



**American  
Red Cross**

# Southern and Midwest Tornadoes **ONE-YEAR UPDATE**

December 2022

## A Letter from Leadership

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In December 2021, thousands of lives were forever changed when a band of tornadoes tore a path of destruction across Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Missouri and other parts of the South and Midwest. Homes were ripped apart, and communities were left in shambles. Tragically, dozens of people lost their lives.

What should have been a joyous holiday season for many instead left individuals and families coping with incredible losses amid tremendous devastation. Through it all, the American Red Cross has worked hand in hand with these communities in their time of need, providing relief and comfort to hundreds. In shelters, dedicated volunteers brought warmth and compassion to everything they did — from serving meals to lending a listening ear — to lessen the immense burden of this disaster.

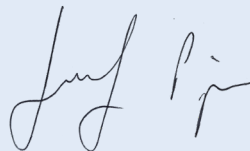
While we were on the ground with our disaster responders in western Kentucky, we were deeply heartened by the generosity of spirit around us. Hundreds of Red Crossers worked tirelessly, spending the holidays away from home so they could support Kentucky families when they needed it most. Even more inspiring was the incredible support impacted residents showed for neighbors in the wake of their own heartbreak.

Our deep local presence has allowed us to stand with affected individuals and families throughout their long road of recovery. In the months since the disaster, we focused our attention on helping people rebuild homes as well as bolstering services that will ultimately make their communities stronger. From helping families secure household items that can be costly to replace to building the capacity of local mental health providers, our recovery work will help disaster-stricken communities heal and become whole again.

This devastating tornado outbreak made a lasting impact on everyone in its path. But with your support, the Red Cross has offered help and hope to people facing their darkest hours. Donors like you make this life-changing work possible. Thank you for all you do for those we serve.



Brad Kieserman, Vice President,  
Disaster Operations and Logistics



Jennifer Pipa, Vice President,  
Disaster Programs

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Front cover: Disaster worker Kylie Parkinson hugs Bret Cobb, whose Dawson Springs, Kentucky, home was damaged during the December tornadoes. Photo by Mimi Teller/American Red Cross

## Red Cross Provides Relief and Comfort Amid Heartbreak

On December 10, 2021, a band of tornadoes stretching more than 200 miles ripped through communities across the South and Midwest. Arkansas, Missouri, Tennessee and Kentucky were hit especially hard. Sadly, dozens of people lost their lives when these deadly tornadoes tore through.

Thousands of American Red Cross volunteers and employees deployed to deliver relief and comfort to people reeling from this massive event. In the wake of these tragic storms, we provided safe refuge for people who'd lost their homes, nourishing meals to families who had no electricity and a shoulder to lean on for people facing tremendous loss.

Zonia Quero Ziada, a Red Cross spiritual care volunteer, deployed to western Kentucky to help impacted residents cope with emotional pain following the disaster. One of the people she helped was a woman who'd lost her sister in the tornadoes.

Zonia and the woman communicated over several weeks, and as time went on, the woman began to heal and overcome her feelings of grief. She sent Zonia a heartfelt text, thanking her for her support. "THANK YOU! I no longer wake up at 3 in the morning filled with guilt, sadness, and tears," the woman wrote.

We remain committed to disaster-ravaged communities long after those initial harrowing days. As time passes, we focus our efforts on meeting impacted residents' ongoing needs. In the weeks after the storms, the



Red Crosser Misty Thomas surveys the damage in Mayfield, Kentucky. Photo by American Red Cross

Red Cross distributed direct financial assistance to thousands of individuals and families, helping them take charge of their recovery and meet their most pressing concerns. These funds helped people afford things like replacement appliances, security deposits on new places to live and even clean clothes.

Our focus in recent months has been on grants to local partner organizations. Disasters start and end locally, and by helping other nonprofits on the ground build their capacity, we help communities become whole again. From enabling people to secure essential items for their rebuilt homes to providing trauma-informed counseling, these grants make a vital difference for people impacted by these tornadoes.

