



**American  
Red Cross**

# Hurricane Florence: Two-Year Update

October 2020

## A Message from Trevor Riggen, Senior Vice President of Disaster Services, American Red Cross

---



In September 2018, tens of thousands of people had their lives upended when Hurricane Florence devastated communities in North Carolina, South Carolina and beyond. The slow-moving storm dumped record-breaking rainfall across a large swath of the Carolinas and caused widespread flooding – bringing added destruction to many areas that were inundated by Hurricane Matthew just two years before.

Powered by the generosity of our donors, dedicated Red Cross disaster workers were there for hard-hit residents in the immediate aftermath of Florence’s heartbreaking destruction, and they have remained since then, delivering relief, comfort and ongoing recovery support as survivors picked up the pieces and began to rebuild their lives.

Thousands of Red Cross volunteers and employees from local communities and across the country responded swiftly following Florence’s impact. Working alongside our disaster relief partners, they battled difficult conditions to provide safe refuge for displaced families, along with warm meals, emotional support and mental health services for people suffering unimaginable losses. They also offered basic health services, such as help with lost eyeglasses and prescription medications for affected individuals and families, and they delivered essential relief and cleanup supplies and more than \$20 million in financial assistance to help people get back on their feet.

Two years after the storm clouds lifted, the Red Cross continues to stand with Florence survivors and their communities. We’ve given additional cash assistance to households that suffered severe hurricane damage, helping them pay for recovery expenses like home repairs or other housing costs, replacement of lost appliances and furnishings, and much more. We’ve also awarded more than \$10 million in grants to partner organizations with specialized expertise to help local communities meet ongoing needs and become more resilient against future crises – funding services from home repair and rebuilding to free training in construction trades that have been in high demand after the damage caused by Florence.

After a disaster of this magnitude, recovery takes time and teamwork. With our deep local presence across the region, the Red Cross will remain by the sides of impacted residents and communities for as long as we are needed, thanks to the compassionate commitment of our donors, volunteers and employees. On behalf of those we serve, thank you for standing with us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Trevor Riggen". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Trevor Riggen

## From Relief to Recovery, We Continue to Stand with Florence Survivors

Over the last two years, the American Red Cross has stood with individuals and families impacted by Hurricane Florence's powerful onslaught, providing immediate aid in the storm's wake and continuing recovery assistance in the months that followed.

Since our last report, the Red Cross has continued to award targeted grants to non-profits doing vital work in communities that are still recovering from this catastrophic storm. These grants are helping to fund the work of community partners with specialized expertise and services, including home repair and rebuilding assistance, free training in construction and other trades vital to rebuilding efforts, and much more. The Red Cross has also continued to work with other local nonprofits to foster increased resilience and preparedness in the impacted communities.

### Delivering Relief and Comfort in Florence's Wake

When a disaster threatens homes, many survivors' top concern is finding safe shelter. When tens of thousands of people evacuated their homes just ahead of Florence's landfall, and when many more left homes and belongings behind as they fled rising floodwaters, the Red Cross was there to help them find refuge. To meet this great need, the Red Cross joined with government and community partners to open safe shelters in North and South Carolina. In addition, thousands of our dedicated volunteers and employees worked around the clock to offer relief and comfort for individuals and families coping with trauma and uncertainty.

At the shelters, we helped nourish evacuees with warm meals and snacks, and we provided comfort kits containing personal care items, as well as other essentials like diapers. These services didn't stop at the shelter doors. When survivors could safely return to their communities, Red Cross workers fanned out in emergency response vehicles to deliver warm meals prepared by partners like Southern Baptist Disaster Relief, as well as vital cleanup supplies like rakes, shovels, mops and buckets, coolers and bug spray.

While this tangible assistance is essential to disaster survivors, offering a sympathetic ear and other emotional



In Bennettsville, S.C., volunteer Paul Mirador hands out fruit cups to Marlboro County Clerk Anna Patterson for a meal distribution after Hurricane Florence. "If people can't cook because they don't have power, then how are they going to feed their families?" said Paul. Photo by Michael G. Seamans/American Red Cross

support is also a key aspect of our relief work. That's why Red Cross mental health workers were on hand in shelters and impacted communities to aid residents coping with loss and trauma. Trained volunteers were also ready to help with basic health services, such as replacing lost prescription drugs and monitoring shelter residents with medical needs, as well as assisting people struggling with accessibility issues or other functional needs.

