



# Standing Ready With a Helping Hand American Red Cross

The American Red Cross Response to the Central U.S. Floods and Tornadoes



# Unbounded Relief



Talia Frenkel/American Red Cross

Volunteer Mindy Pinkus talks with McKenzie Wedemeier, who has been helping clean up her grandmother's Waverly, Iowa, home, damaged by flooding.

**C**ommunities in the central United States suffered from a seemingly endless series of storms and tornadoes beginning in May 2008. From the farmlands of Iowa to the mountains of West Virginia, thousands of Americans lost their homes and livelihoods to floods and tornadoes. Floodwaters overran riverbanks, breached levees and flowed into neighborhoods. Simultaneously, the American Red Cross helped people

prepare for flooding while delivering relief to the thousands who had already been affected. When the floodwaters finally receded, they revealed an unbelievable level of destruction. More than 4,000 homes in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, West Virginia and Wisconsin were destroyed and thousands more needed repairs. Families and individuals across all of these states faced the overwhelming task of starting over.



Talia Frenkel/American Red Cross

Red Cross volunteer Terry Brink is handed a case of hot meals by Kim Willis of the Southern Baptist Convention. Together, the Red Cross and Southern Baptists delivered more than 10,000 meals a day in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, alone.

## Successful Partnerships

The American Red Cross did not carry out such a large operation all by itself. The services we delivered were made possible by the collaborative efforts of several organizations driven by the same humanitarian mission.

The Red Cross teamed up with many local, regional and national partners in its disaster response. We worked to build local capacities, mobilize and empower communities and establish partnerships with other public and private organizations whose capabilities strengthened and complemented our disaster relief initiatives. From the International Brotherhood of Teamsters to the Serve the City volunteer organization, and from the Salvation Army to local school districts, the Red Cross was a committed and integral part of the coordinated relief effort.

The Southern Baptist Convention—a longtime Red Cross partner in mass feeding operations—made it possible for the Red Cross to serve more than \$1 million meals; Catholic Charities helped the Red Cross connect with Spanish-speaking and faith-based populations; and Church of the Brethren Disaster Child Care teams provided safe environments in shelters where children could be supervised while their caretakers met with Red Cross caseworkers or disaster mental health professionals.

By working with agencies that share our commitment to serving disaster-affected communities, we join our resources and expertise to provide the best possible response to the people we all serve.



Jacob Eliot and Riley Ables receive snacks from Red Cross volunteer Jessee Jones in Columbus, Indiana, after floodwaters receded.

Talia Frenkel/American Red Cross

With everything from cots for weary evacuees to mobile communications technology that replaced storm-damaged systems, more than 9,200 Red Cross disaster workers nationwide served in 124 Red Cross and partner-run shelters, working day and night to provide comfort to worried residents. They staffed the 125 emergency response vehicles (ERVs) used to serve meals and hand out clean-up supplies; including rakes, brooms, cleaning products and other items.

Following the emergency response phase, Red Cross caseworkers met with individual clients to assess their needs and devise a long-term recovery plan in collaboration with community partners. This included addressing medical needs, offering emotional support, assisting with insurance claims and providing guidance for accessing federal assistance or small loans.

In addition to causing billions of dollars in structural damage, the storms inflicted deep emotional wounds. Not only were homes and belongings destroyed, but many people were out of work when businesses were under water, inaccessible or without power for days or weeks. The Red Cross deployed disaster mental health professionals to provide triage, assessment and psychological first aid to disaster survivors and relief workers. They helped ease the mental and emotional stress experienced during disasters. Our mental health professionals provided nearly 21,000 consultations, reinvigorating the spirits of those who lost so much.

The Red Cross was a vital presence in those states affected by the storms. In this report, we discuss the various services we provided and the hope we delivered.

## Ongoing Commitment

Deere & Company and the John Deere Foundation have supported American Red Cross relief efforts since 1917. Nearly a century later, the company still answers the call for help. The John Deere Foundation donated \$1 million to the Disaster Relief Fund in response to the central U.S. floods and tornadoes.

“The Red Cross is a valuable partner in helping us carry out our goal to serve those during the initial stages of a disaster recovery and help position them to restore their lives,” says Amy Nimmer, President of the John Deere Foundation.

