



**American
Red Cross**

California Wildfires

Three-Month Update | February 2018

Red Cross Brings Relief after Devastating California Wildfires

During late 2017, a series of wildfires scorched over 500,000 acres across both Northern and Southern California. As these destructive blazes brought heartbreak and tragic losses to communities across the state, the American Red Cross swiftly mobilized alongside our disaster partners to bring relief and comfort to people whose lives had been turned upside down.

October's massive blazes—fueled by high winds and dry conditions—took a tragic toll, killing more than 40 people and devastating communities in several Northern California counties. Many neighborhoods were struck with little or no warning, forcing more than 90,000 people to quickly evacuate, often with nothing but the clothes on their backs. In their wake, the wildfires left thousands of homes damaged or destroyed.

Only two months later, a swarm of wildfires ignited across Southern California, fanned by powerful Santa Ana winds and fueled by large amounts of dry vegetation. These fires—including the Thomas Fire, which ultimately became

the largest wildfire in California history—forced more than 230,000 people to evacuate and caused significant damage across the region. One firefighter and one resident were killed in hard-hit Ventura County.

While these unprecedented fires raged across California, Red Cross volunteers and employees—many of them from nearby communities and Red Cross chapters—joined with local partners to deliver vital assistance for people in need. They helped open safe shelters for all people displaced by the disasters, while volunteers in emergency response vehicles distributed hot meals and relief supplies directly to affected neighborhoods.

Red Cross disaster workers also provided vital health services as well as emotional support and spiritual care. And when residents returned to fire-ravaged communities to clean up and salvage what they could, local volunteers also handed out wildfire relief kits, including essentials like rakes, shovels, masks, gloves, garbage bags, sifters, eye-drops and sanitary wipes.

Response at a Glance

American Red Cross volunteers and employees mounted a massive response to help hundreds of thousands of people impacted by the 2017 wildfires in both Northern and Southern California.



More than **264,000 meals and snacks** served with partners



Nearly **179,000 relief items** distributed



Nearly **39,000 overnight shelter stays** provided with partners



More than **23,000 health and mental health services** provided



More than **4,000 cases** opened to help people in need

—Cumulative figures as of January 9, 2018

Northern California: Supporting Recovery after Tragic Fires

Wildfire survivors in several Northern California counties are dealing with grief and loss in the aftermath of these destructive blazes. In the months ahead, the Red Cross will work alongside our disaster partners, including government agencies, other non-profit groups, faith-based organizations, area businesses and others, to coordinate ongoing relief and recovery efforts for people with unmet needs.

Trained Red Cross caseworkers are meeting with impacted individuals and families, giving them a chance to share their most urgent needs and ask questions. They are also helping affected residents create recovery plans and connecting them with critical services and resources, including financial assistance for those who qualify. To help people get back on their feet, the Red Cross has opened more than 3,100 cases for affected individuals and families, reaching thousands of Northern California residents as of January 9, 2018.

After Evacuation, Santa Rosa Family Finds Help and Hope at Red Cross Shelter

Forced to leave their homes by the wildfires, three generations of Christil Bell's family, along with their dog, Bully, had been living in their recreational vehicle for three days. They were parked outside Santa Rosa's Finley Community Center when Laura Hoyden, a Woodside, California, resident who was managing a Red Cross shelter in the center, knocked on the RV's door.

Laura asked if the family knew about the services available inside, including food, clothing, hot showers, comfort and hygiene items, dog food for Bully, and medical assistance for Ms. Bell's mother, who had to leave behind some medical supplies.

The Bells were stunned and grateful—they had just been happy to find a place to park the RV. The assistance didn't stop there. The ailing 1988 RV had broken down several times as they fled the wildfire, and Roy Pitts, a Red Cross volunteer in charge of shelter logistics, recruited two other local volunteers and a neighbor to help replace the RV's alternator and make other repairs.

"[The Red Cross has] been great," Ms. Bell said. "They have helped us with everything."

Even though she and her daughter found out that their homes were destroyed in the fire, they feel things are not all bleak.

"I see my family's spirits just perking up," Ms. Bell said. "Blessings are just raining down."



Their homes consumed by the wildfires, Christil Bell's family found shelter, comfort—and neighbors who helped repair their ailing RV—at a Red Cross shelter in Santa Rosa, California. Photo: American Red Cross

"[The Red Cross has] been great," Ms. Bell said. "They have helped us with everything."

Southern California: Red Cross Support Continues in Affected Communities

As one of the largest wildfires in California history burned through December and into the new year, hundreds of Red Cross volunteers worked alongside partners throughout the holidays to make sure those affected had a safe place to stay, food to eat and a shoulder to lean on during this challenging time. And once evacuation orders were lifted, the Red Cross distributed relief items and cleanup supplies for people beginning to return to devastated neighborhoods—while also working to help Montecito residents impacted by horrific and deadly mudslides that followed on the heels of the fires.

Recovering from a disaster can be a confusing, emotionally draining and complicated process. As they did following the October fires in Northern California, Red Cross caseworkers in Southern California are meeting with residents impacted by the December fires at local assistance centers, helping them create individual recovery plans, find aid for their most pressing needs and locate available services and resources to get back on their feet. In some situations, the Red Cross is also providing financial support for needs like apartment deposits, clothes and food, or to cover immediate transportation expenses. The Red Cross will continue working with local government, non-profit and other partner organizations in Southern California to coordinate recovery efforts for the impacted communities.

Montecito Resident a ‘Fan of the Red Cross’ after Back-to-Back Evacuations

Hannah Troy of Montecito, California, stayed in two Red Cross shelters during two separate disasters over a five-week period. She was evacuated twice during the Thomas Fire, the largest in California’s history. During her first mandatory evacuation she spent two days at the Red Cross shelter on the University of California, Santa Barbara campus, and later stayed with a friend for 12 days over the holidays.

