

AUGUST 2024

HAWAII WILDFIRES ONE-YEAR REPORT



**American
Red Cross**



Non-Congregate Sheltering Provides Critical Refuge for Displaced Survivors

Above, Red Cross volunteer Diane Haman hands out meals to wildfire survivors Shannon Kaio and Rick George. The Red Cross provided Shannon and Rick with shelter at a local hotel after they were displaced by the deadly Lahaina wildfire.

While the Red Cross typically operates communal, or congregate, shelters following disasters, non-congregate sheltering (NCS) is an alternative emergency sheltering solution that provides privacy to disaster survivors in the form of hotels and short-term rentals. Working together with the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency, we have sheltered thousands of residents displaced by the Lahaina wildfire in area hotels. Many individuals and families were forced to live out of these rooms for months after the fire due to a scarcity of affordable housing options on the island. In addition to the necessary administrative and upfront costs of the rooms, the Red Cross provided meals and a daily point of contact to support residents in these non-congregate shelters.

Above: Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross

Cover photo: Linda Santella embraces Red Cross volunteer Wanda Hernandez at Lahaina Civic Center on Maui. She and her husband, Celestino Santella, received financial assistance from the Red Cross to help buy gas and replace a walker and medications that were lost in the fire. Despite all the setbacks, Linda still feels grateful. "With everything going on in the world, to receive all these blessings is incredible," she said. Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross

A LETTER FROM

Cliff Holtz, President and CEO, American Red Cross



One year ago, fast-moving wildfires brought heartbreaking destruction to Maui and the Island of Hawaii — with the worst impacts occurring in and around the historic town of Lahaina and the surrounding areas. The American Red Cross was there from the start, and since that awful day, we have worked tirelessly to deliver vital aid and comfort to people coping with overwhelming losses. Our local Hawaii team was quickly bolstered by highly trained and experienced Red Cross disaster responders from around the region and across the country, and thousands more volunteers stepped forward to help from the local community.

When I visited Hawaii in the wake of the fires, I was grateful for the opportunity to meet with the dedicated Red Cross workers — most of them volunteers — who deliver our critical mission. Whether offering a hug and encouraging words or delivering warm meals to a family that had lost its home, compassionate Red Crossers were there in people's darkest moments, helping turn heartbreak into hope. I was also inspired by the strength and resilience of local community members who stepped up again and again to support neighbors in need.

On Maui, the Hawaii Wildfires consumed much of the historic town of Lahaina and upended countless lives. Some faced the loss of loved ones; others had their homes destroyed, along with a lifetime of memories. Thanks to our generous donors, we have reached tens of thousands of people with vital disaster relief and recovery services, including meals, shelter, health services, emotional support and financial assistance to help with urgent needs like rental deposits, transportation, replacing lost food and clothing, and much more.

For many who lost their homes, the complex challenges of finding somewhere to live on a small island with a scarcity of affordable housing presented additional obstacles to recovery. The Red Cross has assisted our government partners by administering and supporting non-congregate sheltering for these families in nearby hotels, providing daily assistance to thousands of people forced to live out of these rooms for many months after the fire.

We know that for many affected individuals and families a new normal still seems far away. In the months ahead, the Red Cross will continue to stand alongside our community partners to help wildfire survivors, and their unique community, recover and rebuild their lives. I am profoundly grateful for all you've done to make this work possible. On behalf of those we serve, thank you for your life-changing support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cliff A. Holtz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cliff Holtz



HAWAII WILDFIRES RESPONSE AT A GLANCE



More than **3 million** meals and snacks served with partners



More than **2.2 million** overnight shelter and hotel stays provided with partners



Reached an estimated **32,750 people** with disaster relief and recovery services, including financial assistance

Cumulative figures as of July 8, 2024.

Delivering Compassionate Care for Heartbroken Survivors

In August 2023, thousands of lives were forever changed when destructive wildfires swept across Maui and the Island of Hawaii. The blazes devastated the small town of Lahaina, and thousands of homes were destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. In the weeks and months after these tragic fires, the American Red Cross provided around-the-clock relief and recovery assistance to heartbroken survivors, including meals, shelter, reunification services for people separated in the disaster and additional support—such as aid for families who lost loved ones.

Our ongoing aid was especially critical for the more than 6,000 residents who couldn't return home and were cared for by Red Cross volunteers and employees in dozens of local hotels as part of our non-congregate shelter (NCS) program. In addition to meals and other essentials, our workers offered a daily point of contact to assist wildfire survivors with recovery planning, help them connect with available recovery resources from our partners and much more as they begin to rebuild shattered lives and communities. Health and mental health responders were onsite and available via a 24/7 phone number.