John Deere’s support of the Red Cross enables us to respond to disasters across the country and abroad. When an earthquake struck China’s Sichuan Province in May, the foundation and John Deere employees gave more than \$335,000 to help the Red Cross meet the needs of thousands of people.

“The Red Cross helped provide an avenue for employees all over the world to support the relief efforts,” said Nimmer.

John Deere and its employees have a long history of supporting those in need, and this gift demonstrates their ongoing commitment to helping others.



## Swift Support

During a sold-out show in August in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, country singer Taylor Swift donated \$100,000 to the American Red Cross.

"This was the first sold-out show the people of Cedar Rapids have had since the flood," said Taylor Swift. "We appreciate their support. They stood by me and now I want to stand by them. This is why I gave \$100,000 to the community through the American Red Cross."

This is not Swift's first donation to the Red Cross. Earlier this summer, she donated her merchandise sales—totaling \$10,500—from the Country Music Awards Festival to the Nashville Area Chapter. The funds supported activities in Tennessee and the Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund.



Taylor Swift presents the Red Cross with a check for \$100,000 to support disaster victims affected by the Iowa Tornadoes and Floods at her concert on August 8, 2008, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.



Dave Kroer/American Red Cross

Red Cross volunteers Mickey and Jackie Bailey, from North Carolina, complete field assessments as part of the Roaming Outreach Team in northern Iowa. This team—consisting of a mental health professional, a nurse, a communications specialist, a financial services associate and client caseworkers—went door to door to help those affected by the floods.

## Iowa

Responding to what Iowa Governor Chet Culver called “the worst natural disaster in Iowa history,” the Red Cross delivered aid to tens of thousands of Iowans affected by tornadoes and floods. On May 25, a mile-wide tornado packing winds of 200 mph demolished one-third of Parkersburg before tearing through nearby New Hartford. The same storm system flooded homes in two counties. Two weeks later, another storm flooded the already saturated state.

Thousands of homes were damaged, downtown Cedar Rapids was swamped and thousands of acres of farmland were destroyed.

The Red Cross was able to provide shelter, hot meals and relief supplies because of the volunteers who make up about 96 percent of our workforce. Our volunteers are key to the Red Cross mission, helping us prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. For example, volunteer caseworkers provided direct emergency assistance to those with disaster-caused needs. Red Cross caseworkers met with clients at 25 service centers throughout Iowa while other teams canvassed rural areas to meet with hundreds of clients who could not reach our service centers.

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I don't know where we would be if it weren't for the Red Cross.

—Lloyd Schneckloth, whose home in Nichols, Iowa, was flooded

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After caseworkers verified their clients' disaster-caused needs and cross-referenced information with other organizations distributing financial assistance, we provided specific disaster health services, emergency financial assistance, reunification and recovery plans for each individual impacted. We provided everything from food and clothing to the means to search for a new job or place to live.

The Red Cross helped in every way, shape and form possible, from the time we woke up to the time we went to bed.

— Bruce Recker, who lost his Iowa home to a tornado

## Facts at a Glance Iowa

**Shelters Opened**  
36

**Shelter Overnight Stays**  
More than 1,200

**Meals and Snacks Served**  
More than 760,000

**Emergency Response Vehicles (ERVs)**  
44

**Red Cross Disaster Workers**  
6,188



Michael Rector, whose home was damaged by flooding, speaks with a volunteer at a busy Red Cross service center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Talia Frenkel/American Red Cross



A resident of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, explains damage done to his property and his neighborhood to Red Cross volunteer Joe Hanson.

Marty Robby/American Red Cross



Talia Frenkel/American Red Cross

Red Cross volunteer Melissa Schultz comforts Doloris Faust, who is staying at the Martinsville High School shelter in Indiana.

## Indiana

A strong tornado swept through central Indiana on May 30, carving a mile-long path of destruction, toppling utility poles, knocking off tree limbs and tearing roofs off buildings. Torrential rains followed, flooding the region. Dozens of counties were declared major disaster areas. Indiana had not experienced such devastating flooding since 1913.