Her return home proved to be brief, when she woke up to the sound of heavy rain and a mudslide evacuation alert in the early morning hours of January 9. She ran to where her minivan had been parked, but it was no longer there. Her brother-in-law’s car was also swept away. With the roads clearly unsafe, she went back inside and waited with her sister and brother-in-law, with whom she lives.

When they had learned the day before that their home was in a voluntary evacuation area, Hannah had packed her car with a bag with clothes and supplies for a few days in case she needed to evacuate again. Those belongings were now gone in a wave of mud.

After being rescued from her home, Hannah was relieved to find refuge at another Red Cross shelter. Having trudged through thick mud with her family and dogs, she was glad to have a hot shower and fresh clothes, because she couldn’t carry many belongings.

“You won’t find a bigger fan of the Red Cross than me,” Hannah said.



Hannah Troy, her family and their pets found refuge with the Red Cross following back-to-back evacuations. Photo: Cindy Hugel/American Red Cross

“You won’t find a bigger fan of the Red Cross than me,” Hannah said.

Generous Donations Power Red Cross Response

The Red Cross has raised \$25.5 million, including the value of critical donated goods and services, to help people impacted by the 2017 California Wildfires. As of January 9, 2018, the Red Cross had already spent or made commitments to spend approximately \$10 million on emergency relief and recovery efforts for people affected by the California Wildfires—including \$7.6 million for the October wildfires that impacted Northern California and \$2.4 million for the December wildfires in Southern California. As emergency relief and recovery efforts wind down, the Red Cross is working carefully on plans for the remaining funds. All remaining funds will be used to provide and support ongoing services for individual and community long-term recovery across the affected communities in California.

California Wildfires Relief and Recovery: Expenses and Commitments

California Wildfires (Northern California) Spent and Committed (in millions)*					
As of January 9, 2018					
Expense Categories	Food, Shelter and Relief Items	Health and Emotional Support	Immediate Financial Assistance	Total	Expense %
Financial assistance, food and other relief items	\$1.5	\$0.3	\$1.7	\$3.5	46.1%
Deployment and maintenance of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$1.4	\$0.3	\$0.2	\$1.9	25%
Freight and warehousing	\$0.7			\$0.7	9.2%
Full time Red Cross employees	\$0.3		\$0.1	\$0.4	5.3%
IT, communications and call centers	\$0.2			\$0.2	2.6%
Kitchen, shelter and other logistics that enable service delivery	\$0.1			\$0.1	1.3%
Equipment, maintenance and fueling of Red Cross emergency vehicles and rented trucks	\$0.1			\$0.1	1.3%
Temporary disaster employees					0%
Total Program Expenses	\$4.3	\$0.6	\$2.0	\$6.9	91%
Management, general and fundraising**				\$0.7	9%
Total Spent and Committed				\$7.6	

*Dollar figures are rounded to the nearest \$100K; therefore, expenses \$49,999 and below are represented as zero.

**Management, general and fundraising expenses support our work at its core and are indispensable to running the organization and helping people in need. They include the people and systems to maintain our enterprise-wide computer and telecommunications, HR and payroll systems to support our more than 21,000 employees and approximately 300,000 volunteers, fundraising and communications functions, and other support services across all program lines. 91 cents of every dollar received for the California Wildfires will be spent on our services to people affected by the California Wildfires.

California Wildfires (Southern California) Spent and Committed (in millions)*

As of January 9, 2018

Expense Categories	Food, Shelter and Relief Items	Health and Emotional Support	Immediate Financial Assistance	Total	Expense %
Financial assistance, food and other relief items	\$0.4		\$0.5	\$0.9	37.5%
Deployment and maintenance of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$0.5	\$0.2	\$0.1	\$0.8	33.3%
Freight and warehousing	\$0.2			\$0.2	8.3%
Full time Red Cross employees	\$0.1		\$0.1	\$0.2	8.3%
IT, communications and call centers	\$0.1			\$0.1	4.2%
Kitchen, shelter and other logistics that enable service delivery					0%
Equipment, maintenance and fueling of Red Cross emergency vehicles and rented trucks					0%
Temporary disaster employees					0%
Total Program Expenses	\$1.3	\$0.2	\$0.7	\$2.2	91%
Management, general and fundraising**				\$0.2	9%
Total Spent and Committed				\$2.4	

California Wildfires (Total)

\$25.5 raised (in millions) as of January 9, 2018*

Expense Categories	Total
Total Program Expenses	\$9.1
Management, general and fundraising**	\$0.9
Total Spent and Committed	\$10.0
Program Dollars Remaining	\$14.1
Management, general and fundraising remaining to be applied	\$1.4
Total Budget	\$25.5

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Thank you!

The American Red Cross must be prepared to respond quickly when disasters occur. From home fires that affect a single family to hurricanes that impact millions, those in need turn to the Red Cross in their darkest hours because they know they can depend on us with vital relief when it's needed most. Your donation helps us fulfill this trust.

Top: Harley holds her dog as they stand alongside a Red Cross Emergency Response Vehicle delivering supplies to the Clear Lake neighborhood after the devastating wildfires in Northern California. Photo: Marko Kokic/American Red Cross. *Bottom left:* Session, age 3, saw and can describe what the Thomas fire in Ventura County looked like as his family evacuated. It was a "big fire," he said. Now Session is a fan of fire trucks and other emergency vehicles. Photo: Dermot Tatlow/American Red Cross. *Bottom right:* Clear Lake Park resident Jerry Thomas meets with Red Cross volunteer Francis Porter. "Thank you, it helps to know people care," Thomas said. Photo: Marko Kokic/American Red Cross