



**American  
Red Cross**

Pikes Peak Chapter

*News Release*  
**NEWS RELEASE**

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### **What is the scope of the current Red Cross disaster response to Joplin, MO?**

The Red Cross is responding to the tornadoes which hit this past weekend as it continues to respond along the Mississippi River and carry on its huge recovery operation to help people affected by the tornadoes which devastated communities in several southern states in April.

More than half of the country – from North Dakota to the East Coast and all throughout the South – has been affected by severe weather since March. Red Cross disaster workers are helping people all across the country, making sure they have a safe place to stay, food to eat, emotional support, basic health services and relief supplies. Since March 31, the Red Cross has supported 28 large disaster relief operations affecting 22 states.

### **Why doesn't the Red Cross accept donations of clothing and other small items?**

Our primary focus after a disaster is getting help to large numbers of people in a short amount of time. We try to focus our workers on that goal and often don't have the resources that it takes to sort, process, store and transport small donations.

In addition, we want to be consistent in the help we give to disaster victims and cash donations allow us to purchase large quantities of goods that help us do that. Financial donations also help us meet any specific needs a disaster client might have.

### **Is the Red Cross able to help people affected by the tornadoes which caused severe damage in the Joplin, Missouri area while already responding to huge disasters along the Mississippi River and areas of the south devastated by tornadoes which hit earlier this spring?**

The Red Cross was on the ground in Joplin right after the tornadoes hit, providing food, shelter and emotional support for people there. A shelter was open within hours of the tornado where more than 100 people spent Monday night. Red Cross emergency response vehicles in Missouri are out in the area distributing food, water and relief supplies in the affected neighborhoods. Additional Red Cross workers are arriving and relief materials like toothbrushes and shampoo, tarps, coolers, rakes and other clean-up supplies are being sent in. Trained health services and mental health workers will help people cope in the aftermath of these tragic storms. Meanwhile, thousands of Red Cross workers continue to help people along the Mississippi River and in areas where tornadoes wiped out entire communities in April.

**With so many people evacuating from their homes in Joplin, what has the Red Cross done since the tornado to provide shelter in Joplin?**

The American Red Cross opened a shelter shortly after the tornado struck on Sunday. That shelter, located at Missouri Southern State University, had approximately 100 people on Monday night and can hold up to 1,000 people. The Red Cross is working with local officials in Joplin to arrange transportation to help get people to shelters and if necessary, identify additional shelter locations. The Red Cross also opened a shelter in Minneapolis, where more than 50 people spent Monday night following the tornadoes there.

**This seems like almost too much for the Red Cross to deal with successfully. Is there a point at which the Red Cross will have reached its disaster relief limits and be unable to send help?**

The Red Cross is constantly planning for and working on response to large-scale disasters in this country and around the world. We have a trained network of more than 60,000 disaster volunteers ready to help. There are emergency supply warehouses across the country, especially in disaster-prone areas, where disaster relief supplies are stored, ready to move at a moment's notice. The Red Cross has the ability to serve a million meals a day, and has enough cots, blankets and comfort kits for about 350,000 shelter residents.

Knowing no one organization can do everything alone, we have also developed and strengthened our partnerships with many organizations and businesses which support Red Cross relief efforts in many ways, from feeding those affected and providing services in shelters, to conducting disaster assessments, offering spiritual care and health and mental health services, and teaching preparedness information throughout areas where flooding is expected.

**These disasters seem to be coming one on top of the other. Does the Red Cross have enough funds to help all the people affected by these large emergency situations which have cropped up this Spring?**

The Red Cross estimates that it will spend as much as \$41 million responding to the disasters which have occurred since the end of March, and to date, about \$33.6 million has been raised in donations for these responses. This estimate includes Red Cross' relief efforts for the myriad of disasters which have hit the United States this spring, including the wildfires in Texas, the tornadoes which devastated areas of the South, the Mississippi River flooding response, and helping people affected by this past weekend's tornadoes.

**How can the Red Cross move people and equipment quickly when something like this happens?**

The Red Cross works hard to be ready to respond to any disaster in the United States. We store relief items in warehouses close to disaster-prone locations, enough to accommodate large numbers of shelter residents. Lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina have helped us improve our capability to respond to large-scale disasters.

We have increased the amount of food, cots, blankets, comfort kits and other relief items to ensure enough shelter supplies are on hand to accommodate large numbers of shelter residents. We have increased the number of mobile kitchens and feeding vehicles. We have permanent

satellite communication systems in Red Cross chapters across the country to enable communication in the event of damage to the local infrastructure.

*The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies nearly half of the nation's blood; teaches lifesaving skills; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a charitable organization — not a government agency — and depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please contact the Pikes Peak Chapter at 719-632-3563 or visit [www.pparc.org](http://www.pparc.org).*