This disaster changed lives, shattered daily routines, disrupted jobs and destroyed property. At Red Cross service delivery sites and shelters, residents received counseling from mental health workers and found the strength to deal with difficult emotions brought on by such devastation. Professional social workers, counselors, psychologists and psychiatrists took leave from their professional practices for up to two weeks at a time to provide numerous services,

### Facts at a Glance Indiana

**Shelters Opened**  
**19**

**Shelter Overnight Stays**  
**Nearly 1,400**

**Meals and Snacks Served**  
**Nearly 139,000**

**Emergency Response Vehicles (ERVs)**  
**33**

**Red Cross Disaster Workers**  
**963**

All of my kid's things, my pictures, were gone. When you come back and see everything in mud, it's heartbreaking. It may be just stuff, but it was our home. It was my refuge.

—Red Cross client who lost her Indiana home to flooding

## Bridging the Gap

Monsanto's partnership with the Red Cross spans two decades and includes financial giving, and a recognized relationship with Red Cross Health and Safety training. "Disasters affect all of us—they impact communities where we have neighbors, friends and loved ones," said Deborah J. Patterson, President of the Monsanto Fund. "Monsanto is proud to help all of those affected by disaster by giving to the Red Cross. We give to the Red Cross because people trust the Red Cross and they have the capability to respond anywhere at anytime."

Through the Monsanto Fund—whose goal is to improve people's lives by bridging the gap between their needs and their resources—the company gave \$1.5 million for flood relief in Iowa and other similarly affected states. In addition, Monsanto offered its U.S. employees a matching gift program and the opportunity to commit one eight-hour day with pay to volunteer in support of local flood relief efforts, including sand-bagging and clean-up projects. The employee volunteer program was expected to generate more than 9,400 hours of manpower.



Deborah J. Patterson,  
President, Monsanto Fund

including the following:

- Crisis intervention
- Mental health education
- Psychological first aid
- Referrals to community partners for long-term support
- Support for Red Cross disaster workers

In response to this disaster in Indiana, our mental health workers provided 4,742 consultations with individuals and families feeling overwhelmed.

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I'm one of the lucky ones. I'm just out here helping my neighbors. The Red Cross has been great. You've been here every day. We can't thank you enough.

—Faith York, a community volunteer in Ft. Atkinson, Wisconsin.

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## Wisconsin

The torrential storms in Wisconsin caused extensive devastation across the state. The Red Cross quickly deployed 23 ERVs to deliver relief supplies to residents and emergency personnel.

As ERVs circulated through neighborhoods, residents would put down their rakes and garbage bags when they heard the air horn. Deliveries provided meals and clean-up supplies, as well as an opportunity to take a break from the daunting task of combing through debris in search of salvageable belongings. ERVs can distribute up to 600 meals per day.



Red Cross volunteers Susan Lathrop from South Dakota and Mary Scott from Wisconsin unload clean-up kits in Milwaukee.

American Red Cross

### Facts at a Glance Wisconsin

Shelters Opened  
35

Shelter Overnight Stays  
More than 1,400

Meals and Snacks Served  
Nearly 72,000

Emergency Response Vehicles (ERVs)  
23

Red Cross Disaster Workers  
973

ERVs are also used to transport and distribute disaster recovery items like rakes, shovels, towels, masks, gloves, sunscreen and bug repellent. The Red Cross now has 324 ERVs strategically placed around the country to respond to both local and large-scale emergencies.

## Kansas

Kansans know the importance of acting fast to seek shelter when a tornado threatens. Lives are saved when people heed the warnings and know what to do and where to go.

Throughout the night of June 11, severe weather struck much of north-central Kansas. In the middle of the night, the Red Cross set up a shelter that gave people a safe place to wait out the storm. The twister cut a path six blocks wide, reducing more than half of the homes and buildings to rubble, snapping utility poles and knocking down trees. Red Cross disaster workers set up additional shelters throughout the affected areas, where displaced residents could find a hot meal and a safe refuge from the howling winds and rain that continued to threaten the community.

### Facts at a Glance Kansas

Shelters Opened  
3

Shelter Overnight Stays  
35

Meals and Snacks Served  
More than 15,000

Emergency Response Vehicles (ERVs)  
4

Red Cross Disaster Workers  
164

We were able to immediately open the first shelter because of existing partnerships with officials at schools, churches and commercial buildings. We also coordinate sheltering activities with the local and state governments and other partner organizations. Several disasters over the past few years have reinforced the importance of providing for the disabled, elderly, medically dependent and other population groups during disasters.