After a disaster like Florence, families can struggle to afford basics like utilities and groceries or covering the next month's rent. Many survivors need a helping hand to get back on their feet. Powered by our generous donors, the Red Cross provided thousands of severely impacted individuals and families with financial assistance of \$600 each — totaling more than \$4 million — to help meet these and other urgent needs.

In addition to the immediate assistance provided during the emergency response, we also provided additional financial assistance to thousands of the most severely affected households to help impacted residents with longer-term recovery.



In Hope Mills, N.C., volunteers pose with their emergency response vehicle. After spending two emotional and rewarding weeks together on a team, long-lasting friendships form between volunteers. Photo by Daniel Cima/American Red Cross

### Response at a Glance



More than **1.6 million meals and snacks** served with partners



More than **131,500 overnight shelter stays** provided with partners



More than **336,500 relief items** distributed



More than **73,900 individual care** contacts made



Over **6,600** severely affected households provided with **immediate financial assistance**

All figures are cumulative and reflect Red Cross response efforts since September 14, 2018

## Meeting Florence Survivors' Ongoing Recovery Needs

At the Red Cross, we know disaster survivors need support long after the floodwaters recede, and the Red Cross has spent more than \$27 million to assist with ongoing Florence recovery efforts. We have used these funds to deliver more financial assistance to households that needed an extra hand and to fund grants for community-based recovery services.

### Recovery Financial Assistance

As part of our recovery aid for individuals and families in the first year after Florence's impact, the Red Cross distributed additional financial assistance to households that needed more support — reaching out to thousands of people whose primary homes had been destroyed or suffered major damage.



Over **6,300** damaged or destroyed households provided with **recovery financial assistance** totaling approximately **\$16 million**

With our assistance, recipients were able to afford temporary housing, essential repairs and much more. As of August 24, 2020, the Red Cross had made payments of \$2,500 each to more than 6,300 households. This assistance helped individuals and families pay for temporary housing, make essential repairs to flood-damaged homes, replace lost appliances and furniture, and much more.

### Grants for Community-Based Recovery Services

In the year since our last report, the Red Cross has continued to fund community-based recovery efforts in North and South Carolina through targeted grants to nonprofit organizations with a strong track record of providing vital services, with approximately \$10.3 million awarded (including \$1 million remaining to be disbursed) as of August 24, 2020.

In addition to helping fund home repairs and other housing needs, grants in year two of recovery have enabled community resilience and preparedness services for some of the most vulnerable impacted

residents. This has included work to strengthen local nonprofit organizations; assistance for immigrant and farmworker families affected by Florence; free training in construction and related trades; financial counseling, mental health and spiritual care; helping residents with disabilities overcome barriers to access and secure needed services; and much more.

The following are just a few of the organizations that received Red Cross grants to support ongoing recovery and resilience in the affected communities. To learn more about our Hurricane Florence recovery grants, including a complete list of grantees to date, please visit [redcross.org/florence](https://redcross.org/florence).



Amy Riggs (left) and her family used Red Cross financial assistance to help repair the roof of their Wilmington, N.C., home, which was severely damaged by a fallen tree during Hurricane Florence. Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross

### ***SBP (Originally the St. Bernard Project)***

Inspired by the co-founders' experience as volunteers in St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana, following Hurricane Katrina, Red Cross grantee SBP launched an innovative program to help local philanthropic organizations better serve communities impacted by Hurricane Florence in North Carolina.

With a \$1.8 million grant from the Red Cross, SBP helped support volunteer recruitment and staff training needs for community nonprofits and hired a construction-savvy program manager to aid these organizations' rebuilding efforts, while also supporting home repair and rebuilding expenses for 78 impacted families. Without this funding, these vulnerable families would face an unpredictable path to recovery.

Beyond the families directly impacted by this grant, eight local nonprofits serving the affected communities are now equipped with new resources, techniques and procedures that will allow them to have greater impact

in responding to Hurricane Florence and future disasters. "This partnership has allowed me to increase my outreach and impact significantly," said Tracy Coffin, construction project manager for the Fayetteville, N.C., Habitat for Humanity, which received support funded by the Red Cross grant. "I have almost doubled my original projection for disaster recovery repairs."

### ***Welvista***

Disasters like Hurricane Florence often hit economically disadvantaged residents the hardest and longest. Based in Columbia, S.C., Welvista's mission is to help uninsured and underserved South Carolinians gain access to essential health services, like prescription medications, while reducing the long-term costs of health care from untreated conditions. Welvista's outreach helps ensure that no one has to choose between groceries for their family or needed medications.