### Response at a Glance\*

More than **1,100 Red Cross disaster workers** mounted a massive response to help people impacted by these tornadoes. They have:



**119,300**

Served more than **119,300 meals and snacks** with partners



**57,100**

Provided more than **57,100 overnight shelter and hotel stays** with partners



**52,100**

Distributed more than **52,100 relief items**



**4,800**

Opened more than **4,800 cases** to provide recovery support

\*Cumulative figures in Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri and Tennessee as of November 10, 2022

## Helping Residents Take Charge of Their Recovery

When tornadoes like the storms of December 2021 tear apart a town, the road to recovery can be long, arduous and filled with roadblocks. In addition to coping with immense devastation — people lost their homes, businesses and, in some cases, their entire communities — many residents faced financial barriers that delayed their recovery.

The Red Cross responds to tens of thousands of disasters a year, and we see firsthand what a difference direct financial assistance makes for people recovering from a disaster. As of November 10, 2022, we'd provided \$6.8 million in relief and recovery financial assistance to help thousands of individuals and families impacted by the December 2021 tornadoes. This aid included additional recovery funds so some of the most severely affected residents could address unmet needs as they continued to rebuild their lives.

In the days after the tornadoes, this money helped families purchase necessities like clothing — some made it through the storm with little more than what they wore on their backs. As the days stretched on, people used these funds to put gas in their tanks and pay for things insurance doesn't cover — like food and bills. And as weeks turned to months, this assistance allowed impacted residents to complete home repairs, make deposits on new places to live, replace appliances and accomplish other tasks that allowed them to turn a corner in their recovery.



Top: Stacey Enis, pictured next to her husband, Fred, gestures at their home, which was severely damaged by the tornadoes. Stacey and Fred received Red Cross aid in the storms' aftermath. "If we didn't receive assistance from the Red Cross, I don't know where we'd be." Photo by Adam Chapman/American Red Cross. Bottom: A volunteer conducts damage assessment in Arkansas after the December tornadoes. Photo by John Brimley/American Red Cross

## Red Cross Grants Help Communities Recover and Rebuild

Recovering from a disaster like the December tornadoes takes a team effort. The work the Red Cross does is part of a much larger network that involves people from many organizations coming together to support impacted residents. Through strategic grantmaking to local non-profits, the Red Cross is supporting wide-ranging community recovery efforts.

### Long-term Recovery Groups: Community Foundation of West Kentucky

Residents healing from the devastation of a disaster often face a range of challenges — from replacing lost Social Security cards to repairing their home — and barriers to completing one task can make it harder

to accomplish the others. For instance, if a person lost their vehicle in the storm, it will be harder for them to get to work, which could lead to financial insecurity.

Long-term recovery groups, which are local, community-based groups typically set up in each county, help individuals and families by developing a holistic recovery plan that focuses on all aspects of recovery, from home construction to mental health needs.

The Red Cross is supporting long-term recovery groups through grant funding to the Community Foundation of West Kentucky. These groups help residents chart a path to recovery through casework, construction management, and overseeing donations and volunteer support.

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“There is only one organized way to ensure all who need help, receive help... through the long-term recovery groups. It is a daunting process, but one that produces invaluable impact [for] the community as a whole.”

Chris Dockins, associate director and chief operating officer at the Community Foundation of West Kentucky

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“Some survivors may need home repairs or rebuilds, some may need transportation, others employment, mental health, assistance with medical bills, household goods, rent/utility deposits or other needs,” Dockins said. “Once identified in the individual recovery plan, the case manager will connect the survivor with community resources to meet the identified needs.”

Red Cross grant funding through the Community Foundation of West Kentucky has allowed local long-term recovery groups to hire additional staff, including construction managers, who help affected residents navigate the complex process of rebuilding their homes. In addition, the foundation was able to use funding from the Red Cross to help other local non-profits purchase materials and labor for home rebuilds.

One person helped by these home repairs shared feelings of appreciation. “This was a horrible thing that happened to all of us,” they said. “But the help we have received to put our lives back together is a true blessing from above. We didn’t know what we were going to do. We are so thankful for the help.”

