



**American
Red Cross**

Western Wildfires

SIX-MONTH UPDATE | JUNE 2021

Red Cross Stands with Residents Devastated by 2020 Wildfire Season

Last year's wildfire season was a traumatic one for families and communities in Oregon, California and other states across the western U.S., including Colorado, Montana, Washington and Wyoming. In Oregon, some of the most destructive wildfires in state history destroyed thousands of homes, while multiple California blazes consumed over 4.1 million acres.

In response, the American Red Cross was there with immediate relief for tens of thousands of residents who were forced from their homes amid the added challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. While taking extra steps to keep people safe during this ongoing public health emergency, thousands of Red Cross volunteers and employees worked night and day for months to provide shelter, food, water, cleanup supplies and health, mental health and spiritual care support for survivors—many of whom lost nearly everything to the flames.

This immediate relief made a real difference for Oregon resident Ellen Simonson. "I can't thank you enough for being there in this tragic event," she said. "It meant so much to have my basic needs met—and sometimes just someone to talk to. It felt like someone cared," Ellen added.

Six months later, as the western U.S. braces for another potentially devastating wildfire season, many people around the region are still trying to move on

from the impact of the 2020 fires. Thanks to generous support from compassionate donors, the Red Cross has stood by the sides of individuals and families to help meet their pressing recovery needs, providing financial assistance to hard-hit residents, aid with recovery planning and much more as survivors get back on their feet and begin to rebuild their lives.



Red Cross volunteer Jillian Robertson surveys damage from the LNU Complex fire in Vacaville, California. Visit our [Western Wildfires story map](#) for more about the Red Cross response to the devastating 2020 wildfire season. Photo by Dennis Drenner/American Red Cross

Building Bridges from Hardship to Recovery for Wildfire Survivors

As many people who were severely affected by the 2020 western wildfires struggled to pick up the pieces, the Red Cross provided immediate funds to help them with essentials like food, transportation, housing needs and clothing. In the months since the wildfires ended, the Red Cross has continued to provide financial assistance to some of the most significantly impacted survivors, helping them build bridges from hardship to recovery.

As of March 31, 2021, we had provided relief and recovery assistance totaling approximately \$4.1 million, reaching thousands of households impacted by wildfires in the western U.S.

Recovery from destructive disasters like these is a team effort, and trained Red Cross volunteers and workers continue to partner closely with nonprofit and civic organizations, local businesses and governments to care for communities and families. They are helping wildfire survivors to plan their next steps and identify available recovery resources, as well as offering comfort, encouragement and guidance through this often-challenging journey.

In addition to financial assistance and one-on-one support, the Red Cross is making plans to fund work carried out by partner organizations with specialized expertise to address unmet longer-term recovery needs



Red Cross workers assemble wildfire cleanup kits for distribution to residents impacted by the 2020 Lake Fire in Los Angeles County, California. Photo by Mimi Teller/American Red Cross

in the affected communities and help their residents become better prepared for and more resilient against future crises.

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 **938,700** meals and snacks with partners



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



Made more than **61,900** individual care contacts



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

Cumulative figures as of March 31, 2021, including responses in California, Colorado, Montana, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming

Shelter Resident Transition Program: Helping Survivors Recover with Dignity

Arising from lessons learned following past disasters, the Shelter Resident Transition (SRT) program is a newer focus area for Red Cross recovery work. In a nutshell, SRT team members meet with survivors—whether face-to-face or virtually due to COVID-19—who are living in congregate or non-congregate shelters, such as hotels paid for by the Red Cross. They assess client needs and provide support and financial assistance to help these residents find more permanent, stable living situations.

As Red Cross worker Christine Spalding, the SRT team lead for the Oregon wildfires response, put it: “It was only because of SRT that many of the people we met were even able to start their recovery.”

In the western U.S., many residents live in impermanent or non-traditional housing situations—some may be experiencing homelessness, while others live “off the grid” in tents or “fifth wheel” campers on public lands that were consumed by the massive blazes. Six months after the wildfires, nearly 150 Oregon families were still

staying in hotels, often simply because local housing was hard to find.

Christine and a dedicated team of experienced volunteers—some local and others working virtually from locations around the country and the world—meet with individuals and families like these to help them find their best housing solution. “That looks different for everyone,” she said. “We might help them move into a more permanent living situation, fund a move to another area or buy them a bus ticket so they can travel to family members.”

