



**American
Red Cross**

Western Wildfires

THREE-MONTH UPDATE | APRIL 2021

Red Cross Aids Tens of Thousands in a Record-breaking Wildfire Season

As another record-breaking wildfire season decimated communities in Oregon, California and states across the West, thousands of American Red Cross volunteers once again stepped up to provide vital aid for tens of thousands of people facing an onslaught of destructive fires.

Hard-hit **Oregon** communities experienced some of the worst wildfires in the state's history. In early September, unusually high winds and an ongoing drought fueled multiple blazes that destroyed thousands of homes, forced tens of thousands of Oregonians to evacuate and scorched over a million acres.

Meanwhile, **California** residents suffered through another year of devastating blazes as thousands of fires consumed well over 4.1 million acres—a new record for the state. The August Complex Fire alone charred more than a million acres across Northern California, while other major wildfires, including the LNU Lightning Complex, the Creek Fire, and many more, took a terrible toll on disaster-weary Californians from early May through late December.

The state of **Washington** experienced multiple wildfires on both sides of the Cascade Mountains, including Labor Day weekend fires fed by high winds that ravaged the eastern Washington towns of Malden and Pine City. Fires also blanketed the Seattle area with smoke, causing unhealthy air conditions throughout the Puget Sound region.

Colorado, Wyoming and **Montana** also saw multiple large wildfires have heartbreaking effects on thousands of residents. In response to this extraordinary wildfire season, trained Red Cross disaster teams worked around the clock to deliver shelter, food, water, cleanup supplies and emotional support to people facing stressful evacuations and heartbreaking losses—powered by steadfast support from our generous donors and dedicated volunteers.



Red Cross worker Eric Carmichael views miles of burned forest along a road in Clackamas County, Oregon. Visit our [Western Wildfires story map](https://www.redcross.org/2020wildfiresstorymap) ([redcross.org/2020wildfiresstorymap](https://www.redcross.org/2020wildfiresstorymap)) for more about the Red Cross response to the devastating 2020 wildfire season.

Meeting Urgent Needs of Wildfire Survivors

Jessica Alvarez was just waking up when she received a text warning—the destructive Creek Fire was approaching her Meadow Lakes, California, home. Within minutes, the air outside was filling with choking smoke, and her 7-year-old, chronically ill daughter began to cough and experience shortness of breath.

In the frantic rush to evacuate her family ahead of the fire, Alvarez forgot her daughter’s critical medical equipment and medications. Remembering just a few miles down the road, she wanted to turn back, but it was too late—the fire was too close and the roads were already closed.

At a Red Cross evacuation center, Jessica and her three daughters were provided a hotel room, food and emotional support following their harrowing escape. Desperate to replace her youngest daughter’s medical equipment and medicines, she explained her predicament to a volunteer and was quickly connected by phone with Red Cross nurse Debby Dailey.

“I was crying hysterically,” Jessica recalled. “But she remained calm and reassured me that I wasn’t alone in this and that together we would get this figured out.”

“Without the Red Cross I really don’t know how we would have gotten the medication for our daughter.”

Jessica Alvarez, Meadow Lakes, California



Jessica Alvarez and her daughters received vital support from the Red Cross after a narrow escape from the Creek Fire in California. Photo by Cynthia Hugel/ American Red Cross

Debby quickly tapped into her knowledge of available resources to secure an overnight shipment of lifesaving medications and equipment for Jessica’s daughter. When they met in person, Jessica fought back tears as she thanked Nurse Debby for helping her little girl. “I am so very, very thankful for the help and support from the Red Cross,” she said.

As wildfires raged across the West, Red Cross disaster workers stood with thousands of families like Jessica’s, offering comfort and care to survivors coping with displacement and destruction. To ensure the well-being of Red Cross workers and the people they serve amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Red Cross disaster teams sheltered evacuees in hotels when possible and followed appropriate safety protocols.

Response at a Glance

Thousands of Red Cross workers have mounted a massive response to help people impacted by the unrelenting wildfires in the West. They have:



Served more than **941,500** meals and snacks with partners



Provided more than **470,100** overnight shelter and hotel stays with partners



Made more than **62,100** individual care contacts



Distributed more than **59,600** relief items

Cumulative figures as of December 31, 2020, including responses in California, Colorado, Montana, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming

The Red Cross also set up drive-thru distribution sites to safely deliver other critical services, including warm meals, relief items and cleanup supplies, including rakes, buckets and ash sifters to salvage valuables from homes consumed by the flames. And knowledgeable, compassionate Red Cross health and mental health workers were on hand to help with critical health needs and offer vital emotional support to hard-hit residents.

With many survivors already struggling to make ends meet, the Red Cross also provided funds to help families pay for some of their most immediate needs, such as food, transportation and clothing. As of December 31, 2020, the Red Cross had provided \$4.1 million in financial assistance for residents most severely impacted by the Western Wildfires.

For Oregon Evacuees, the Smile Behind the Mask Is Magic

Amid the smoky air surrounding the Oregon State Fairgrounds in Salem, Oregon, volunteer Michael Watkins seemed unfazed. He offered a warm greeting to evacuated residents as they entered the emergency shelter.

Although he was wearing a mask, his smile came through.

Last May, the Raleigh, North Carolina, resident graduated from Campbell University with a degree in Business Administration and Social Work. He thought coming to help with the Oregon wildfires would be a good opportunity to combine his passion for helping people with his newly acquired skills.

“I’m learning a lot from others, such as the Red Cross Health Services volunteers tending to the health needs of residents,” said Michael, “I want to help someone whose need is greater than mine.”



