

## Disaster Relief and Preparedness

The following is a list of some major events in American Red Cross disaster relief history, in addition to widely recognized disaster-specific preparedness weeks or months.

Costs of disasters and their relief efforts are given in values at the time of the disaster and in adjusted (2003) dollars in square brackets. (It should be noted that sources sometimes give different totals for disaster costs because they are usually estimates rather than exact figures.)

Where appropriate, the cost of American Red Cross aid is given if known at the time of writing. The strength of hurricanes is given as maximum category values which may not be the same as values at the time of landfall over the U.S. mainland.

January 5, 1905	President Theodore Roosevelt signs the Congressional Charter, still in effect today, that requires that the Red Cross to provide services that address “the sufferings caused by pestilence, famine, fire, floods, and other great national calamities, and to devise and carry on measures for preventing the same.”
January 17, 1994	A 6.8 magnitude earthquake centered in the Northridge area of Southern California causes 61 deaths and \$20 billion [\$25 billion] in property damage. Red Cross aid: \$35.8 million [\$45 million].
January 22, 1937	Flooding on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers causes 250 deaths and leaves 288,000 homeless. Red Cross aid: \$25 million [\$321 million].
March 25, 1911	Fire destroys the top three floors of a New York City building occupied by the Triangle Shirtwaist Company. Locked doors prevent many of the workers from escaping. 146 young women, mostly immigrants, die from burns or from throwing themselves out of windows; 70 others are injured. Red Cross aid: \$70,000 [\$1.3 million]
March 27, 1964	The strongest earthquake ever recorded in North America, 9.2 on the Richter scale, destroys much of Anchorage, Alaska, resulting in 131 deaths. Red Cross aid exceeds \$7.8 million [\$47 million].
April 3-4 1974	The worst outbreak of tornadoes in U.S. history occurs over a two-day period as 148 twisters touch down in 13 states, causing 330 deaths and injuring 5,484 in a path of destruction covering a total of more than 2,500 miles. Total damage is estimated to be \$332 million [\$1.2 billion].
April 14, 1912	Shortly before midnight, the RMS <i>Titanic</i> collides with an iceberg, sending 1,513 passengers and crew to their deaths. The Red Cross joins other groups in assisting the 711 survivors who are brought to New York. Red Cross aid: \$157,000 [\$2.9 million].



Together, we can save a life

# Calendar

Disaster Services

April 18, 1906	At 5:12 a.m., a magnitude 8.3 earthquake strikes San Francisco, followed by fires that combine to destroy 500 square blocks of the city with an estimated 700 casualties. Pres. Theodore Roosevelt calls on the Red Cross to collect and administer relief funds that total more than \$3.1 million [\$596 million].
April 19, 1995	A bomb tears apart the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, devastating the Oklahoma City community. Red Cross employees and volunteers respond immediately with care and comfort that continues to the present day. In the immediate aftermath the Red Cross operated shelters and service centers, a compassion center, and relayed Disaster Welfare Inquiries. Long term care addresses mental health and medical needs as well as living expenses.
April 21, 1927	The levee at Mounds Landing, Mississippi, breaks bringing on the worst of the Mississippi River springtime flood that inundates 27,000 square miles of land up to a depth of 30 feet. Damage exceeds \$400 million [\$4.3 billion] and 246 people lose their lives. Red Cross aid exceeds \$14 million [\$149 million].
May 16-22	National Hurricane Preparedness Week
May 18, 1980	After nearly two months of minor earthquakes and steam eruptions, Mount St. Helens begins a major volcanic eruption that lasts for nine hours, devastating more than 150 square miles of forest land, killing countless wildlife, and leaving about 60 persons dead or missing. The local Red Cross chapter provided mass care, operated shelters, and aided civic authorities with damage assessment.
May 31, 1889	The South Fork Dam above Johnstown, Pennsylvania, bursts, drowning more than 2,200 people downstream. Six days later Clara Barton and fifty relief workers arrive to help the flood victims in the first major test of the Red Cross to deal with a large-scale, man-made catastrophe. They set up feeding stations, build shelters to house survivors, and render medical care provided by nurses from the Philadelphia Red Cross Society. Red Cross aid: \$239,000 [\$4.5 million].
May 31, 2001	The Red Cross opens its Clara Barton Center for Domestic Preparedness in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, whose mission is to educate and train those who deliver humanitarian aid during attacks on U.S. soil involving weapons of mass destruction.
June 1	Atlantic hurricane season begins.
June 5, 2001	Tropical Storm Allison comes ashore on the Texas coast near Galveston, then veers back out to sea, making a second landfall on June 11 on the Louisiana shore, from where it moves northeast, and clears the U.S. mainland along the mid-Atlantic states.