### **House in a Box: The Disaster Services Corporation of the Catholic Diocese of St. Vincent De Paul**

Imagine moving into a rebuilt house and sleeping on the floor. Sadly, without help securing furniture and home goods, this can be the reality for many disaster-affected residents without financial means.

Even after a family’s home is rebuilt, the work of returning to normalcy is far from over. Families still need to furnish their homes and replace lost household items, a process that can be extremely costly and time consuming.

Through a grant for the House in a Box program, run by the Disaster Services Corporation of St. Vincent De Paul, USA, the Red Cross is assisting hundreds

of families across Kentucky and Tennessee with this complex and sometimes overlooked aspect of recovery. This program will provide these families with basic furniture and household supplies, such as beds, linens, dinettes, pots and pans, and other essential items — a “house in a box,” so to speak.



The House in a Box program will help many families in Kentucky and Tennessee obtain essential household items to make their rebuilt homes livable. The photo above shows a Tennessee home that was destroyed by the tornadoes. Photo by American Red Cross

### **Mental Health Counseling: University of Louisville**

Rebuilding after a disaster involves not only repairing physical damage, but also healing from the psychological impacts. Devastatingly, disasters are tied to increased suicide risk.\* “Our concern post the recent tornado event is that the rates of suicide may rise, and our needs are more in advancing our practitioners’ skills in treatments for suicide risk,” said Gretchen Roof, a vice president of clinical services at Four Rivers Behavioral Health, one of the organizations receiving funding.

To help residents in some of the areas hit hardest by the December tornadoes, the Red Cross has granted funding to the University of Louisville to boost the capacity of local mental health nonprofits in Kentucky, including Bowling Green, Dawson Springs and Mayfield. The University of Louisville will help these nonprofits serve more people by growing the ranks of trained providers. The university will also teach counselors trauma-informed care to better equip them to work with disaster survivors.

\*Jennifer A. Horney, Ibraheem M. Karaye, Alexander Abuabara, Sera Gearhart, Shannon Grabich, Maria Perez-Patron. The Impact of Natural Disasters on Suicide in the United States, 2003–2015. Crisis, 2020; 1 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1027/0227-5910/a000723>

Providers will focus on, but not limit their support to, groups that often have difficulty accessing mental health services, including the Hispanic community, the refugee community, children and low-income populations.

### **Camp Noah and Children's Mental Health: Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota**

Another way we're supporting mental health is through funding for Camp Noah, a program for elementary

school-aged children who have been impacted by disaster and other trauma. Red Cross funding will support 10 Camp Noah sites across Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri and Tennessee.

During camp, a team of certified staff provide children with intentional activities to help them process their experiences through creative activities and play. Children are encouraged to grieve their losses and share their unique gifts and talents.

## **Looking Ahead: Standing with Communities for the Long Haul**

Powered by the incredible generosity of our donors, we will continue supporting comprehensive long-term recovery into next year and beyond. In spring 2023, the Red Cross will provide additional financial assistance to help individuals and families who still face major barriers to recovery. This Expanded Recovery Assistance program will target those with the greatest levels of social vulnerability, since people with pre-existing risk factors are likely to face more significant challenges recovering from a disaster. With these funds, individuals and families can meet essential needs, such as buying a bed to sleep on instead of an air mattress, paying expenses to commute to work and completing delayed home repairs.

Along with this additional financial assistance, the Red Cross will also continue to disburse and award grants to

partner organizations, many of them hyperlocal non-profits that are attuned to the particular needs of their communities. Whenever possible, our long-term recovery team prioritizes working with nonprofit organizations that are embedded in the impacted community. Because these partners typically operate on a smaller scale than national organizations, we focus our work in part on building their capacity and better equipping them to work with funders to support their communities.

When we sign a grant agreement with a partner, we typically provide 25% of the funds up front, with additional disbursements based on successful project activities. This allows us to ensure that our partners are delivering services in accordance with our mission and helps us ensure dollars are being used effectively.

