

# Disaster Relief

FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE

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*Red Cross volunteers checking in in the morning*      *Loading the Emergency Response Vehicle after the drill*  
*Photos: courtesy Dave Pollock, Lower Cape Zone Leader*

## **Red Cross Volunteers Participate in Regional Sheltering Simulation at Nauset Regional High School in North Eastham**

April 3rd, 2010, Hyannis, MA - Some 40 Disaster Action Team Members with the Cape Cod and Islands Chapter, American Red Cross, participated in the third Regional Sheltering Exercise at Nauset Regional High School in North Eastham.

The Exercise was led by Eastham's co-emergency Management Directors, Fire Chief Glenn Olson and Police Chief Edward Kulhawik and supported by the Barnstable County Regional Emergency Planning Committee (BCREPC).

Nauset Regional High School is one of six regional shelters identified by the Barnstable County Emergency Management Team. This was the third time in the past year that multiple agencies collaborated to offer a regional full-service shelter including a special area to shelter pets. Plans are underway to test all other regional shelters within the next few months.

75 Red Cross volunteers and members of other participating agencies set up the shelter and tested all sub-functions. Red Cross managed the dormitory, mass feeding, individual client services, material support, staff services, health and mental health support.

The overall goal of the exercise, which lasted five hours, was to test the suitability of the Nauset Regional High School facility as a regional shelter, to identify problems and shortcomings so they can be remedied before the shelter is put to use. The scenarios tested were for two types of disasters: a hurricane and a snow storm.

The results were that all groups felt that the facility was usable as a regional shelter and several fairly minor shortcomings will be addressed. This was good training for all involved, including Red Cross. Several Nantucket volunteers also attended this exercise. While they will not be working at this shelter, they will take lessons learned back to the Island to apply them there.

Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES), managed by volunteer Frank O'Laughlin of Marstons Mills supported communications, organizing communications within the shelter as well as to the outside world should cell phones and other phones are out of commission. The Cape Cod Disaster Animal Response Team (CC DART) staffed the pet shelter and volunteers from the Cape Organization for the Rights of the Disabled (CORD) were on hand.

Other agencies participating were: Coordination/Planning: Barnstable County Regional Emergency Planning Committee (BCREPC); the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT); and staff from the Nauset Regional High School were in attendance to help with setting up and breaking down of the simulation and storing the materials used.

During past national and regional disasters, the Red Cross, BCREPC and other agencies learned that it is easier to manage full-service regional shelters rather than multiple small shelters for small numbers of people—to make the most efficient use of human and material resources. These six regional shelters can currently handle 3,000 people, or 500 per shelter. When fully resourced, the combined capacity will be even greater. Through the Cape Cod Traffic Plan, the Mass Military Reservation (MMR) can shelter an additional 3,000 people.

Regional shelters allow for enough food, water, supplies and supporting resources to provide quality care to all potential users of the shelters. They allow for the sheltering of pets, and transportation is available for those in need. In addition volunteer medical personnel will be available to address basic, general and special medical needs at the site. Finally, there will be coordinated safety, logistics and communications through local police and fire departments, ARES, other local and regional safety agencies working together to support the sheltering operations, ensure the public's safety, and facilitate essential communications.

The regional sheltering plan is designed to complement local, town management of emergency resources. Local and community shelters can open at any time. In an emergency, each town's Emergency Management Director makes decisions independently on deploying emergency resources, in coordination with regional authorities.

The Cape Cod and Islands Chapter has just trained two Disaster Volunteer Teams of 12 each on Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket and is implementing a Disaster Response Capacity Plan on both islands aimed at increasing shelter capacity, recruiting and training additional Response volunteers and collaborating with local government and other response agencies to implement a major shelter location on each islands should a disaster occur.

*All American Red Cross disaster assistance is free, made possible by voluntary donations of time and money from the American people. You can help disaster-affected clients, such as from recent fires and floods, on Cape Cod and the Islands by making a financial gift to the American Red Cross Local Disaster Relief Fund, which enables the Red Cross to provide shelter, food, counseling and other assistance to those affected by a disaster. On those rare occasions when donations exceed Red Cross expenses for a specific disaster, contributions are used to prepare for and serve those affected by other disasters. Contributions to the Local Disaster Relief Fund may be sent to your local American Red Cross chapter at 286 South Street, Hyannis, MA 02601. Tel. (508) 775-1540. Internet users can make a secure online contribution by visiting [cciredcross.org](http://cciredcross.org)*

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