Together, we can save a life

# Calendar

Disaster Services

June 19, 1972	Although Hurricane Agnes is only a category 1 hurricane, it causes more than \$3.1 billion [\$13.7 billion] in damages and 117 deaths as it moves slowly northward from Florida to inflict its heaviest losses in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and New York. Red Cross relief: \$23.1 million [\$102 million]
Third full week of June	National Lightning Safety Week
July 15, 1970	Representatives of seven voluntary organizations, including the Red Cross, meet to form the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) to assure adequate planning and coordination of voluntary response during disasters.
August 17, 1969	A category 5 hurricane, Camille, pounds the Mississippi coast with sustained winds of 100 mph and gusts to 175 mph, weakening as it makes its way north and east causing extensive damage in Kentucky and Virginia as well as 256 deaths. Red Cross aid: \$20 million [\$101 million].
August 24, 1992	Andrew, a category 5 hurricane, hits Florida, then passes over the Gulf to come ashore again in Louisiana, causing a total of \$26 billion [\$34 billion] in damages and the loss of 65 lives. Red Cross relief: \$81.7 million [\$108 million].
August 26, 1979	Category 5 Hurricane David causes heavy destruction on several Caribbean islands before it reaches Florida and works its way up the Atlantic seacoast. Damage costs are \$320 million [\$815 million].
August 27, 1893	A violent storm strikes the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina, devastating farms and homes, and causing at least 1,000 deaths. Clara Barton leads the Red Cross effort to feed more than 30,000 mostly African-American homeless and starving people, provide medical help, and implement a planting rehabilitation project that continues for nine months. Red Cross aid: \$65,000 [\$1.3 million].
July - August, 1993	The Great Midwest Flood claims 48 lives and causes \$18 billion in damage, making it the costliest flood in U.S. history. Red Cross aid: \$44 million [\$56 million].
September 4, 1881	Fire breaks out in the forests of the Michigan Lower Peninsula causing 169 fatalities and laying waste approximately one million acres. Only three months after its formation, the Red Cross provides supplies and emergency funds to victims in the organization's first disaster relief effort. Red Cross aid: \$80,000 [\$1.4 million].
September 8, 1900	A category 4 hurricane and storm surge exceeding 20 feet hit Galveston, Texas, leaving at least 6,000 people dead (some estimates go as high as 12,000), making it the deadliest natural disaster in American history. Clara Barton directs her final relief operation which includes purchase of 1.5 million strawberry plants to help farmers to regain their livelihood. Red Cross expenditures total about \$120,000 [\$2.5 million].



