

# INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja  
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

## UNITED STATES: HURRICANE KATRINA

9 September 2005

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

### In Brief

This Bulletin (no. 10/2005) is being issued for information only. It is based on updates from the American Red Cross (ARC), reflecting the status of the situation and information available at this time. As of 12 September, information on this disaster will be issued on an adjusted schedule. A fact sheet on this disaster response will be issued on Mondays, followed by information bulletins on Wednesdays and Fridays. The bulletins will highlight different response components (including sheltering, feeding, health, tracing, international support).

The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time. The American Red Cross webpage ([www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)) contains additional information on the evolving situation, the relief response to Hurricane Katrina, a tracing link, as well as information on donating to the National Disaster Relief Fund. To access information in Spanish please refer to the ARC Spanish webpage [www.cruzrojaamericana.org](http://www.cruzrojaamericana.org)

*For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:*

*In the United States: American Red Cross National Headquarters, Stacy Ragan, Operations Lead; email [ragans@usa.redcross.org](mailto:ragans@usa.redcross.org); phone 1-202-303-5089; fax 1-202-303-0059; Media and Public Affairs; phone 1-202-303-5551; Nadia Mitchem, Fundraising; email [mitchemn@usa.redcross.org](mailto:mitchemn@usa.redcross.org); phone 1-202-303-4826*

*In Geneva for all enquiries from National Societies:*

- *Linda Stops, Operations Coordinator, Operations Support Department, Geneva; email [linda.stops@ifrc.org](mailto:linda.stops@ifrc.org), phone 41-22-730-4300, fax 41-22-733-0395 or Luis Luna, Federation Regional Officer, Americas Department, Geneva; email [luis.luna@ifrc.org](mailto:luis.luna@ifrc.org), phone 41- 22-730-4274, fax 41-22-733-0395*
- *In Geneva, contact the Media and Public Relations Unit, phone 41-22-730-4357, fax 41-22-740-0275*

*All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.*

*For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>*

### Background

Hurricane Katrina, one of the most destructive hurricanes in recent U.S. history, has reportedly resulted in nearly 300 fatalities, primarily in Mississippi and Louisiana, but also in Florida, Alabama, and Georgia. Preparations are said to be underway to recover thousands of bodies as flood waters recede. While nearly 50,000 have reportedly been rescued from flood-affected areas, thousands are still missing. Hundreds of thousands of evacuees are being sheltered around the country.

According to the U.S. Government, federal disaster declarations now cover 90,000 square miles of affected areas. Efforts to clear debris and pump water out of New Orleans, Louisiana are underway. Meanwhile, the American public and disaster responders are being cautioned to limit contact with contaminated flood waters and to be wary of dirty, sharp, or heavy debris materials that may pose serious health threats to survivors.

### **Red Cross and Red Crescent action**

In the face of destruction that is now estimated to have affected three-quarters of a million people across 90,000 square miles, it will take time to address the needs of Hurricane Katrina survivors. It is expected that a long-term, massive feeding and sheltering operation will be required for many months and that additional needs will emerge. The American Red Cross is committed to responding to this disaster and devoting every resource to this humanitarian relief effort.

At this time, the American Red Cross is focused on getting life's basic essentials—food, water and shelter—to hurricane survivors. The American Red Cross is trying to track down everyone that needs help and is doing its best to reconnect survivors with their loved ones.

This unprecedented relief operation is being made possible by the tireless efforts of more than 39,000 American Red Cross volunteers from around the U.S., the more than 100 international delegates from national societies around the world, as well as from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Federation), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). These international delegates—requested and coordinated by the American Red Cross—continue to be integrated into the American Red Cross domestic disaster response system in affected areas and at American Red Cross National Headquarters. Many national societies are playing a role in this response, and many more national societies have expressed their willingness to send delegates as further needs are identified. The American Red Cross is grateful for this speedy and generous response and will continue to coordinate offers of assistance with identified needs.

Support for this disaster response has also poured in to the American Red Cross from generous financial gifts and pledges that, to date, are estimated to total over US \$536 million, including contributions sent or pledged by International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) partners. This financial support is greatly appreciated. The American Red Cross will continue to keep Movement partners informed as needs develop. Please note that currently the American Red Cross does not require additional in-kind donations.

