

# emergency **REDiPlan**

## How to help

### Practical ways of helping people affected by an emergency

After an emergency, images of destruction and despair in the media give many people a strong desire to help. However, knowing how to help can be difficult.

Red Cross is an experienced agency which helps people affected by emergencies in Australia and overseas. This information sheet gives you some tips on the best ways to help people recover.

### Donating items

You should only donate items if an organisation is specifically asking for them. When people see others who have lost everything, it can be instinctive to go to the cupboard and find old items to donate. Donated items need to be collected, sorted, cleaned, stored and transported – which often costs more money than what the items are worth. These items may not be culturally appropriate or right for the climate or weather conditions.

When people donate items that cannot be used it actually costs to dispose of them and this can literally mean that there is less money available for people in need.

And when disaster strikes a rural area in Australia or a remote region overseas, local businesses affected by the same disaster can benefit and recover themselves if the goods needed are purchased locally. The recovery of local business is often key to community recovery.

#### What you can do:

- have a garage sale for the items and donate the money to charity. You can team up with your friends and neighbours, which can be great fun
- sell the items on an online auction house then donate the proceeds
- donate goods only when requested to do so.

### Give money

The easiest way to help after an emergency is to give money to an organisation, such as Red Cross, that is helping people affected. This will either help them fund their work assisting people affected by the emergency, or if a public appeal has been announced, then the money can be directed to people or communities in need.

Money is often the greatest need, as it can be spent by the affected people on what is most necessary in their situation.

There are many charities that help people during and after emergencies. Red Cross is one of the major and well-established independent disaster response organisations with years of experience assisting people in a range of ways, including collecting and directing appeal money for people and communities affected by disasters.

#### Checking credentials:

- before donating, make sure an organisation is a registered charity, and has tax deductibility status
- find out how it plans to use the money Australian Red Cross and other reputable charities will publish an Appeal Intent on their website stating what the Appeal funds will be used for
- if you are approached by a collector, ask to see identification – if in doubt, don't donate.

# emergency **REDiPlan**

## **Collecting funds:**

If you want to collect funds, start by contacting the organisation for which you would like to fundraise. It will often have guidelines for people wanting to collect for its appeals. Red Cross has guidelines for people to use when raising funds within their community. A community Fundraising Kit can be downloaded from [www.redcross.org.au](http://www.redcross.org.au), and follow the links through how you can help, to Community Fundraising.

There are laws in place surrounding fundraising, so check that what you do complies with relevant Commonwealth and State laws and local government regulations.

## **Volunteering**

Many people often want to give their time to help out following an emergency.

The best thing you can do is register as a volunteer before an emergency occurs. Volunteers require training and registration, to ensure checks are carried out and that they are covered by insurance. This makes sure that volunteers are best able to help affected people when an emergency strikes.

If an emergency occurs, each State and Territory in Australia has an emergency plan which will be activated. If you are not already signed up as a volunteer, the best thing to do is contact your local emergency management agencies to see if they can register spontaneous volunteers.

Leave your details, including your skills and experience, and wait for the agency to contact you. If it doesn't call you right away, don't worry – it will simply be very busy trying to manage the effects of the emergency. Let it do its job, and contact you if it needs extra help.

Many people also feel compelled to help out overseas when a disaster strikes, however, Red Cross has a global network of 100 million volunteers already working in their communities and a register of trained and skilled aid workers that have undertaken our Basic Training Course and are ready to go.

## **Accommodation**

The best thing for people affected by an emergency is to have their own space as they are facing a very stressful time and often need privacy. Unless your local authorities specifically request it, it's best not to offer accommodation.

## **Further information**

For further information visit [www.redcross.org.au](http://www.redcross.org.au) email [rediplan@redcross.org.au](mailto:rediplan@redcross.org.au) or call your local Red Cross office.

This general information sheet is designed to assist people deal with the effects of emergencies but necessarily contains only information of a general nature that may not be appropriate in all situations.

Before taking any action you should independently consider whether that action is appropriate in the light of your own circumstances.

Proudly supported by