Volunteer Michael Watkins welcomes those visiting the Red Cross shelter at the Oregon State Fairgrounds in Salem, Oregon, following the September 2020 wildfires. Photo by Axl David/American Red Cross

For people fleeing a wildfire and seeking refuge in a Red Cross shelter, their initial arrival can feel intimidating. Michael understands the importance of that experience and how small gestures can leave a lasting impact.

“It’s extremely important to have a good first impression,” said Michael. “People are the first priority to us.”

Generous Donors Enable Western Wildfires Relief and Recovery

Thanks to our compassionate supporters, the Red Cross has raised \$46.5 million, including the value of critical donated goods and services, to help people impacted by the 2020 Western Wildfires. As of December 31, 2020, the Red Cross had already spent or made commitments to spend approximately \$29.5 million

on emergency relief and recovery efforts for these wildfires in California, Colorado, Montana, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming. We will continue to program the remaining funds to provide and support services for both individual and community long-term recovery in the impacted communities.

California Wildfires Expenses and Commitments¹ (in millions)

as of December 31, 2020

Expense Categories	Food, Shelter, and Relief Items	Health and Emotional Support	Financial Assistance	Community Recovery	Total	Expense %
Financial assistance, food and other relief items	\$5.8	\$0.3	\$1.5	\$-	\$7.6	60%
Deployment of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$1.7	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$1.7	14%
Full-time Red Cross employees	\$1.0	\$0.1	\$0.2	\$-	\$1.3	10%
Freight, postage and warehousing	\$0.3	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$0.3	2%
IT, communications and call centers	\$0.2	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$0.2	2%
Kitchen, shelter and other logistics that enable service delivery	\$0.1	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$0.1	1%
Equipment, maintenance and fueling of Red Cross emergency vehicles and rented trucks	\$0.1	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$0.1	1%
Total Program Expenses	\$9.2	\$0.4	\$1.7	\$-	\$11.3	90%
Management, general and fundraising ²					\$1.2	10%
Total Expenses					\$12.5	100%
Program Dollars Remaining					\$5.9	
Management, general and fundraising remaining to be applied					\$0.7	
Total Budget					\$19.1	

¹Dollar figures in all tables are rounded to the nearest \$100,000; therefore, expenses of \$49,999 and below are represented as zero.

²Management, general and fundraising expenses support our work at its core and are indispensable to running the organization and helping people in need. They include the people and systems to maintain our enterprise-wide computer and telecommunications, HR and payroll systems to support our approximately 18,500 employees and more than 300,000 volunteers, fundraising and communications functions, and other support services across all program lines. 90 cents of every dollar received for the western wildfires will be spent on our services to help people affected by these wildfires.

Oregon Wildfires Expenses and Commitments¹ (in millions)

as of December 31, 2020

Expense Categories	Food, Shelter, and Relief Items	Health and Emotional Support	Financial Assistance	Community Recovery	Total	Expense %
Financial assistance, food and other relief items ²	\$6.8	\$0.2	\$2.5	\$-	\$9.5	62%
Full-time Red Cross employees	\$1.2	\$0.1	\$0.3	\$-	\$1.6	10%
Deployment of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$1.3	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$1.3	8%
Freight, postage and warehousing	\$1.0	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$1.0	7%
IT, communications and call centers	\$0.2	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$0.2	1%
Kitchen, shelter and other logistics that enable service delivery	\$0.1	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$0.1	1%
Equipment, maintenance and fueling of Red Cross emergency vehicles and rented trucks	\$0.1	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$0.1	1%
Total Program Expenses	\$10.7	\$0.3	\$2.8	\$-	\$13.8	90%
Management, general and fundraising ³					\$1.5	10%
Total Expenses					\$15.3	100%
Program Dollars Remaining					\$8.5	
Management, general and fundraising remaining to be applied					\$1.0	
Total Budget					\$24.8	

¹Dollar figures in all tables are rounded to the nearest \$100,000; therefore, expenses of \$49,999 and below are represented as zero.

²Includes \$1.2 million in contractual expenses expected to be reimbursed by the state of Oregon.

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Other Western Wildfires Expenses and Commitments^{1,2} (in millions)

as of December 31, 2020

Expense Categories	Food, Shelter, and Relief Items	Health and Emotional Support	Financial Assistance	Community Recovery	Total	Expense %
Financial assistance, food and other relief items	\$1.1	\$-	\$0.1	\$-	\$1.2	72%
Full-time Red Cross employees	\$0.1	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$0.1	6%
Deployment of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$0.1	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$0.1	6%
Freight, postage and warehousing	\$0.1	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$0.1	6%
Total Program Expenses	\$1.4	\$-	\$0.1	\$-	\$1.5	90%
Management, general and fundraising ³					\$0.2	10%
Total Expenses					\$1.7	100%
Program Dollars Remaining					\$2.7	
Management, general and fundraising remaining to be applied					\$0.3	
Total Budget					\$4.7	

¹Dollar figures in all tables are rounded to the nearest \$100,000; therefore, expenses of \$49,999 and below are represented as zero.

²Includes wildfires responses in Colorado, Montana, Washington and Wyoming.

³Management, general and fundraising expenses support our work at its core and are indispensable to running the organization and helping people in need. They include the people and systems to maintain our enterprise-wide computer and telecommunications, HR and payroll systems to support our approximately 18,500 employees and more than 300,000 volunteers, fundraising and communications functions, and other support services across all program lines. 90 cents of every dollar received for the 2020 western wildfires will be spent on our services to help people affected by these wildfires.

Thank you!

In this challenging time for people across the country, those in need turn to the Red Cross for vital support when help can't wait. Your donation helps us fulfill this promise. The Red Cross is deeply grateful for the remarkable commitment of our donors, which has already made a meaningful impact for those we serve, and will continue to enable vital services as we carry out our lifesaving mission amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.