A Red Cross grant to partner SBP directly funded home rebuilds like this one for 78 Florence-impacted families, as well as capacity-building support for local community organizations. Photo courtesy of SBP

With \$150,000 in grant funding from the Red Cross, Welvista has provided and delivered medications to South Carolinians in need across the communities that suffered the most from the hurricane and ensuing flooding. Many of these free medications are essential for conditions like diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, and high cholesterol as well as for mental health needs. The grant also helped Welvista purchase high-quality generic medications to complement donated medications from pharmaceutical partners and meet the needs of hurricane survivors.

“Thank you for being angels to so many during a time of crisis and recovery!” said Welvista CEO Juanita Wright. “We are grateful and thankful to be a partner in recovery with the Red Cross.”



In South Carolina, a Red Cross grant helped our non-profit partner Welvista provide free prescription medications to Hurricane Florence survivors like Tammy Walker. Photo courtesy of Welvista.

### ***Episcopal Farmworker Ministry (EFWM)***

Episcopal Farm Worker Ministry’s mission is to care for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families. Last year, EFWM and the Red Cross partnered to provide services and aid to underserved Latino residents in rural North Carolina who were affected by Florence, with a focus on distributing donated supplies and providing mental health services to those affected.

---

**“The grant was exactly what we needed at the right time.”**

Lariza Garzón, executive director, Episcopal Farmworker Ministry

---

“Farmworkers were stranded at camps, and we heard reports of farmworkers whose homes became flooded and had to stay inside school buses or cars,” said EFWM’s executive director, Lariza Garzón. “Many were afraid to ask for help.”

After doing daily deliveries of aid for six weeks, EFWM focused on recovery support, working with lower-income families that typically don’t have savings and don’t qualify for unemployment. Since 2019, they have helped over 60 families with home repairs. They also partnered with El Futuro, Inc., to provide culturally appropriate mental health services to the community.

With Red Cross support, EFWM hired a project coordinator and outreach workers to do community education about mental health, particularly regarding the stigma around mental health illnesses. They also started a peer-to-peer education program that reached hundreds of families, and have expanded their focus to COVID-19 relief as the pandemic has impacted local migrant worker communities. “The grant was exactly what we needed at the right time,” said Garzón.

### **Craven Community College**

Craven Community College, located in hard-hit Craven County, North Carolina, used a \$218,000 grant from the Red Cross to provide free training in construction trades that have been in high demand after the damage caused by Hurricane Florence. To help the county develop a skilled workforce that could rebuild homes and communities after a natural disaster, Craven Community College is offering trade programs that include electrical, HVAC, plumbing, carpentry, welding, small engine repair and contractor entrepreneur classes.

“As we recover from the extraordinary impacts of Hurricane Florence, we have an urgent need for skilled

labor in the construction trades,” said Dr. Ray Staats, Craven Community College president. “Our students have an opportunity to take free classes and contribute to the community by working on houses alongside Habitat for Humanity volunteers,” said Staats.

Red Cross funding has helped individuals repair and replace their own heating and air conditioning systems, rewire faulty wiring in their homes, mitigate mold damage, and reframe houses. “Thankfully, this grant from the Red Cross is having a real and immediate impact on our recovery and future resiliency against the next storm we face,” said Staats. “You have provided the framework to rebuild lives for a brighter tomorrow.”



A Red Cross grant helped Craven Community College, in Craven County, N.C., fund free training in construction-related trades that have been in high demand after the damage caused by Hurricane Florence. Photo courtesy of Craven Community College



## Helping Communities Become Better Prepared for Future Crises

With more than 30 counties in North and South Carolina impacted by hurricanes and flooding in the last five years, many residents remain at risk from future storms. As part of our Hurricane Florence response, the Red Cross has supported a number of community preparedness and resilience programs. For example, at a virtual disaster preparedness and planning summit held in June, the Red Cross hosted a session called “Harnessing Humor to Plan Our Future,” focused on four key areas communities need to integrate into their disaster planning: climate change, pandemics, inequality and changing demographics.

Nikki Davis, regional officer of community and volunteer engagement for the Red Cross in Los Angeles, kicked off this interactive discussion, and Pablo Suarez, associate director for research and innovation at the Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre, shared how humor can help people connect and find creative solutions to plan for challenging times. During the session, three humorists drew cartoons representing participant feedback and trending topics.