When a disaster strikes, the American Red Cross provides shelter, food, and health and mental health services to address basic human needs. Affected individuals and families are given assistance that will help them to resume their normal daily activities independently. These services are being provided to Hurricane Katrina survivors on a massive scale with the support of its volunteers, the public, donors, and Movement partners. Once the urgent disaster-caused needs are met, the American Red Cross, along with government and other agencies and charities, will assess what longer-term needs exist and create an effective and comprehensive safety net for those whose lives have been affected by this disaster.

### **Sheltering and Feeding**

The most visible and well-known of American Red Cross disaster relief activities are **sheltering and feeding**. The American Red Cross opens shelters for those displaced by a disaster and provides meals and snacks to families and to emergency workers in affected areas. The sheer volume of people affected and the extensive geographical area impacted by Hurricane Katrina is requiring a massive emergency feeding and sheltering operation on the largest scale the American Red Cross has experienced to date. Amongst the assistance that Hurricane Katrina evacuees are finding in these shelters are warm meals,

clothing, and personal comfort items, including deodorant, soap, toothbrush, personal products, and diapers. Mental and emotional care is provided, as is medical assessment, first aid, and medical care (replacement of dentures, diabetes medication, glasses). Red Cross workers may meet one-on-one with families to tailor a recovery program to their unique situations.

To date, assistance in this sector has included:

- Opening **675** shelters and evacuation centers in **23** states and the District of Columbia, including **233** in Louisiana alone. More than **161,000** hurricane victims have found safety, food, water and comfort in these facilities. The shelters range in size from the Houston, Texas, Astrodome, which was set up and operational in less than 24 hours to house tens of thousand of evacuees to a Biloxi, Mississippi High School that is housing just over 1,000 displaced residents. However, the number and location of Red Cross shelters fluctuates daily as shelters close, reopen, or move, depending on the need.
- Serving nearly **6 million** hot meals and more than **5.9 million** snacks to survivors of Hurricane Katrina. Hot meals are being served at a pace of **500,000-600,000** each day.
- Making it possible for **54,000** people who are running out of personal resources to remain in hotels in 46 states.
- Bringing computers into shelters to speed the registering of shelter residents.
- Integrating international Red Cross delegates into the American Red Cross domestic disaster response system and into shelters in the affected region to provide support.

### Health

Following a disaster, the American Red Cross also provides health-related assistance, including **first aid** and **mental health** support. American Red Cross nurses deliver first aid assistance and attend to other health-related matters while disaster mental health service workers offer information and help educate people on the emotional impacts of disasters and how to cope with them. American Red Cross disaster mental health services workers are licensed mental health practitioners trained to recognize the emotional impact of a disaster on those affected by the disaster as well as disaster workers. In hurricane-affected areas these counsellors are offering mental health support to hurricane survivors and disaster workers.

To date, assistance in this sector has included:

- Providing first aid in shelters and working with emergency medical authorities to care for the ill and injured.
- Integrating more than 20 Mexican Red Crossers with Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training into American Red Cross disaster response activities in Houston, Texas.

### Tracing

The American Red Cross is carrying out Katrina Family Linking with the ICRC Central Tracing Agency (CTA) through the ICRC Family Links Web site ([www.familylinks.icrc.org](http://www.familylinks.icrc.org)). People can access the Web site by logging on directly or by calling the Katrina Family Linking Call Center at 1-877-LOVED-1S (1-877-568-3317). All this information is available worldwide and not confidential.

To date, assistance in this sector has included:

- Assisting in restoring Katrina Family Links, in coordination with the ICRC, through the Family Links Registry Web site where more than **181,200** people have registered and through the 1-877-LOVED-1S hotline that has received more than **85,200** calls.
- Integrating five experienced Family Tracing delegates from the ICRC, one from the British Red Cross, and one from the Netherlands Red Cross into the American Red Cross domestic disaster response system to support American Red Cross Katrina Family Linking efforts in the field. The ICRC tracing specialists are currently working with American Red Cross volunteers to support family linking in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. The ICRC has offered additional help, if and when needed.

### **Logistics**

American Red Cross personnel face the same challenges as victims of the disaster. Depending on the location, these range from damaged roads, power lines and buildings to a lack of water, electricity and communications, all of which complicate efforts to get assistance to those in need as soon as possible. Difficulties are tempered by our local presence and our pre-positioned supplies and personnel. Local American Red Cross workers readied shelters before the disaster struck. As soon as areas are declared safe by local authorities, additional Red Cross workers and supplies can move in. American Red Cross logistics experts are directing and facilitating the transport of assistance to areas of greatest needs.

