

# The Recovery Continues



## The American Red Cross Response to the 2007 California Wildfires

**From the Desk of Gail McGovern**

**July 2008**

Dear Wildfires Relief Supporter:

Last fall, raging wildfires in California caused the evacuation of approximately half a million people. Thousands of individuals and families turned to the American Red Cross for support, guidance and hope. With your help, we were able to assist our neighbors who lost so much to the wildfires. We have prepared this brief report to update you on our initial emergency relief efforts and ongoing operations following the fires.

Within one week, caring individuals, corporations and foundations gave generously to meet the needs for our emergency response to the California wildfires. Your generosity enabled the Red Cross to bring emergency relief to those affected and to help plan their long-term recovery. Our priority was to shelter and feed those forced from their homes, and to support first responders. Simultaneously, we provided emotional support, basic health and mental health services, clean-up supplies and other essential items. Approximately \$15.4 million was used for the immediate disaster operation, and our long-term relief work continues.

The full impact of your donations is best described by the people who were affected by this disaster. In addition to this executive summary, I invite you to read *Partnering for Relief—The American Red Cross Response to the 2007 Southern California Wildfires (January 2008)*, which is available online at [www.redcross.org/sponsors/partneringforrelief.html](http://www.redcross.org/sponsors/partneringforrelief.html), along with a video, photo essays and other stories spotlighting our donors, partner agencies and volunteers. These narratives are a testament to people like you who help entire communities triumph over the adversity caused by disasters like the California wildfires. Thank you for your support during this time of need. Because of you, we were there when individuals and families in California needed us the most.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gail McGovern".

Gail McGovern  
President and CEO

## Executive Summary

In October 2007, the California wildfires displaced approximately half a million people and destroyed thousands of homes and buildings.

As part of its mission, the Red Cross provides relief to people affected by disasters. When the wildfires forced people from their homes, the Red Cross was among the first to respond by—

- Operating 40 shelters and providing more than 30,000 overnight stays to people.
- Serving 1.4 million prepackaged meals and snacks to evacuees and responders.
- Empowering more than 2,000 people with the means to purchase food, clothing and other relief items.
- Offering disaster mental health services to tens of thousands of people.
- Distributing more than 24,000 toiletry kits for residents, firefighters and Red Cross disaster workers.
- Providing rakes, shovels, work gloves, dust masks, refuse bins and other clean-up supplies.

The Red Cross responded to countless calls for help, as did our caring partners and donors across the country, by bringing immediate assistance to those affected and easing their long-term recovery.

### Partnering for Relief

The Red Cross and our partner agencies—including the Southern Baptist Convention, The Salvation Army, the Church of the Brethren, the Mexican Red Cross and the Business Roundtable—acted quickly to contribute the time, skills and resources necessary for this relief effort.

To reach California's diverse population, including many non-English speaking residents, we also partnered with the Mexican consulate, Catholic Charities, NAACP, Muslim Community Center of Greater San Diego, Temple Adat Shalom, National Council of La Raza, National Disability Rights Network and Native American tribes, including the Pechanga, Morongo and San Manuel Bands of the Mission Indians.

At assistance centers established by federal, state, county and local governments, the Red Cross met with clients to assess their needs and offer comprehensive resources, such as medical assistance, mental health counseling, family linking services, help with filing insurance claims and guidance for accessing federal assistance and small loans.

### Working Toward Recovery

The Red Cross helps people recover from disaster by first meeting essential needs such as food, clothing, temporary shelter and emotional support. As the public infrastructure is repaired and people in California attempt to restore their homes or seek other housing, the Red Cross continues to work with partner agencies to identify resources for residents to rebuild their lives.

Your donations make it possible for case managers to assist individuals in developing a recovery plan and navigating the maze of assistance available. Through this process, affected individuals are able to receive help in meeting disaster-related needs such as limited expenses for temporary housing, health and mental health related costs, building permits, repair materials, the replacement of occupational tools and equipment, and much more.

In addition, through the recovery planning process, families are receiving assistance with breaking down the seemingly insurmountable task of recovery into more manageable and achievable components. This enables families to recognize and build on their strengths and see progress as the individual tasks are accomplished. This empowers them and encourages them to take on the responsibilities and leadership in designing and achieving their personal recovery.

On behalf of the thousands of people we helped during and after the California wildfires, the Red Cross is grateful to all our donors, partners and volunteers who reached out during this time of need.



Red Cross mental health volunteer Elizabeth English consoles Debby Stout in front of the remains of her home in Rancho Bernardo, California.

# Unprecedented Generosity

**Donor Dollars At Work** (All figures as of March 31, 2008)

## A Financial Snapshot of the California Wildfires Response

The Red Cross has determined that contributions and pledges received in response to the California wildfires are sufficient to cover the estimated costs for our relief efforts.

