



**American  
Red Cross**

# California Wildfires 2018: Two-Year Update

December 2020





Above: Red Cross colleagues Michael DeVulpiieres and Vicki Eichstaedt visit the remains of a neighborhood in Paradise, California. Photo by Daniel Cima/  
American Red Cross

Cover photo: Red Cross volunteer Vicki Eichstaedt speaks with Randy Salez, of Magalia, California. Randy and his dog, Max, took refuge at a Red Cross shelter  
in Chico during the 2018 wildfires. "I have never seen people come together like this, with such generosity of spirit," Randy said. Photo by Daniel Cima/  
American Red Cross



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

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It's been two years since the devastating 2018 wildfire season brought widespread evacuations, narrow escapes and tragic losses to families across California. That summer in Northern California, the Carr Fire consumed over 220,000 acres in Shasta and Trinity Counties, while the massive Mendocino Complex Fire raged for more than three months. And on November 8, the deadly Camp Fire wiped out nearly the entire town of Paradise as well as nearby communities, leaving heartbroken survivors struggling to get back on their feet. Meanwhile, the Woolsey Fire in Southern California forced tens of thousands to evacuate their homes as it scorched large swaths of Los Angeles and Ventura counties.

Wherever these disasters struck, from rural Butte County to suburban Los Angeles, dedicated American Red Cross volunteers and employees were on hand, providing relief and comfort to tens of thousands of Californians as they faced heartbreaking losses and an uncertain future. With generous support from donors across the U.S., we worked alongside our partners to deliver safe shelter, warm meals, basic health services and essential supplies to wildfire survivors. Equally important, our workers provided much needed emotional support and spiritual care to help people cope with the ongoing trauma inflicted by these wildfires.

That commitment has continued over the last two years. Red Cross donors helped us provide millions of dollars in financial assistance as residents who lost so much began to recover and rebuild their lives. We've also awarded millions more in grant funding to partners who continue to do important work in the affected communities — from assistance with rebuilding homes to providing counseling and mental health services for survivors.

Few things are more devastating to a family than seeing their home and cherished memories devoured by fire. But thanks to our compassionate supporters and dedicated employees and volunteers, we and our partners in recovery can continue to stand with people impacted by the deadly 2018 California wildfires — even as another devastating wildfire season has once again ravaged communities across the state. On behalf of those we serve, thank you for your commitment and your trust.

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

Trevor Rikken



Red Cross volunteers work with a disaster partner, World Central Kitchen, to load hot meals onto our response vehicles for residents impacted by the 2018 Camp Fire, which devastated the town of Paradise and other communities in Butte County, California. Photo by Daniel Cima/American Red Cross

## Delivering Relief and Comfort During a Devastating 2018 Wildfire Season

In November 2018, the horrific Camp Fire swept through the small Northern California town of Paradise and nearby communities in Butte County. It was the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in state history, taking 85 lives and incinerating thousands of homes and local businesses.

On the same day, the Woolsey Fire ignited in Southern California, eventually killing three people and displacing more than 295,000 residents in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. Thousands more people had faced the destructive impact of wildfires earlier that summer and fall, including the Carr Fire in Shasta and Trinity Counties

and the Mendocino Complex Fire — which was the largest in state history at the time.

As smoke and ash enveloped communities across the state, American Red Cross volunteers and employees were there to offer relief and comfort to wildfire survivors. Working alongside government and community partners, they helped provide refuge for tens of thousands who fled their homes as fires threatened and provided warm meals, relief items and cleanup supplies — as well as sorely needed emotional support and spiritual care for heartbroken residents and their families.

### Response at a Glance

Through the deadly 2018 wildfire season in California, more than 2,600 American Red Cross volunteers and employees helped tens of thousands of affected residents.



