



Midwest Tornadoes and Floods

SIX-MONTH UPDATE | OCTOBER 2019



American Red Cross

Helping Communities Across the Midwest Through a Devastating Spring

In Spring 2019, communities across the Midwest were ravaged by a series of flooding and severe weather events—including multiple devastating tornadoes—that impacted tens of thousands of residents. Throughout this tumultuous season, the American Red Cross was there to help individuals and families affected by these emergencies, providing critical relief and comfort when it was needed most.

March's strong storms and destructive flooding crippled communities and destroyed homes. Swollen by torrential rains and winter snowmelt, the Missouri and Mississippi rivers breached levees and broke flooding records, forcing thousands of residents across multiple states—including Nebraska, Iowa, Michigan and Illinois—to flee the swiftly rising waters. Through the spring, flooding continued to test the endurance of residents and volunteers alike—in southern Illinois, flood relief and sheltering operations continued for nearly two months.

Later in the spring, an extraordinary 500 tornadoes swept through the U.S. in just 30 days. Twisters carved paths of destruction in Missouri, Arkansas and other states from Nebraska to Indiana. Late at night on May 27, multiple powerful tornadoes ripped through communities around Dayton, Ohio, taking one life and causing widespread damage and injuries. Meanwhile, rivers from the Great Plains to the Mississippi Valley overtopped their banks throughout May as the relentless severe weather continued.

Thousands of Red Cross volunteers and employees worked tirelessly across the affected states to deliver sorely needed relief for hard-pressed individuals and families. They helped provide safe refuge for flood and tornado survivors displaced from their homes, served warm meals and snacks in storm-battered communities, and distributed vital supplies. They also delivered compassionate care, including health and mental health

Response at a Glance



More than **308,200 meals and snacks** served with partners



Nearly **130,300 relief items** distributed



Nearly **15,000 overnight shelter stays** provided with partners



More than **17,000 individual care contacts** made

—Cumulative figures in Arkansas, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin as of September 13, 2019.

services, spiritual care, and additional support for people with disabilities and functional needs. In addition, the Red Cross gave financial assistance totaling more than \$2 million to help individuals and families meet pressing needs, such as replacing lost clothing or paying for groceries, utilities and lodging.

This support meant so much to St. Charles, Missouri, resident Teresa Crawford and her 5-year-old grandson. After losing everything when rising waters inundated their home, Teresa received assistance for her urgent needs from a Red Cross caseworker, as well as from our disaster partners, who worked together to help flood survivors at a Multi-Agency Resource Center in St. Charles.

“Now I am overwhelmed by the generosity and blessings in this room, this is exactly what I needed,” Teresa said.

Ohio Family Finds Refuge with Red Cross after Terrifying Ordeal

As evening fell on Memorial Day, Chavella Woods had taken her children home from a day of play at a nearby park and started their bedtime routine. Then she heard people outside yelling “It’s coming! It’s coming!”

“It was chaotic,” Chavella recalled. “I didn’t even know there was a tornado watch. Then the lights started flickering and then I heard a loud boom and the windows started shaking. We went into a bathroom closet to take cover.”

One of many tornadoes that struck the Dayton area that night, the powerful twister cut a swath of destruction through Chavella’s apartment complex. “I looked out and

saw what I thought was car lights,” she said, “but it was actually the light that sat at the top of our apartment complex that was now on the ground.”

With her home in ruins, Chavella and her children were evacuated to one of five Red Cross shelters opened in the Dayton area. At the shelter, she and her family found a safe place to sleep and hot meals to eat, along with support and care from Red Cross volunteers. “The service you offer is awesome,” she said. “Y’all are a blessing.”

Like most people staying in a Red Cross shelter, Chavella was concerned about her neighbors. In addition to taking care of her six children, she also helped others at the shelter, doing what she could to give back.

“I swear as soon as I’m able, I’m contributing dollars, or contributing help because what y’all do is beyond awesome,” she said. “You’re taking care of us.”



Chavella Woods with three of her children at a Red Cross shelter in Dayton, Ohio. Photo by Marita Salkowski/American Red Cross

Ongoing Recovery Support for Storm-Ravaged Communities

Our work does not end when storm clouds clear and floodwaters recede. Across multiple impacted states, the Red Cross has joined with our disaster partners to support the ongoing recovery needs of affected residents. Red Cross caseworkers have helped families make recovery plans and complete complex paperwork, as well as providing financial assistance and helping people connect with available resources from other organizations.

Working with community, government and non-profit partners, we are also supporting Long-Term Recovery Groups (LTRG) in some of the hardest-hit areas, including communities in Ohio, Illinois, Missouri and Arkansas.

These groups bring together disaster relief partners and stakeholders from the local community to identify and help provide for the unmet needs of affected families and communities.

For example, housing is a critical need in the Dayton area, where several apartment complexes that comprised a significant portion of the region’s affordable housing were damaged beyond repair by the May tornadoes. Caseworkers employed by the LTRG will work with families to provide referrals and financial assistance to help with these needs, including relocation to new homes or repair of damaged homes.

Generous Donors Fund Midwest Tornadoes and Floods Relief and Recovery

Thanks to generous support from our donors, the Red Cross has raised \$12.4 million, including the value of critical donated goods and services, to help people impacted by Spring 2019's tornadoes and flooding in the Midwest. As of September 13, 2019, the Red Cross has

already programmed approximately \$9.1 million on relief and recovery efforts for affected residents across 12 states. We will continue to provide and support services for both individual and community recovery in the impacted communities.



Volunteer Tom McRae unloads cleanup kits for residents affected by flooding in Waterloo, Nebraska. Photo by April Opplinger/American Red Cross

Midwest Tornadoes and Floods 2019 Expenses and Commitments (in millions)¹
as of September 13, 2019 (\$12.4 million raised)

Expense Categories	Food, Shelter and Relief Items	Health and Emotional Support	Financial Assistance	Total	Expense %
Financial assistance, food and other relief items	\$1.9	\$0.1	\$2.1	\$4.1	45%
Deployment and maintenance of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$2.3	\$0.3	\$0.1	\$2.7	30%
Freight, postage and warehousing	\$0.4	—	—	\$0.4	5%
Full-time Red Cross employees	\$0.3	—	\$0.1	\$0.4	4%
IT, communications and call centers	\$0.3	—	—	\$0.3	3%
Equipment, maintenance and fueling of Red Cross emergency vehicles and rented trucks	\$0.2	—	—	\$0.2	2%
Kitchen, shelter and other logistics that enable service delivery	\$0.2	—	—	\$0.2	2%
Temporary disaster hires	—	—	—	—	0%
Total Program Expenses	\$5.6	\$0.4	\$2.3	\$8.3	91%
Management, general and fundraising ²				\$0.8	9%
Total Expenses				\$9.1	100%
Program dollars remaining to be spent				\$3.0	
Management, general and fundraising remaining to be applied				\$0.3	
Total Budget				\$12.4	

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

²Management, 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 the flooding and tornadoes in the Midwest will be spent on our services to affected residents.

Thank you!

The Red Cross must be ready for every disaster, big or small, and we respond to an average of more than 62,000 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.