“The [session] was an innovative way to meet collaborators and talk about disaster response,” said Katherine Asaro, legal services program director of the N.C. Pro Bono Resource Center. “Kudos to the Red Cross for their creative approach to bringing together disaster responders from across the state in a meaningful, inclusive and fun way.”

As part of the Hurricane Florence recovery program, the Red Cross also expanded our existing youth preparedness materials, including two videos promoting mental health support for children after disasters, two new Prepare with Pedro activity books, which have been translated into 12 different languages, and the first-ever Pedro cartoon. These materials – designed to help children living through disasters as well as those experiencing life in shelters – were being distributed to communities in the Carolinas as the 2020 hurricane season began. They will also be available across the country to support children during and after disasters, and they’ve been shared with our partners in the global Red Cross network for use in countries around the world.



As part of the Florence recovery program, the Red Cross created two new Prepare with Pedro activity books for children experiencing disasters. “The Resilience Activity book includes realistic coping skills that can immediately start to build resilience in children, especially with adult support.” said Claire Pywell, a Red Cross program manager for Youth Preparedness and Recovery. “The shelter book presents a positive, realistic shelter experience for a child, providing support and understanding in an uncertain time.”

## Generous Donors Power Relief and Recovery for Florence Survivors

Red Cross disaster assistance is powered by the extraordinary generosity of our donors, who contributed \$69.5 million, including the value of critical donated goods and services, to help Hurricane Florence survivors in the Carolinas. As of August 24, 2020, the Red Cross had already programmed approximately \$67.4 million on emergency relief and recovery efforts for people affected by Hurricane Florence. The remaining funds will be used

to help with unmet needs for individuals and families impacted by Hurricane Florence, as well as to support longer-term community-based recovery services in the affected areas.

To learn more about Red Cross response and recovery efforts to help Hurricane Florence survivors, visit [redcross.org/florence](https://www.redcross.org/florence).



Seven-year-old Faheim has some fun with a Red Cross volunteer delivering supplies to help families in Raeford, N.C., clean up after Florence's flooding. Photo by Daniel Cima/American Red Cross

## Hurricane Florence Expenses and Commitments (in millions)<sup>1</sup>

As of August 24, 2020 (\$69.5 million raised)

Expense Categories	Food, Shelter and Relief Items	Health and Emotional Support	Immediate Financial Assistance	Individual and Community Recovery	Total	Expense %
Financial assistance, food and other relief items	\$8.6	\$0.1	\$4.6	\$16.0	\$29.3	44%
Deployment and maintenance of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$9.1	\$0.9	\$0.2	\$0.1	\$10.3	15%
Long-term recovery grants to help meet unmet needs <sup>2</sup>	—	—	—	\$9.3	\$9.3	14%
Freight, postage and warehousing	\$3.1	—	—	—	\$3.1	5%
Full-time Red Cross employees	\$1.7	\$0.1	\$0.3	\$0.4	\$2.5	4%
Kitchen, shelter and other logistics that enable service delivery	\$2.3	—	—	—	\$2.3	3%
IT, communications and call centers	\$0.9	—	\$0.9	\$0.4	\$2.2	3%
Temporary disaster hires	\$0.3	—	\$0.1	\$1.2	\$1.6	2%
Equipment, maintenance and fueling of Red Cross emergency vehicles and rented trucks	\$0.7	—	—	—	\$0.7	1%
<b>Total Program Expenses</b>	<b>\$26.7</b>	<b>\$1.1</b>	<b>\$6.1</b>	<b>\$27.4</b>	<b>\$61.3</b>	<b>91%</b>
Management, general and fundraising <sup>3</sup>					\$6.1	9%
<b>Total Expenses</b>					<b>\$67.4</b>	<b>100%</b>
Program dollars remaining to be spent (includes grant funds awarded but not disbursed)					\$1.8	
Management, general and fundraising remaining to be applied					\$0.3	
<b>Total Budget</b>					<b>\$69.5</b>	

<sup>1</sup>Dollar figures are rounded to the nearest \$100K; therefore, expenses \$49,999 and below are represented as zero.

<sup>2</sup>\$1 million remaining to be disbursed on grants already signed. Does not include partner organizations' administrative costs related to the grant, which are approximately 1–3 percent of the awarded amount. These costs are reflected in the management, general and fundraising rows.

<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 20,000 employees and approximately 300,000 volunteers, fundraising and communications functions, and other support services across all program lines. 91 cents of every dollar received for Hurricane Florence will be spent on services to people affected by Hurricane Florence.

*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 single-family or apartment 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.