Different disabilities create different needs, and the Red Cross understands that there is no such thing as a “one size fits all” approach. Over the past two years, the Red Cross has invested more than \$500,000 in equipment—such as accessible cots, commode chairs and shower stools—to assist individuals with disabilities who may stay in our shelters.

I’m on top of the levee looking out over thousands of acres of corn fields, with the Mississippi River at my feet. People are working to save their property and their farms. I’m proud to be a member of the American Red Cross, helping them as they fight the Mississippi River.

—Larry Fortmuller, American Red Cross volunteer in Gulfport, Illinois



Joe Morgan, of Martinsville, Indiana, rests in a Red Cross shelter after losing almost all his belongings to floods.

Talia Frenkel/American Red Cross

## Helping Neighbors

When disasters strike, the McCormick Foundation and its partners are always there to help. Following the tornadoes and floods that struck the central U.S. this spring, the Chicago-based McCormick Foundation launched a Neighbors in Need Campaign. Through its network of newspaper, broadcaster and sports team partners nationwide, the foundation raised money from readers, viewers and fans. Through a competitive grant process, the foundation awarded this money along with its own very generous matching grant to several nonprofit organizations involved in relief and recovery following this disaster.

The American Red Cross is grateful to have received a generous \$100,000 grant from the McCormick Foundation’s Neighbors in Need Campaign. For this grant and all of its previous disaster relief gifts to the American Red Cross, we extend a very special thank you to the McCormick Foundation and its Neighbors in Need Campaign donors.



## Facts at a Glance Nebraska

**Shelters Opened**  
11

**Shelter Overnight Stays**  
More than 100

**Meals and Snacks Served**  
More than 23,500

**Emergency Response Vehicles (ERVs)**  
7

**Red Cross Disaster Workers**  
150



## Nebraska

Each time it seemed like the residents of Nebraska and its neighboring states were on the road to recovery, bad weather would strike again. Coordination between government and community-based organizations involved in this relief effort was the key to overcoming the challenges brought on by these relentless storms. This is why during disasters, the Red Cross partners with:

- The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), including the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
- The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), including the U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM).

We staff operation centers, including Joint Field Offices, state Emergency Operation Centers and the National Response Coordination Center at FEMA, to ensure our response is coordinated with state and local partners and to increase information sharing between the government and NGO sector.

Working in this capacity ensures an effective and efficient response, thus delivering appropriate help when it is needed.

## Missouri and Illinois

Extensive flooding hit Missouri and Illinois as rivers topped numerous levees, coursing through streets and into homes. Residents worked urgently to build up the remaining levees to prevent water from submerging



Nancy Orr, whose home in Gladstone, Illinois, was flooded, discusses her immediate needs with Red Cross volunteer Glenda Plunkett.

Steve Schweitzer/American Red Cross



The Red Cross distributed meals and snacks at sand-bagging sites—like this one in Cedar Rapids, Iowa—throughout states affected by flooding.

Marty Robey/American Red Cross

## Facts at a Glance Missouri and Illinois

**Shelters Opened**  
13

**Shelter Overnight Stays**  
More than 150

**Meals and Snacks Served**  
Nearly 85,000

**Emergency Response Vehicles (ERVs)**  
10

**Red Cross Disaster Workers**  
559

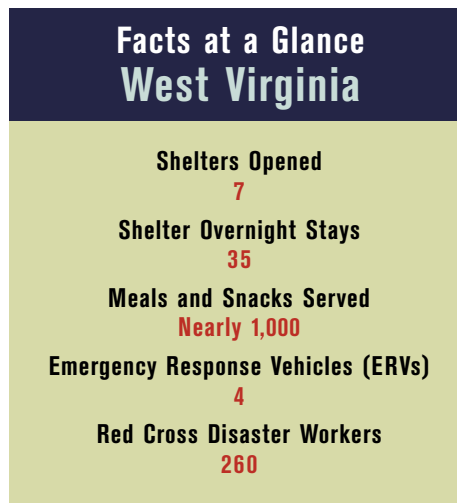
their towns, and the Red Cross was by their sides. For example, in Gulfport, Illinois, the National Guard and local community members launched a massive effort to shore up the remaining levee. Red Cross disaster workers in ERVs arrived to revive the workers' exhausted spirits with bottled water, meals and snacks.

