, financial donors and more than 4,600 coalition partners for their commitment to saving lives and raising awareness about fire safety.

With their steadfast support, we continued to make a lifesaving impact for the people and communities we serve.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Red Cross volunteers around the country continued to share our lifesaving message in communities like yours every day—home by home, family by family. In spring 2020, the Red Cross, our partners and tens of thousands of volunteers were once again preparing to *Sound the Alarm* with a spring push of smoke alarm installation and home fire safety events.

Unfortunately, due to the evolving public health emergency, our 2020 *Sound the Alarm* events have been postponed until further notice to minimize the risk for those we serve and our workers. Working with public health authorities, we are determining when it may be prudent to resume these events and exploring alternate plans.

We are profoundly grateful for the extraordinary support of our 2020 national partners, **Delta Air Lines** and **Lowe's**, along with many other regional sponsors, companies, organizations and individuals who had generously committed their time, talent and financial resources to this critical effort, and we look forward to resuming our lifesaving *Sound the Alarm* events when it is safe to do so.



Above: Employee volunteers from national partners Airbnb and Nissan were among the more than 29,000 volunteers who registered for our spring 2019 *Sound the Alarm* events. Photos by American Red Cross



Thank you!

The American Red Cross gratefully acknowledges the following companies, foundations and partner organizations that have made extraordinary contributions to our Home Fire Campaign.⁴

Addison Hines Charitable Trust

Edison International

S. Mark Taper Foundation

The Ahmanson Foundation

Firehouse Subs Public
Safety Foundation

The USAA Foundation

Blue Cross and Blue Shield
of North Carolina

Grainger

United Way of Central Indiana

BMW of North America

Lowe's Home Improvement

United Way of Miami-Dade

Delta Air Lines

National Grid



**American
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⁴Donations to Home Fire Campaign of \$250,000+ as well as special promotional partners from January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019.

Above: When Gilbert Toussaint's New Orleans home of 50 years caught fire, newly installed smoke alarms provided by the Red Cross alerted him and his daughter to escape. Brad Zerivitz/American Red Cross