More than **382,100 meals and snacks** served with partners



More than **81,200 relief items** distributed



More than **66,800 health, mental health and spiritual care contacts** provided



More than **61,300 overnight shelter stays** provided with partners

—Cumulative figures as of October 28, 2020



This compassionate care was critical for so many Camp Fire survivors, like 75-year-old veteran James Millen and his wife, Rebecca. In addition to \$500 in financial assistance they received while staying at a shelter in Chico, California, Rebecca received mental health support from an on-site psychologist, who helped her cope with symptoms of post-traumatic stress. James told us that this mental health support was critical to help his wife deal with the trauma of fleeing their home and losing so much to the flames.

## Supporting Recovery for Impacted Residents and Their Communities

Our work has continued long after the fires were contained and the smoke cleared. Recovering from disasters of this scope is a marathon, not a sprint, and the Red Cross has worked with a wide range of partners, including government agencies, non-profit groups, faith-based organizations, area businesses and long-term recovery groups, to help residents who lost so much to these devastating blazes get back on their feet and rebuild their lives.

Over the last two years, we have remained by the sides of 2018 wildfires survivors to offer ongoing support for recovery. We provided financial assistance to help the most severely affected residents meet critical needs, and we have continued to fund grants to partner organizations with specialized expertise that are carrying out vital work in their communities — including home repair and rebuilding assistance, access to mental health services and addressing the ongoing needs of underserved communities.

### Financial Assistance

As of October 28, 2020, the Red Cross had provided over \$27 million in recovery assistance to more than 10,000 individuals and families who were most severely impacted by the 2018 wildfires. These funds were in addition to \$8.7 million in immediate financial assistance provided during the emergency response.

All told, Red Cross financial assistance for 2018 California wildfires survivors totaled approximately \$35.8 million. This support helped impacted families address some of their most urgent needs, including temporary housing, home repairs and cleanup, replacing

lost appliances and furniture, buying groceries, clothing and school supplies for children, transportation costs and much more.

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For wildfire survivors like Dave, who had just moved in to a new apartment in Paradise three days before the Camp Fire swept through town, Red Cross financial assistance helped provide some comfort in the immediate aftermath of a harrowing escape. Most of his belongings were still in boxes as he fled just ahead of the flames with only a laundry basket of socks and underwear in his car. Dave received \$500 in immediate assistance that helped him purchase clothing to replace what was lost when his home burned.



Long-time Malibu resident Bonnie Decker shares a moment with Red Cross worker Alexis Agrinsoni. Bonnie, who lost her home to the Woolsey Fire, received recovery assistance from the Red Cross. Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross



## Grants for Community-Based Recovery Services

In addition to providing financial assistance directly to affected individuals and families, the Red Cross has also supported community-based recovery efforts in California through strategic grants to non-profit organizations with a strong track record of providing vital services. Made possible by our generous donors, the Community Recovery phase of our program prioritizes the most vulnerable survivors in communities with the least access to recovery funding and service resources.

We are committed to serving California's diverse communities, including low-income households and communities, seniors, children, people with disabilities and access and functional needs, those who were not eligible for individual recovery assistance, and those who lack access to the full range of recovery resources from government agencies.

One area of heightened emphasis is the Latino community in California, which constitutes 38% of the state's population. To better reach underserved and vulnerable members of this community, we are augmenting resources and staff to help Red Cross teams and partners overcome cultural, linguistic and legal barriers that can make recovery especially difficult. These efforts will help facilitate accessible, equitable and inclusive services during response, recovery and preparedness programming. Augmented staff will also help diversify the Red Cross workforce to better reflect and represent the communities we serve.

With \$11.4 million in funds awarded as of October 28, 2020 — including approximately \$10.3 million already disbursed — our community grant recipients continue to provide vital support for people impacted by the 2018 wildfires across Northern and Southern California. Following are descriptions of some of the partnerships and programs funded by the Red Cross in year two of recovery from the 2018 fires.