## West Virginia

West Virginia suffered four days of heavy rain, flooding, high winds, tornadoes, mudslides, landslides and lightning that damaged homes and businesses in the north-central section of the state. The storms dropped more than four inches of rain on McDowell County, forcing the Tug Fork of the Big Sandy River and its tributaries to overflow, spilling water into several surrounding counties. This disaster exceeded the capacity of local Red Cross chapters.

Local chapters always provide the initial response, which takes place during the first 24–48 hours. If disaster needs exceed the chapter's capacity, the nationwide network of Red Cross chapters and its national headquarters is utilized to support the response effort.

One of the first resources the Red Cross sends into an affected area is an emergency communications response



vehicle (ECRV) and a corresponding support team. Outfitted with satellite, cellular and short-wave telecommunication equipment, ECRVs proved to be a great asset during the disaster relief operation in West Virginia, aiding in the flow of information to speed up the assistance to those affected by the flooding.

## Technology Improves Response

Disaster assessment is a major component of any disaster relief and recovery effort. The Red Cross has a comprehensive system to evaluate the destruction caused by all types of disasters. Supporting this system are GPS-enabled handheld computers, which automatically upload data and photos from Red Cross staff members at disaster sites, straight into a central computer. This technology enables Red Cross caseworkers to meet with disaster survivors in service centers to view photos and information gathered earlier by the disaster assessment team at the survivor's residence. The information aids the Red Cross in determining how to assist affected residents and deploy services appropriately.

"I was able see on the computer the picture of this woman's home with four feet of water around it," said Eddie Fitzgerald, a project manager for Global Relief Technologies, describing how this technology enabled a Red Cross caseworker to readily assist a woman affected by flooding. "Immediately, the caseworker had the information needed to provide the woman with a place to stay for a few days until she could find a new place to live."



Talia Frenkel/American Red Cross

At a Red Cross distribution site, Red Cross workers provide clean-up kits to residents of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

# The Disaster Relief Fund

The beneficiaries of Red Cross services are not strangers; they are family members, friends, colleagues and neighbors. They are people from every community and all walks of life who suddenly find themselves completely dependent upon others for their recovery—or even their very survival.

The American Red Cross typically responds to 80 large-scale disasters each year. However, in just 10 weeks from May to July, we responded to more than 40. At the height of our operations in the central U.S., the Red Cross announced that its Disaster Relief Fund was depleted. Upholding our promise to meet the emergency needs of victims of

disasters requires not only the selfless work of our volunteers, but the financial generosity of donors. The Disaster Relief Fund is the conduit through which caring people can assist those affected by disaster—they can help to provide food, shelter and physical and mental health services.

You can continue to help the victims of thousands of disasters across the country each year by supporting the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund. For more information, please go to [redcross.org](http://redcross.org)



Dave Knoer/American Red Cross

Red Cross volunteer Luke Thomas helps residents in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, clean their flood-damaged homes.



Talia Frenkel/American Red Cross

Johana Smiley, 8, receives a hot meal from the Red Cross outside her house in Columbus, Indiana.

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No matter how bad a day you think you're having, when you see what they've been through you realize you don't have it that bad. The key is listening to our clients. They need to talk, to tell their stories. It's difficult to hear their trauma. But the fact that they can talk about it helps them open up and release their stress.

—Red Cross medical volunteer

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## Your Donation Changed Lives

Beginning in May 2008, tornadoes and floods devastated communities in the central United States. This report shows how your generous donation helped the American Red Cross respond to the needs of those affected by this disaster.

This country depends on the Red Cross during such difficult times. We depend on your donation to help individuals, families and organizations learn how to prevent, prepare for and respond to disasters all year round.

Disasters change lives. With your donation to the Red Cross, you did too.

**Thank you for helping us help others.**



Red Cross volunteer Marion Harcourt comforts a resident affected by flooding in Martinsville, Indiana.

Talia Frenkel/American Red Cross

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