



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 in-kind donations to disaster victims are:

- 1. Contributions of Cash - Often 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**

Exactly what is needed can be confirmed by checking with a relief organization on site at the disaster, or by calling the FEMA 800 number or a state 800 donations number set up specifically to provide such information in the emergency. The organizations involved regularly update their information to the coordination office which allows the needs to be made known. Only provide the requests associated with 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 the relief supplies requires personnel and financial resources within the affected area. When unsolicited truckloads of items arrive at a disaster site there is often no place to unload the goods.

This often creates a problem resulting in not being able to utilize the items regardless of the need. To avoid this, designate 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, 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 source 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 Need**

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 not needed immediately at the disaster site are maintained and handled at the local level. These are often sent to the site at a later time.

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

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

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.

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

[National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster Website](#)