Red Cross worker Lena Highland speaks with Nicole Bateman, executive director of Habitat for Humanity of Butte County, which received a Red Cross grant to help acquire land and support construction of new houses for residents who lost their homes to the 2018 fires. Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross



## Housing Support for Veterans and Others in Need

The Red Cross has awarded a community recovery grant of \$505,000 to nonprofit partner Veterans Housing Development Corporation (VHDC), which dedicates resources and expertise toward developing affordable housing for veterans and their families. VHDC is applying this grant funding toward the development of 18 owner-occupied homes in Oroville, California, and 30 apartments in Shasta Lake, California. Both projects are reserved exclusively for qualifying veterans who were impacted by the Camp and Carr wildfires in 2018.

Due to the extreme housing shortage in Northern California, which has been exacerbated by the wildfires, many U.S. military veterans are living in less-than-desirable conditions. Some are still in hotel rooms or living with family members in cramped spaces, while others are still living in FEMA trailers or emergency shelters. VHDC's projects with the Red Cross will help the neediest veterans move into safe, permanent housing and support critical services for them.

"We've been trying to accelerate the delivery of housing to veterans in need, but due to labor and material shortages — along with increased costs for material and labor — we've had to get creative," said Brad Long, executive director of VHDC. "The support we've received from the Red Cross is a good example. On top of the challenges posed by the wildfires, COVID-19 has created even more constraints on labor and material and has delayed new construction by five or six months. We're fortunate that the Red Cross has been so flexible in adapting their program to fit these unusual circumstances."

In the second year of recovery, we have also continued to support the work of local Habitat for Humanity chapters in Butte County, Los Angeles County and Yuba County. Red Cross funding helped Harout Tenekedjian, a Los Angeles County resident, finally return home this year. Harout's home was the only one left standing in his mobile home park after the Woolsey Fire. Although it was somehow spared destruction, his home required significant repairs to ensure it was livable, safe, secure and sanitary.

With help from the Los Angeles Habitat for Humanity, Harout was able to have the interior of his home — which was covered in soot and ash — cleaned and repainted, as well as having new smoke and CO alarms installed. The grant funding also supported utility work required to



With support from a Red Cross grant, the Los Angeles Habitat for Humanity helped Harout Tenekedjian get back into his home, which was damaged by the 2018 Woolsey Fire. Photo courtesy of Los Angeles Habitat for Humanity

reconnect Harout's home to the electrical grid and relocate the gas meter, water and sewer connections closer to the home, out of the driveway and the pathway of vehicles.

"I am so thankful," said Harout. "The assistance from the Red Cross and the Los Angeles Habitat for Humanity enabled me to move back home. My dogs are also so happy!"

## Recovery Services for Underserved Communities

Red Cross grantee Caring Choices — which was awarded more than \$277,000 in community recovery funds — works to improve the health and welfare of residents in Northern California by providing services that are currently non-existent or limited in availability and accessibility. The organization also serves as an emergency volunteer services center during disasters — allowing community volunteers a pathway to assist people in a variety of ways during times of need — and they provide disaster case management services for impacted residents as part of the Camp Fire Long Term Recovery Group.





Lino, a day laborer in Southern California, used financial assistance provided through a Red Cross grant to help support his family after the 2018 Woolsey Fire. Photo courtesy of IDEPSCA

After watching staff members, friends and neighbors lose their homes, family, pets and sense of community, Caring Choices knew that mental health support would be needed to restore a sense of safety and wellness. In addition, many survivors didn't even know how to begin their recovery journey. With Red Cross funding to hire mental health professionals and additional caseworkers, Caring Choices plans to assist over 500 individuals and families by the completion of this grant.

"That would never have been possible without the assistance of the Red Cross," said Barbara Hanna, the president and founder of Caring Choices. "In the beginning, there was desperation in our client's voices as they were still in temporary housing at the fairgrounds, some still sleeping on cots and in tents," she said. "Being able to offer them a case manager to

help them access funds for permanent housing, to rebuild their home or replace some items they lost was a bright point for the client, as they couldn't have navigated that themselves."