## **Generous Supporters Make Relief and Recovery Possible**

Thanks to our generous donors, the Red Cross has raised approximately \$50.2 million, including the value of critical donated goods and services, to help people affected by the December 2021 Southern and Midwest Tornadoes.

As of November 10, 2022, the Red Cross had already spent or made commitments to spend approximately \$19.4 million on emergency relief and recovery efforts for these storms. This does not include the millions in grantee awards that are in process and have not yet been disbursed. In addition, to fill the gap between funds raised and funds needed, we have specific expenses that have been reimbursed by the state of Kentucky. We will continue to program the remaining funds to provide and support services for both individual and community long-term recovery in the impacted regions.



Red Cross volunteer Mimi Teller gets a hug from a young girl in Mayfield, Kentucky. Photo by American Red Cross

## Southern and Midwest Tornadoes Expenses and Commitments (in millions)<sup>1,2</sup>

as of November 10, 2022

Expense Categories	Food, Shelter and Relief Items	Health and Emotional Support	Financial Assistance	Community Recovery and Resilience	Total	Expense %
Financial assistance, food and other relief items	\$1.6	\$0.5	\$3.0	—	\$5.1	26%
Recovery Financial Assistance	—	—	\$3.8	—	\$3.8	19%
Deployment of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$1.2	\$0.6	\$0.7	—	\$2.5	13%
Community grants	—	—	—	\$2.2	\$2.2	11%
Full-time Red Cross employees	\$0.8	—	\$0.2	\$0.5	\$1.5	8%
Temporary disaster hires	\$0.4	—	—	\$0.5	\$0.9	4%
Freight, postage and warehousing	\$0.6	—	—	—	\$0.6	3%
IT, communications and call centers	\$0.2	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.5	3%
Kitchen, shelter and other logistics that enable service delivery	\$0.3	—	—	—	\$0.3	2%
Equipment, maintenance and fueling of Red Cross emergency vehicles and rented trucks	\$0.1	—	—	—	\$0.1	1%
<b>Total Program Expenses</b>	<b>\$5.2</b>	<b>\$1.2</b>	<b>\$7.8</b>	<b>\$3.3</b>	<b>\$17.5</b>	<b>90%</b>
Management, general and fundraising					\$1.9	10%
<b>Total Spent and Committed</b>					<b>\$19.4</b>	<b>100%</b>
Additional budgeted recovery programs					\$28.8	
Management, general and fundraising remaining to be applied <sup>3</sup>					\$3.2	
<b>Total Budget<sup>4</sup></b>					<b>\$51.4</b>	

<sup>1</sup>Dollar figures in all tables are round to the nearest \$100,000; therefore, expenses \$49,999 and below are represented as zero.

<sup>2</sup>Includes tornado responses in Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri and Tennessee.

<sup>3</sup>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 17,000 employees and nearly 300,000 volunteers, fundraising and communications functions, and other support services across all program lines. 90 cents of every dollar spent for Southern and Midwest Tornadoes will support delivering care and comfort to help people affected by these storms.

<sup>4</sup>As of November 10, 2022, we have budgeted approximately \$51.4 million for the Southern and Midwest Tornadoes. This includes \$1.2 million in reimbursements from the state of Kentucky. Kentucky Tornadoes donations are supporting the response in Kentucky, and Southern and Midwest Tornadoes donations are supporting all responses across impacted states.

► For more information about our response to this disaster and stories of people we've helped, please visit our Southern and Midwest Tornadoes story map at [redcross.org/southern-midwest-tornadoes](https://redcross.org/southern-midwest-tornadoes).

*Thank you!*

The Red Cross must be ready for every disaster, big or small, and we respond to an average of more than 60,000 disasters per year — including home fires, severe weather, floods and wildfires. Those in need turn to the Red Cross in their darkest hours because they know they can depend on us right after the disaster and through their recovery. Your donation helps us fulfill this promise. We are grateful for your trust.



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