



## Disaster Relief

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# NEWS

FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE CONTACT: Glen Beasley (508) 776-9663

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### **Red Cross Provides Haiti Relief Information and Volunteer and Donation Guidance to the Public**

#### **Background**

On January 12, at 5:22pm local time, a series of earthquakes with magnitude 6.5 to 7.3 struck Haiti in the highly populated area of Department Ouest, 10 miles from Port-au-Prince. Aftershocks are continuing to occur.

#### **Current Situation**

- **Damage** - The capital of Haiti, Port-au-Prince, has been severely affected including critical city infrastructure such as electricity, water and phone services. Initial reports indicate a large number of casualties and widespread damage. According to preliminary reports, many Red Cross, UN and government buildings have collapsed or have been damaged. Populations may also be affected in Carrefour and Jacmel.
- **Access** - The Port-au-Prince International Airport is closed to commercial traffic, but remains open for official use. Thousands of earthquake survivors are clogging roadways, hindering the ability of rescue workers to reach those trapped beneath rubble. Transportation disruptions are expected to deteriorate.
- **Power** - There is a near-total blackout in Port-au-Prince; the power grid has been significantly damaged, and sporadic blackouts have begun to spread across the island. Those with generators could run out of fuel before nightfall, further limiting electricity availability.
- **Communications** - Due to limited electricity, communications are difficult with phone lines and cellular infrastructure down.

#### **American Red Cross**

The American Red Cross is responding to this disaster, and will be working with Red Cross partners in Haiti and with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

- **The American Red Cross has released \$10 Million for immediate response action.**
- It is making available all the relief supplies at its warehouse in Panama (enough for 5,000 families) in support of relief efforts. These supplies include blankets, kitchen sets, and water containers to meet immediate needs of survivors.
- At the International Federation's request, the American Red Cross is deploying a five-member Relief Emergency Response Unit (ERU) to manage the distribution of relief items to earthquake survivors. In addition, it has a disaster specialist en route to Haiti to support disaster assessments conducted by the International Federation's FACT team.
- The American Red Cross has several experienced disaster specialists standing by to be deployed if requested.
- The American Red Cross has staff on the ground in Haiti and is working to obtain information on the situation.

**Page 1. All Red Cross Disaster Relief is provided free of charge.**

- The American Red Cross will continue to monitor the situation and communicate with the Haiti Red Cross and International Federation for future immediate action.

#### International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation)

- The International Federation has deployed a number of Emergency Response Units for Relief, Telecommunications, Logistics, Health/Mobile Hospital and Logistics, as well as a Field Assessment and Coordination Team.
- The International Federation has activated its Pan American Disaster Unit in Panama to provide supplies from its warehouse as needs and response options are identified.

#### **How to Help:**

Countless requests have come from people wanting to help. The best way to do that is to make a donation to the American Red Cross International Response Fund at [redcross.org](http://redcross.org) or by calling 1-800-RED-CROSS. Donors can designate their gifts to Haiti relief. Donations to the International Response Fund allows the American Red Cross to respond to global emergencies and disasters.

In addition, several hundred thousand people have chosen to make a mobile donation. Donors can text "Haiti" to 90999 on their cell phone to send a \$10 donation to support Red Cross relief efforts in Haiti.

The American Red Cross currently is not accepting any in-kind donation of goods and materials. For more information see the Frequently Asked Questions below.

#### **Volunteers:**

The American Red Cross is currently deploying Internationally Trained Disaster Specialists to the affected area in Haiti. The American Red Cross is **not** currently seeking public volunteers to deploy to these affected areas, however, we strongly encourage individuals to get involved and get trained locally here at the American Red Cross to be trained specialist for future incidents both locally and internationally. You can volunteer at [www.ciredcross.org/volunteer](http://www.ciredcross.org/volunteer)

#### **Reconnecting to a Loved One:**

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has set up family linking for individuals seeking their families in Haiti. If you have a loved one that is missing or you are trying to reconnect with a loved one in Haiti please go to <http://www.icrc.org/familylinks> and complete the information.