Together, we can save a life

# Calendar

Disaster Services

September 8, 1965	Hurricane Betsy (category 3) makes landfall over southernmost Florida with winds as high as 160 mph. After crossing Gulf waters, it strikes land a second time over the Louisiana coast. All told, it causes 75 deaths and property damage totaling \$1.4 billion [\$8.2 billion]. Red Cross aid: \$17.2 million [\$101 million].
September 10, 1989	Category 5 Hurricane Hugo strikes Caribbean islands and then causes widespread damage as it moves across the Carolinas and Virginia. Red Cross aid: \$68.6 million [\$102 million]
September 11, 2001	Terrorists hijack airplanes and attack the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, while another hijacked plane crashes in rural Pennsylvania. A total of 3,030 people are killed and 2,337 suffer injuries. Red Cross undertakes a massive relief effort involving 57,000 disaster workers (nearly 55,000 of whom are volunteers) who provide extensive aid to survivors and rescue and recovery workers. The Red Cross receives donations from the public exceeding \$1 billion. To date, the Red Cross has spent \$832 million on grants and services, many of which continue to be offered.*
September 16, 1928	A category 4 hurricane makes landfall over Palm Beach, Florida, after causing extensive destruction in the Caribbean. It causes Florida's huge Lake Okeechobee to overflow, placing thousands of acres under water and causing \$25 million [\$274 million] in damages. Estimates of death, mainly to non-white farm workers, range as high as 2,500, which would make this the country's second worst natural disaster. Red Cross relief: \$2.7 million [\$30 million].
September 16, 1999	As a category 4 hurricane, Floyd causes widespread damage in the Caribbean and then moves up the eastern seaboard causing heavy rain and widespread flooding from Florida to Connecticut. It forces the largest peacetime evacuation in United States history as highways are backed up for miles as thousands flee the storm. Floyd kills 77 people and causes \$6 billion in damage. Red Cross aid: \$32.9 million [\$37 million].
September 20, 1998	Hurricane Georges (category 4) takes a path of destruction over St. Croix, St. Thomas, and Puerto Rico in the Caribbean, before hitting Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana on the U.S. mainland. Red Cross aid: \$90 million [\$100 million].
September 21, 1938	A devastating hurricane drives through the northeastern United States, killing more than 600 people and causing an estimated \$300 million in property damage as more than 8,000 homes are destroyed and 6,000 boats wrecked or damaged. Red Cross aid: \$1.7 million [\$22.3 million].
Sunday-Saturday, the week of October 9	Fire Prevention Week



Together, we can save a life

# Calendar

Disaster Services

October 9, 1996	The Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act names the Red Cross as member of the task force to design a model plan to assist air carriers in responding to aircraft disasters, leading to the establishment of Red Cross Aviation Incident Response (AIR) Teams.
October 17, 1989	The 7.1 magnitude “Loma Prieta” earthquake strikes the San Francisco Bay area. Besides widespread property damage, it causes 67 deaths and 3,000 injuries. Red Cross aid: \$23.3 million [\$35 million].
October 29, 1998	Category 5 Hurricane Mitch, the most destructive hurricane to strike the Western Hemisphere in the last two centuries, makes landfall over Honduras and weakens to a tropical storm that lingers over Central America for several days before turning eastward and passing over southwest Florida on November 5, as it makes its way into the Atlantic. Mitch is responsible for over 9,000 deaths, predominately from rain-induced flooding in Central America. The American Red Cross raises a record \$51 million [\$58 million] in one year for recovery work in Central America—the largest amount ever donated up to that time for an international relief effort.*
November 11, 2002	During the Veterans Day weekend tornadoes strike 17 states from the Mississippi Valley to the Atlantic Coast and from the Gulf Coast to the Great Lakes. Seventy-six tornadoes touch down, killing 36 people in five states.
November 28, 1942	It takes 15 minutes for fire to turn Boston’s Coconut Grove nightclub into an inferno. With many of the 1,000 party-goers trapped inside, the death toll reaches 492 and another 166 are injured, making it the worst nightclub fire in history and prompts strengthening of fire code regulations. Local Red Cross units provide relief services to survivors and emergency responders.
November 30	Atlantic hurricane season ends.
December 8, 2002	Supertyphoon Pongsona hits Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands with the intensity of a category 5 hurricane. Miraculously no lives are lost but over 20,000 homes are damaged or destroyed. The Red Cross provides emergency disaster assistance including financial assistance, food, healthcare, crisis counseling, clean-up supplies and more. Red Cross aid: \$19.3 million.*

\* Disaster relief effort is still on-going.