



The Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services

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The Salvation Army's Role in Emergency Disaster Services

Federal law has reaffirmed The Salvation Army's authority to provide disaster assistance with the passage of the Robert T. Stafford Emergency and Disaster Assistance Act, which also created the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This Act specifically names The Salvation Army as a relief and disaster assistance organization.

Several factors guide The Salvation Army's role in responding to disasters. These **guiding factors** include:

- The Salvation Army has an established right to provide disaster relief services. That right is recognized by public law and through signed Memorandums of Understanding and Agreements (MOUs) with government agencies and other voluntary organizations.
- The Salvation Army's disaster relief services are supported solely by donations.
- The Salvation Army is not a first responder; rather, it supports first responders.
- The Salvation Army is a mass-care support agency.

The Salvation Army's Goals in Emergency Disaster Services

When The Salvation Army initiates a disaster relief operation, the first aim is to meet the basic needs of those who have been affected, both survivors and first responders (such as firefighters). Even at this level, The Salvation Army's workers are ministering in that they serve as a means of expressing God's love. The Salvation Army's **goals** are to offer:

- Material comfort
- Physical comfort
- Emotional comfort
- Spiritual comfort

The Salvation Army provides help as an outgrowth of faith and as an act of obedience to God, but no service is withheld because of a recipient's beliefs. If disaster relief recipients ask for prayer or spiritual counseling, The Salvation Army can provide these. The Salvation Army's service might be described as a "ministry of presence," just as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and mourn with those who mourn." (Romans 12:15)

The Salvation Army's Emergency Disaster Service Activities

The Salvation Army provides numerous disaster relief services. Each disaster creates its own unique circumstances. The Salvation Army's disaster response is community based, varying from place to place based upon the community's situation and the magnitude of the disaster.

In a disaster, The Salvation Army has the ability to provide both **immediate emergency assistance and long-term recovery help**. Emergency response services are activated on short notice according to an agreed-upon notification procedure, while long-term recovery is strategically planned in response to the situation, through working and partnering and many other community entities.

Even with the ability to be flexible and to respond based upon the community's situation, there are several basic services that The Salvation Army offers in most major disasters. These services, described below, form the core of The Salvation Army's disaster services program.

Food Service

The most visible of The Salvation Army's disaster services is the delivery of meals and drinks to disaster victims and emergency workers. Food may be prepared and served at congregate feeding sites (such as a Salvation Army corps building, camp or shelter) or from one of the Army's mobile feeding units/canteens, which are essentially kitchens on wheels. Nourishment is provided at other types of events, such as:

- Search and rescue operations
- Law enforcement activities
- School violence incidents
- Disaster drills
- Training exercises
- Special Events

Hydration Service

Hydration service provides beverages which replenish electrolytes (minerals such as potassium), enhance energy and which meet general hydration requirements for those served. Hydration service is offered to affected people and service providers. Hydration service is often used to augment disaster food service. In some situations, however, hydration may be all that is required. Some situations where hydration service is provided alone include:

- Where food is not the most immediate basic need, such as at public events where people may become victims of heat exposure.
- When consumption of food is not safe, such as when air borne contaminants are present.
- Where and when a local Department of Health restricts the serving of food.
- When security management does not allow food service.

Emergency Shelter

When necessary, The Salvation Army provides shelter in a facility identified by the local emergency management personnel. These facilities include:

- Municipal shelters, such as schools
- Salvation Army buildings
- Other facilities that are predetermined by authorities

Cleanup and Restoration

The Salvation Army supports people as they restore and rebuild after a disaster. Cleanup and restoration services include:

- Distribution of cleanup supplies such as mops, brooms, buckets, shovels, detergents, and tarps.
- Coordination of volunteer rebuilding teams.
- Set up of warehouses to distribute reconstruction supplies such as lumber and sheetrock.

Donations Management

The Salvation Army is one of the nation's leaders in collecting, sorting, and distributing donated goods. During a disaster, The Salvation Army may:

- Open disaster warehouses to receive and sort donations.
- Establish distribution centers to dispense goods directly to disaster victims.
- Use donations to support other disaster programs, such as mass feeding and cleanup.

Spiritual and Emotional Care

The Salvation Army provides spiritual comfort and emotional support to disaster victims and emergency workers coping with the stress of a disaster. Salvation Army counselors, who are often ordained as clergy (officers), may simply offer a "ministry of presence," but often people who know about The Salvation Army as representatives of God may ask for prayer or help from the Bible. At Ground Zero following 9/11, one of the most critical ministries of The Salvation Army was counseling firefighters, police, and morgue workers who were struggling with the enormity of the tragedy. Other examples of spiritual and emotional care activities include:

- Comforting the injured and bereaved
- Conducting funeral and memorial services
- Providing chaplaincy service to disaster workers and emergency management personnel

Disaster Social Services

The Salvation Army provides direct financial assistance to disaster victims through a system of trained caseworkers. This assistance is available for:

- Essential living supplies, such as food, clothing, medicine, bedding, or baby products
- Emergency housing needs
- Disaster-related medical or funeral expenses

Emergency Communications (SATERN)

Through The Salvation Army Team Emergency Radio Network (www.SATERN.org) and other amateur radio groups, The Salvation Army helps provide emergency communications when more traditional networks, such as telephones, are not operating. These teams:

- Relay critical information about the disaster.
- Transmit welfare inquiries from friends and family members who are otherwise unable to reach loved ones in the disaster area.

Administration

This service provides the support to keep the other services functioning and includes:

- Clerical and office support
- Purchasing and accounting
- Statistics and reports
- Documentation for authorities
- Personnel, staff and trained volunteers
- Management of spontaneous volunteers