



American Red Cross

California Wildfires 2015

One-Year Update | September 2016



A Year Later, Recovery Continues for Butte and Valley Fire Survivors

For many residents of Calaveras, Amador and Lake Counties, last September’s devastating Butte and Valley Fires continue to have a powerful impact on their lives. The material and emotional toll has been heavy, and the Red Cross and our community partners in local long-term recovery groups are providing ongoing support and comfort as wildfire survivors recover and rebuild their lives.

Disaster caseworkers are working to meet ongoing disaster-related needs, such as short- and long-term housing—particularly for the most vulnerable residents

who need extra help. They also identify available resources from other agencies with specialized expertise.

Recovering from disasters like the Butte and Valley Fires also means coping with stress, anxiety and trauma. Trained Red Cross mental health professionals continue assisting both adults and children with the emotional impact of the devastating fires, whether it’s simply providing an understanding ear or assessing more serious needs and making appropriate community referrals for longer term care.

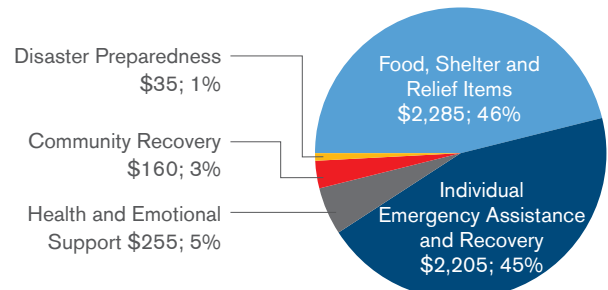
Generous Donations to the Red Cross Power Recovery Efforts

Through generous gifts from our donors, the American Red Cross has raised approximately \$4.5 million in donations and pledges specifically to assist people affected by the September 2015 fires in California. As of September 8, 2016, the Red Cross has already spent or made commitments to spend more than \$4.9 million to fund response and recovery efforts for the 2015 California fires.* In addition to these California-designated funds, many donors also stepped forward to support wildfire response and recovery in states across the West, which included California as well as Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington.

*These costs include the logistics, staff and technology expenses that make our services possible. An average of 91 cents of every dollar the Red Cross spends is invested in humanitarian services and programs.

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Expenses and Commitments as of September 8, 2016
More than \$4.9M (in thousands)



Above: Red Cross teams conduct disaster assessments and distribute relief supplies in Middletown, Calif., following the September, 2015, Valley Fire. Silke Knebel/American Red Cross

Mental Health Volunteer Comforts School Kids, Staff

For the students and staff at tiny Cobb Mountain Elementary School in Lake County, the last day of school in June 2016 meant the end of another chapter in its slow but steady recovery from the Valley Fire. Ellin Ruffner, a Red Cross disaster mental health volunteer who traveled from her home in Maine to Lake County to support students and staff last fall, was a big part of that recovery.

“Because of the fire, some of the school’s children were no longer living anywhere near Cobb, and the children who remained didn’t know if the missing children were lost or dead,” Ruffner said. “And the school had just reopened right smack in the middle of all of that devastation. Everyone was trying their best to keep functioning—but there was just so much stress.”

Ruffner helped organize individual and group sessions and other activities designed to improve the emotional well-being of the elementary-school community. “It helped so much for the children to just be able to tell their personal stories and to get to a point where they could discuss the trauma that they had experienced,” Principal David Leonard said.

Principal Leonard, who lost his own home in the fire, thanked Ruffner for her help in an April email, letting her know that the community is slowly beginning to rebuild. He also made it clear how much her help had meant to him personally. “Your wisdom and kindness have stayed with me this whole time—and for that I am truly grateful,” he wrote.

Red Cross and Partners Assist Calaveras Residents with Recovery

Almost a year after the Butte Fire destroyed more than 500 homes, Red Cross disaster program manager Debbie Calcote continues working closely with Calaveras Recovers, a network of non-profit organizations providing resources for affected residents.

Local non-profits formed the coalition following the wildfire to help people recover and rebuild. They had funds and volunteers, but needed training in casework management. That’s where Calcote came in. “I wanted to make sure the casework was done properly so no one would fall through the cracks,” she said.

Calcote trained volunteers from multiple charities to help them meet the pressing needs of wildfire survivors and assist with their long-term recovery. She still visits the

Calaveras Recovers trailer in Mountain Ranch at least twice a week to answer questions about the 340 cases still open. Half of these cases involve major needs—such as restoring sewer and power lines and obtaining permits for rebuilding—for which the Red Cross is providing additional funding.

Calcote emphasizes that strong cooperation with other community partners is key to successful recovery assistance for wildfire survivors. “Without partnerships, we wouldn’t be able to help people affected by the Butte Fire,” said Calcote. “It takes the collaboration of many agencies.”



A Red Cross worker views damage caused by the Butte Fire in Mountain Ranch, Calif. Jordan Scott/American Red Cross

The Red Cross must be ready for every disaster, big or small, and we respond to an average of nearly 66,000 disasters per year—including single-family or apartment home fires, severe weather, floods and wildfires. Those in need turn to the Red Cross in their darkest hours because they know they can depend on us right after the disaster and through their recovery. Your donation helps us fulfill this promise. We are grateful for your trust.

Thank you!