

1. Contributions of Cash – Always the Best Donation

Monetary contributions allow the professional relief organizations to purchase exactly what is most urgently needed by disaster victims and to pay for the transportation necessary to distribute the supplies.

Donations of money given to recognized relief organizations are tax deductible and allow the relief supplies to be purchased in locations near the disaster site. This stimulates the economy and ensures the supplies will arrive as quickly as possible.

2. Confirm the Need Before Donating any Supplies

You can confirm exactly what is needed by checking with a relief organization on site at the disaster, or by calling the FEMA toll-free number or a state toll-free donations hotline number set up specifically to provide such information in the emergency. The organizations involved will update their information to the coordination office which allows the needs to be made known. Only respond to the needs list which is current and appropriate for the victims being served.

3. Donate Through an Organization

Before starting a collection of goods to send to a disaster site, it is essential to locate a reliable relief organization willing to receive the shipment of donated goods.

Distributing relief supplies requires personnel and financial resources within the affected area. When unsolicited truckloads of items arrive at a disaster site there may be no place to unload the goods.

When unsolicited donations arrive without coordination this creates problems which often result in not being able to use the items even if they are needed. To avoid this, find a relief organization and work with them from start to finish.

4. Transportation Must be Planned in Advance

Do not assume unsolicited relief supplies will be transported at no charge. Local trucking firms may be willing to help in times of disaster, especially if funds are available to cover part of the expense.

Some volunteer agencies may have vehicles going to the disaster site and can deliver the donations or they may be able to identify other possible means of providing the donations to the site.

Certain precautions are necessary regarding inventory, shipping restrictions, warehousing of goods. Always work with an identified relief organization to avoid transportation problems.

5. Donated Items Must be Well Packed and Labeled

It is more efficient when items are sent properly sorted, clearly labeled, and ready for distribution. This should be handled in advance, at the sending location.

Specific content lists should be taped to the side of each box sent. This allows the receiving officials to determine what is in the box without opening it, plus getting it to the proper distribution location in a timely manner.

Food items, if needed, should be boxed according to instructions provided by the organization with whom the donor is working.

6. Small Items and Unsorted Clothing May Go to Local Needs

Relief organizations maintain prepared stocks of needed items, especially dry goods like clothing that are easy to store. These are usually the first relief supplies to the site.

Unsorted bags of clothing and donations are not needed at the disaster site. Organizations that accept used clothing maintain and handle them at the local level. After having been processed, these may be sent to the disaster site at a later time or sent to the next disaster.

The key to an effective donated goods system is to be informed before a disaster arises. Information can be provided through a relief organization

Volunteers are always needed when disasters occur.

It is important that individuals who want to respond to these situations register in the proper manner.

Any relief organization which uses volunteers will have a formal arrangement planned to utilize individuals. Plan ahead to attend training sessions and keep informed of volunteer opportunities.

In a disaster, the volunteer center in your community maintains a list of where volunteers are needed, by what agency, and handles all of the sign-up procedures. This is a coordinated process and allows everyone to serve.

Response and recovery work is often dirty, monotonous, mundane and far from glamorous. Very little individual recognition is noted. Volunteers should be committed to work under such conditions and fit within plans coordinated by the volunteer agencies.

Thanks to generous, well-informed and involved individuals like you, relief organizations can make a real difference in the world.



This information is provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD).

Adventist Community Services
American Radio Relay League, Inc.
The American Red Cross
AMURT (Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team)
Catholic Charities USA
Christian Disaster Response A.E.C.C.G.C
Christian Reform World Relief Committee
Church of the Brethren
Church World Service
The Episcopal Church
Friends Disaster Service
Inter-Lutheran Disaster Response
Mennonite Disaster Service
National Organization for Victim Assistance
Nazarene Disaster Service
The Phoenix Society
The Points of Light Foundation
Presbyterian Church (USA)
REACT International, Inc.
The Salvation Army
Second Harvest National Network of Food Banks
Society of St. Vincent de Paul
Southern Baptist Convention
United Methodist Church Committee on Relief
Volunteers of America
World Vision



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Kentucky State REACT Council, PO Box 33244, Louisville KY 40232

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When Disaster Strikes...

Donations Are Needed...

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Everyone is moved when they hear the news that disaster has befallen a community. Earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, etc., can suddenly change the lifestyle of a family, community and country.

Some helpful ways in which you can be of assistance are part of the National Donations Strategy which has been developed by the National Donations Steering Committee composed of federal, state and local emergency management personnel assisted by private voluntary organizations.

The most effective guidelines for sending donations to disaster victims are outlined in this pamphlet.