To date, assistance in this sector has included:

- Integrating experienced logisticians from several national societies, the Federation, and the ICRC into the American Red Cross domestic disaster response system. Five logisticians from the Belgian Red Cross and four logisticians from the ICRC are supporting American Red Cross logisticians in Alabama; one Dutch and three Finnish Red Cross logisticians are supporting American Red Cross logisticians in Mississippi; and 20 French Red Cross, eight Norwegian Red Cross, seven German Red Cross, six ICRC, and two British Red Cross logisticians are spread throughout Louisiana (Baton Rouge, Gulfport, Pascagoula, Tammany, and Washington) providing additional support.

### **Community Services**

The American Red Cross helps those affected by disaster in accessing available resources. After a disaster, trained American Red Cross interviewers meet one on one with families to determine their needs. The assistance may include providing the means for them to pay for groceries, new clothes, rent, emergency home repairs, transportation, medicines, and tools. The American Red Cross lets people know about community or government resources that are available to them and helps people needing long-term recovery assistance when other resources are inadequate. In the affected areas, including shelters, Red Cross caseworkers have begun to meet one-one one with families to identify their unique needs, to direct them toward available resources, and to begin to build a bridge of assistance that will help them recover from this disaster.

To date, assistance in this sector has included:

- Planning a family assistance program for survivors as they plan their next steps. This will include funds for food, longer-term shelter and support as they continue on their road to recovery.
- Providing assistance to victims who have relocated through American Red Cross chapters around the country. This includes leading local efforts to integrate evacuees into the community, providing stability and a platform for rebuilding lives and families.
- Initiating efforts to recruit 40,000 new American Red Cross volunteers to help bring safe shelter, food, and comfort to those touched by Katrina.
- Integrating more than 45 Canadian Red Cross delegates into the American Red Cross domestic disaster response system to support valuable community-, client-, and staff services support as well as organizational and material support assistance. Delegates are currently supporting American Red Cross activities in Louisiana.

### **Communications/International Coordination**

To date, American Red Cross activities related to Communications and international coordination assistance have included:

- Fielding a large number of media calls.
- Receiving and posting stories and photos related to the hurricane.
- Supporting American Red Cross delegates around the world in meeting information and other needs of the national society in the country to which they are deployed.

- Deploying coordinators from American Red Cross National Headquarters to Texas, Louisiana, and Alabama to receive international delegates and support their integration into the existing American Red Cross domestic disaster response system.
- Working with the Federation to provide latest disaster response information to Movement partners. The Federation is coordinating the international response by Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, including fundraising by dozens of societies.
- Integrating a Federation communications specialist into the American Red Cross domestic disaster response communications network at American Red Cross National Headquarters where she is helping the American Red Cross meeting information-related needs.

To facilitate the international scope of the response to Hurricane Katrina, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) has established a **Response Management Team (RMT)** with the participation of representatives from the UN (OCHA, WHO, UNICEF, WFP), the EU, NATO, and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. A liaison officer from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies will join this unit as part of the general coordination and cooperation taking place in both Geneva and New York. The International Federation is assisting the American Red Cross in this operation by coordinating and facilitating the international response from national societies, and the liaison position is designed to play an integral role in the general coordination and cooperation effort.

### **Fundraising**

To assist in fundraising for the American Red Cross relief effort, all major U.S. broadcast media outlets have scheduled telethons in the coming days. These networks will reach a global audience, therefore Movement partners should please be advised that they may be impacted by these telethons. During the broadcasts, [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) will be the most heavily promoted vehicle through which to contribute to relief efforts due to giving difficulties.

National Societies interested in supporting American Red Cross disaster response efforts on behalf of the Movement, their public, or their government are encouraged to contact the appropriate individual as listed on the first page of this bulletin. Please note that, currently, the American Red Cross does not require additional in-kind donations. The American Red Cross will continue to keep Movement partners informed as needs develop and invites Movement partners to please visit [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) for continual updates or for information on how to support American Red Cross efforts.

**[Click here to return to the title page or contact information.](#)**