



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

American Red Cross of
Northwest Florida
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News Release

NEWS RELEASE

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Your American Red Cross of Northwest Florida is very busy and We Need Your Help

Northwest Florida September 3, 2011 – Being ready for a disaster is not Free. “We are very busy organizing volunteers to staff shelters in preparation for Tropical Storm Lee. Although we hope to not utilize any shelters, we cannot wait until they needed to be ready,” says Leanne Barger, Emergency Services Director for American Red Cross of Northwest Florida.

Your American Red Cross of Northwest Florida has many volunteers deployed helping people all along the eastern seaboard as they cope with the devastation left behind by Hurricane Irene. Red Cross workers continue to operate shelters in seven states, serve meals, hand out relief supplies and offer emotional support. To date, the Red Cross has:

- Served more than 1 million meals and snacks. Nine kitchens capable of serving a total of about 150,000 hot meals each day are operating in North Carolina, Virginia and New York.
- Provided about 55,000 overnight shelter stays in the last week to residents from North Carolina to New England.
- Handed out more than 36,000 relief items like hygiene kits, mops, brooms, tarps, work gloves and coolers.
- Provided more than 9,000 mental health and health services consultations. Mobilized more than 5,000 Red Cross workers, many of whom worked side-by-side with community partners to make sure people get the help they need.

Our costs are growing by the hour. Our current estimate is that Red Cross relief services for Hurricane Irene could cost \$10 million to \$15 million. We haven't raised anywhere near that amount yet, but the public has always come through for us when Americans need help – and we really need your help now.

Even as we help people recover from Hurricane Irene, the Red Cross is also assisting those whose homes are being threatened by wildfires in Texas, Oregon and Oklahoma, and we are still sheltering and feeding residents in Minot, North Dakota impacted by the floods that occurred in June.

Hurricane season comes on the heels of what was a busy spring for the Red Cross with 46 relief operations across 31 states helping people affected by devastating floods, tornadoes and wildfires.

The Red Cross needs about \$450 million every year to respond to nearly 70,000 disasters ranging from a house fire involving one family to larger disasters like floods involving numerous families. Major disasters that impact entire communities add to the cost of our disaster response.

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The Chief Executive Officer of American Red Cross of Northwest Florida Jerry Kindle states, "When an "Ivan" or "Irene" hits, everyone knows the Red Cross will be there to help meet the needs of those devastated by catastrophe. However, the American Red Cross of Northwest Florida continues its work, twenty-four hours a day, every day of the year, responding to smaller local disasters and helping military families in crisis." In the last year, the Red Cross provided the following emergency services in Northwest Florida at *no cost to the clients*:

- Provided emergency assistance at 254 local disasters including house fires, tornadoes and flooding, assisting 799 residents at a cost of \$153,055. (Up 25%)
- With the 7 military bases in our four counties we briefed over 18,000 service members and over 5,500 family members and provided comfort kits to over 5,200 deploying service members.
- Provided emergency communication for 1,200 military and their families in times of emergency, i.e. notification of birth, death or illness. The average cost to process each case is \$24.

The American Red Cross needs your help to ensure that when anyone is affected by disaster, we are there. **Any donation is deeply appreciated and will greatly help those affected by disaster.**

For more information on hurricane preparedness, to volunteer, or to make a donation now, contact the **American Red Cross of Northwest Florida** at 850-432-7601, 850-682-3356, 1-800-773-7620, visit www.yourredcross.org 222 N. Baylen Street, Pensacola FL 32502. You can also text the word REDCROSS to 90999 to make a \$10 donation.

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