Families of US Citizens living or traveling in Haiti should call the US State Department at (888) 407-4747 to seek information.

#### Other Frequently Asked Questions:

In response to international disasters, the American Red Cross often experiences an outpouring of generosity from the American people. As long as disasters continue to happen, we know that people will want to find ways to help. In addition to tremendous financial support, we typically receive myriad offers of product from individuals and community groups.

If you are an individual or community group who would like to make a product donation (such as clothing, hygiene products, medicine or food), please understand, though your generosity is sincerely appreciated, the American Red Cross cannot accept this type of donation.

Though unsolicited offers of goods and services from individuals and community groups are well intentioned, they have hidden costs and pose a number of complications for relief efforts.

For these reasons, the American Red Cross is unable to accept any large collections of items, such as clothing, hygiene items, furniture, toys, blankets, canned goods, or medicine. We are also unable to accept small individual donations of these items.

Why does the Red Cross discourage donations of collected goods and individual items for disaster relief?

- The cost of processing and transporting these types of donations often outweighs the cost of the donated items themselves. Donations of collected goods require time, money and personnel to accept, clean, sort and distribute them.

- The influx of unsolicited donations distracts relief workers on site from critical emergency response activities – feeding and sheltering the affected population.
- In addition, because we cannot anticipate what these spontaneous donations of collected items will include, we cannot ensure that the donated products will be appropriate for the relief effort or that there will be enough of a particular item to distribute them equitably.
- Shipping donated goods is costly and particularly difficult in the aftermath of a disaster. Routes into disaster sites are often damaged or impassable and can be clogged easily with shipments of non-priority items.
- The Red Cross makes every attempt to procure items locally, which minimizes transportation and storage expenses. By procuring goods locally, the American Red Cross can also ensure the items distributed to disaster victims are appropriate for the culture and diet.

Q: Where can donations of collected goods and individual items be most effective?

A: Individual donations of goods and collections of items are put to the best use possible and have the greatest impact economically, when they are donated to charitable organizations in your local community. Donating these items locally eliminates transportation costs and ensures disaster workers are not overwhelmed with sorting unsolicited donations, allowing them to focus on the critical response activities.

Local charitable organizations are not operating in the crisis environment that characterizes disaster relief, so they will have the time and resources to sort, clean and repair goods and identify how and where they can be most beneficial.

Q: Does the American Red Cross ever accept in-kind donations for international disaster response?

A: If you represent a corporation that would like to offer a bulk donation of items for a Red Cross international response that you sell or manufacture, you may contact Sheri Baron at (617) 274-5240 or at [BaronSh@usa.redcross.org](mailto:BaronSh@usa.redcross.org)

Please keep in mind that due to the time sensitivity, transportation costs, and complex nature of our product needs, we have greatest success procuring product as close to the disaster site as possible, which avoids delays in getting basic necessities to disaster victims.

Q: What is the best way I can support the relief efforts?

A: We are especially appreciative of the financial contributions made by individuals, corporations, and foundations. Financial contributions allow us to support the greatest needs in the most efficient manner. Financial contributions can be used to purchase items locally, eliminating the added costs involved in transporting goods. Cash contributions also allow our relief workers to purchase culturally appropriate items in the country and stimulate the devastated economy.

Q: How can I make a financial donation?

A: You can help the victims of countless crises around the world each year by making a financial gift to the American Red Cross International Response Fund, which will provide immediate relief and long-term support through supplies, technical assistance and other support to help those in need. The American Red Cross honors donor intent.

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In addition, donors can text "Haiti" to 90999 on their cell phone to send a \$10 donation to support Red Cross relief efforts in Haiti.

*All American Red Cross disaster assistance is free, made possible by voluntary donations of time and money from the American people. You can help the victims of disasters locally by making a financial gift to the American Red Cross International Response Fund, which enables the Red Cross to provide shelter, food, counseling and other assistance to victims of disaster.*