### Feeding, Sheltering and Emergency Supplies

Red Cross disaster relief workers and our partner agencies opened and supported 40 evacuation shelters across the state, providing more than 30,000 overnight shelter stays. The Red Cross supplied shelters, kitchens and emergency response vehicles (ERVs) with more than 1.4 million prepackaged meals and snacks, distributed approximately 24,000 comfort kits and supplied blankets, cots, clean-up kits, rakes, shovels, work gloves and other essential items for evacuees, disaster responders and clean-up crews.

**Cost: \$7.403 million**

### Emergency Assistance to Families and Individuals

More than 2,000 displaced evacuees received emergency financial assistance from the Red Cross to purchase urgently needed items such as food, clothing, diapers and other essentials. **Cost: \$3.145 million**

### Physical and Mental Health Services

The Red Cross provided both physical and mental health services to more than 50,000 people. Trained mental health professionals at Red Cross shelters and service centers helped evacuees cope with stress, loss and trauma. Red Cross health-care professionals delivered emergency first aid and assisted with other health-related needs, such as replacing prescription medications lost in the fires. **Cost: \$0.405 million**

### Disaster Welfare Information

Overwhelmed communications systems prevented thousands from informing loved ones of their status during the evacuations. The Red Cross leveraged advanced technology resources to locate and connect people during the crisis. Costs associated with this effort included the maintenance and operation of the Red Cross Safe and Well Web site and a toll-free information line.

**Cost: \$0.028 million**

### Community Partner Support

The Red Cross also provided human, material and financial resources to partner agencies joining in the response effort. This included support for partner shelters, feeding operations and case management services.

**Cost: \$0.307 million**

### Logistical Support

A disaster relief response of this magnitude requires a vast reserve of resources and volunteers. Managing these resources requires real estate, logistical support and vendor agreements that exceed local capabilities. Associated costs include rented space for shelter facilities, headquarters and warehousing, in addition to vehicle rental, fleet management, fuel and other necessities.

**Cost: \$2.635 million**

### Fundraising Costs/Management and General Expenses

The Red Cross is managing a large number of contributions from philanthropic donors who helped meet the needs of people in this relief operation. These fundraising costs enable the Red Cross to respond to this and other disasters to fulfill our mission. This category includes essential services in support of the Red Cross disaster relief effort, such as finance and accounting, legal and auditing fees, and public information outreach.

**Cost: \$1.524 million**

**Funds designated by donors for the October 2007 California wildfires: \$24.0 million**

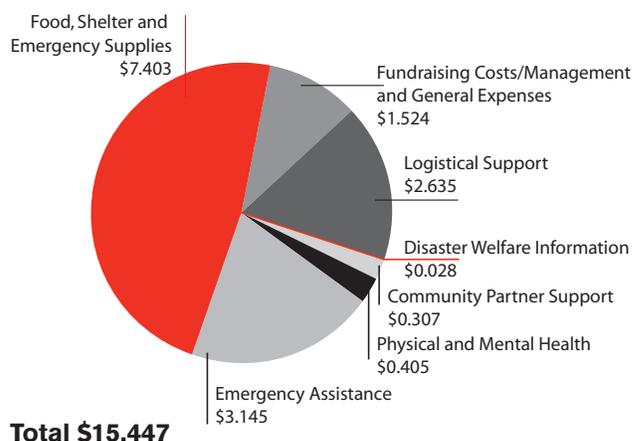
**Funds designated by donors for the Disaster Relief Fund: \$4.9 million**

**Total cost of emergency relief phase: \$15.4 million**

**Projected cost of long-term response: \$8.6 million**

## Timely Donor Response: Emergency Relief Phase

### Expenses (in millions)



## Your Donations Helped

In October 2007, raging wildfires in California devastated the lives of thousands.

This update shows how your generous donations have helped the American Red Cross respond to the immediate and ongoing long-term recovery needs of those affected by the largest evacuation in California history.

Additionally, we invite you to view a video and photo essay, along with stories about the people you helped, at [www.redcross.org/sponsors/partnering-forrelief.html](http://www.redcross.org/sponsors/partnering-forrelief.html).

Communities across the country depend on the Red Cross to respond to disasters like the California wildfires. We depend on your donations to help individuals, families and organizations learn how to prevent, prepare for and respond to disasters all year round. Thank you for your support.



At the service center in Ramona, California, Red Cross volunteer Lori Olsson gets a smile from this little boy.

Taha Frankel/American Red Cross

**“We assist people affected by a disaster to plan and find the resources they need to effectively manage their recovery.”**

— Richard J. Hinrichs, Ph.D., CEM®  
American Red Cross Recovery Planning and Assistance Administrator  
2007 California Wildfires



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