Many disaster clients who connect with the SRT team have experienced trauma beyond the disaster’s immediate impact. One story began with a voice

“I am cold, hungry, on the streets.... I heard the Red Cross might be able to help. Please call me...”

voice message from Julie, Oregon wildfires survivor



Oregon wildfires SRT team volunteers Kathleen Elliot (left), of Oregon, Julia Bishop (center), of Washington, and team lead Christine Spalding. Photo by American Red Cross

message. "I was finishing up the last of 131 calls I made for the day," Christine said. "The message caught my attention: 'My name is Julie;' the caller said. 'I am cold, hungry, on the streets. My fifth wheel [camper] was stolen after evacuating from the fires. I heard the Red Cross might be able to help. Please call me.'"

"When we were able to reach Julie," Christine said, "we confirmed her fifth wheel was stolen after she evacuated, with all her belongings, because she managed to write the police report number on her jeans. She was living on the street, was roughed up, with no clothes, hungry and tired," Christine added.

Bethany Jones, Red Cross shelter lead for Salem, Oregon, took over at this point. She made sure Julie had clothes, toiletries, a hot meal, a warm bed and a shower, as well as arranging for her to meet with Red Cross disaster health and mental health volunteers.

"Bethany and I wept," Christine said, "when we knew Julie was safe and okay. I'm so proud of what the SRT program accomplished for people in need, as well as how it helped enable and empower our caseworkers and volunteers."



Don Baird receives a sifter, wildfire kit and cleaning kit from Red Cross volunteers near Gates, Oregon. Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross

Compassionate Supporters Power Western Wildfires Relief and Recovery

Thanks to our generous donors, the Red Cross has raised \$48.7 million, including the value of critical donated goods and services, to help people impacted by the 2020 Western Wildfires.

As of March 31, 2021, the Red Cross had already spent or made commitments to spend approximately

\$49.8 million on emergency relief and recovery efforts for these wildfires in California, Colorado, Montana, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming. We will continue to provide services for long-term recovery in the impacted communities.

California Wildfires Expenses and Commitments¹ (in millions)

as of March 31, 2021

Expense Categories	Food, Shelter, and Relief Items	Health and Emotional Support	Financial Assistance	Community Recovery	Total	Expense %
Financial assistance, food and other relief items	\$7.5	\$0.3	\$1.5	–	\$9.3	59%
Deployment of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$2.6	–	–	–	\$2.6	17%
Full-time Red Cross employees	\$1.0	\$0.1	\$0.2	–	\$1.3	8%
Freight, postage and warehousing	\$0.5	–	–	–	\$0.5	3%
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	\$12.0	\$0.4	\$1.7	–	\$14.1	90%
Management, general and fundraising ²					\$1.6	10%
Total Expenses					\$15.7	100%
Program Dollars Remaining					\$5.8	
Management, general and fundraising remaining to be applied					\$0.6	
Total Budget					\$22.1	

¹Dollar figures in all tables are rounded to the nearest \$100K; therefore, expenses \$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 March 31, 2021

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	\$19.6	\$0.2	\$2.5	–	\$22.3	73%
Full-time Red Cross employees	\$2.0	–	–	–	\$2.0	7%
Deployment of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$1.2	\$0.1	\$0.3	–	\$1.6	5%
Freight, postage and warehousing	\$1.1	–	–	–	\$1.1	4%
IT, communications and call centers	\$0.2	–	–	–	\$0.2	1%
Kitchen, shelter and other logistics that enable service delivery	\$0.1	–	–	–	\$0.1	0%
Equipment, maintenance and fueling of Red Cross emergency vehicles and rented trucks	\$0.1	–	–	–	\$0.1	0%
Temporary Disaster Hires	\$0.1	–	–	–	\$0.1	0%
Total Program Expenses	\$24.4	\$0.3	\$2.8	–	\$27.5	90%
Management, general and fundraising ³					\$3.0	10%
Total Expenses					\$30.5	100%
Program Dollars Remaining					\$0.4	
Management, general and fundraising remaining to be applied					\$0.1	
Total Budget					\$31.0	

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

²Includes \$13.6 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 March 31, 2021

Expense Categories	Food, Shelter, and Relief Items	Health and Emotional Support	Financial Assistance	Community Recovery	Total	Expense %
Financial assistance, food and other relief items	\$2.7	–	\$0.1	–	\$2.8	78%
Full-time Red Cross employees	\$0.2	–	–	–	\$0.2	6%
Deployment of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$0.1	–	–	–	\$0.1	3%
Freight, postage and warehousing	\$0.1	–	–	–	\$0.1	3%
Total Program Expenses	\$3.1	–	\$0.1	–	\$3.2	90%
Management, general and fundraising ³					\$0.4	10%
Total Expenses					\$3.6	100%
Program Dollars Remaining					\$3.3	
Management, general and fundraising remaining to be applied					\$0.4	
Total Budget					\$7.3	

¹Dollar figures in all tables are rounded to the nearest \$100K; therefore, expenses \$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.