The Red Cross provides its disaster relief and recovery services to anyone who needs them at no cost, regardless of citizenship status or other factors. Community grant recipient Instituto de Educación Popular del Sur de California (IDEPSCA) is using more than \$160,000 in funding from Red Cross donors to provide financial relief to day laborers and other workers in Southern California who were impacted by the Woolsey Fire. These residents are often reluctant to seek assistance from government or nonprofit agencies, and IDEPSCA helps to bridge that gap.

IDEPSCA client Alba was exposed to wildfire smoke without a mask while working as a house cleaner in Malibu. She lost her job and experienced headaches, chest pain and a cough that lasted for months. It was hard to find work because the lingering cough made employers reluctant to let her into their homes.

Red Cross support through the IDEPSCA grant helped Alba pay for gas and things she needed for her children, including diapers for her baby and shoes for her school-aged child. "The help I've received from this program has helped me manage my stress," she said. "I'm so grateful for everything."

Day laborers Lino and Miguel were both working in construction and home maintenance in Malibu when the Woolsey Fire destroyed much of the community. Left without work due to the impact of the fires, they relied on financial assistance provided by the Red Cross via IDEPSCA to help support their families and pay for essentials like food and monthly bills.

"I think if these programs didn't exist, we would possibly be living on the street," said Lino. "I'm very grateful to the Red Cross for all the help they're providing the community."

## Generous Supporters Fund Relief and Recovery Assistance

None of our response or recovery assistance would be possible without the extraordinary support of our donors. The Red Cross has raised \$65.9 million, including the value of critical donated goods and services, to help people affected by the 2018 California Wildfires. As of October 28, 2020, the Red Cross had programmed

approximately \$62.8 million on emergency relief and recovery efforts for the 2018 California Wildfires. The remaining funds will be used to fund recovery initiatives through our trusted partners to help with unmet needs for individuals, families and communities affected by the 2018 wildfires.



## California Wildfires 2018 Expenses and Commitments (in millions)

As of October 28, 2019 (\$65.9 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	\$2.0	\$0.2	\$8.7	\$27.1	\$38.0	61%
Long-term recovery grants to help meet unmet needs <sup>1</sup>	—	—	—	\$10.3	\$10.3	16%
Deployment of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$3.2	\$0.6	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$4.0	6%
Kitchen, shelter and other logistics that enable service delivery	\$1.2	—	—	—	\$1.2	2%
Full-time Red Cross employees	\$0.6	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.3	\$1.1	2%
Freight, postage and warehousing	\$0.8	—	—	—	\$0.8	1%
Temporary disaster hires	\$0.1	—	—	\$0.7	\$0.8	1%
IT, communications and call centers	\$0.1	—	\$0.2	\$0.4	\$0.7	1%
Equipment, maintenance and fueling of Red Cross emergency vehicles and rented trucks	\$0.3	—	—	—	\$0.3	0%
<b>Total Program Expenses</b>	<b>\$8.3</b>	<b>\$0.9</b>	<b>\$9.1</b>	<b>\$38.9</b>	<b>\$57.2</b>	<b>91%</b>
Management, general and fundraising <sup>2</sup>					\$5.6	9%
<b>Total Expenses</b>					<b>\$62.8</b>	<b>100%</b>
Program dollars remaining to be spent (includes grant funds awarded but not disbursed)					\$2.9	
Management, general and fundraising remaining to be applied					\$0.2	
<b>Total Budget</b>					<b>\$65.9</b>	

<sup>1</sup>\$1.1M 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>2</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 approximately 19,000 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 2018 California wildfires will be spent on our services to people affected by these wildfires.

*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.





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Vera Klein and her 8-year-old Chihuahua, Carry, rest in a Red Cross shelter in Woodland Hills, California, after receiving a mandatory evacuation call earlier that afternoon. Photo by Roxanne Schorbach/American Red Cross