Cash assistance is another key element of our recovery support. Using satellite data imagery and other technology, the Red Cross expedited the damage assessment process, moving much more quickly than in previous responses and allowing a faster launch of our financial assistance program.

Above: Tara Valencia and her three children, Maele, Gabriel and Mia speak with Red Cross workers Doyle Rader and Shari Frank at a Red Cross shelter in Wailuku on Maui. The Valencias lived in Lahaina and loaded up their belongings, their dog, Coco, and their parakeet, Snowflake, when ash and soot from the surrounding wildfires began to cover everything around them. Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross

Due to the higher local costs and extreme impact of the fires, the Red Cross quadrupled our standard amount of Immediate Assistance funds to help with urgent needs like buying groceries, replacing lost clothing, paying for transportation and other essentials.

We also delivered additional Bridge Financial Assistance to many of the hardest-hit residents — whose homes suffered major damage or were destroyed — as they sought to overcome significant recovery roadblocks and get back on their feet. As of July 8, 2024, the Red Cross had provided financial assistance totaling approximately \$25.1 million (including both immediate and long-term assistance), reaching thousands of people reeling from these devastating fires.

THE FISHER FAMILY'S STORY: Maui residents Steve and Lenka Fisher welcomed the newest addition to their family, baby Chiara, just five days before the wildfires. After the fires, they stayed in Red Cross-supported non-congregate housing with Chiara and their older daughter, Lydia, as well as their dog, Franklin, and pet scarlet macaw, who Steve shared has been a “stunt parrot” in the past, appearing in movies and TV shows.

They moved to Maui years ago and were so impressed by how the community shows up for its own. The Maui wildfires were no different. When they gathered with neighbors to coordinate how they could help, Steve also met a Red Cross volunteer, who helped his family find NCS housing at a local hotel.

“A lovely volunteer from the Red Cross named Deann — who still keeps in contact with us nine months later — came up and introduced herself to the parrot... I’m so grateful to her and to the Red Cross.”

STEVE FISHER



Photo by Jillian Robertson/American Red Cross

Helping to Meet the Unique Needs of Hawaii Wildfire Survivors

As we respond to increasingly frequent and destructive disasters like the Hawaii Wildfires, the Red Cross continues to explore ways to expand the reach of our essential disaster services and provide more help to people with the greatest needs. In response to the unprecedented devastation the Maui wildfires have caused the state of Hawaii, the Red Cross has adapted our service delivery in extraordinary ways to aid severely affected residents.

Funding Non-Congregate Sheltering Costs

In addition to our partnership with state and federal government agencies to administer and support NCS, for which the hotel and rental expenses will ultimately be reimbursed by our government partners, we also provided donor-funded NCS management, including temporary disaster employees and shelter resident transition services, free of charge to hundreds of people who lost their home in the wildfire but were ineligible for federal assistance due to citizenship status or the nature of their pre-disaster housing status. As of June 30, 2024, Red Cross non-refundable costs for NCS lodging for the non-FEMA-eligible population totaled \$4.1 million to help over 400 displaced residents.

Hiring Temporary Disaster Employees

Recognizing the importance of engaging Hawaii residents in the relief and recovery efforts of their community and neighbors, the Red Cross hired 135 local workers, including community members impacted by the fires, resulting in a commitment of more than \$8 million in salaries and benefits to individuals and an investment in the local economy. Part of this workforce includes support to the state of Hawaii and county of Maui for additional staff members.

EDEN'S STORY: Eden Stewart returned to Maui several years ago at the behest of her grandmother — she needed to return to her community and her culture, after years living off-island, she said. Little did she know how much her community would need her.

Two months after the Maui wildfires, Eden joined the Red Cross as a temporary disaster employee to support our non-congregate sheltering operation. She has been serving as a site manager for NCS shelters ever since, and also an unofficial Red Cross ambassador to the Maui community, connecting partners, supporting survivors and generally helping in every way she can.

“When [my grandmother] found out I was going to be doing this with the Red Cross, she was just so proud,” Eden said. “It’s been difficult, but it’s also just been rewarding, and it’s been an honor to serve the people of Lahaina.”

EDEN STEWART



Photo by Sarah Anderson/American Red Cross

Sadly, with more than 100 lives lost to the wildfires, the Red Cross also stepped up to support families as they navigated this tragedy, increasing our fatality-related financial assistance by 150%.

Disaster Case Management and Aid for Bereaved Families

Disaster case management is critical to support recovery for survivors, helping them make recovery plans and connecting hard-hit individuals and families with available resources to address unmet needs. The Red Cross fully funded the first three months of the Hawaii Wildfires Disaster Case Management program, which was carried out and overseen by partner organizations. This funding filled a gap by helping to speed the standing up of disaster case management partners and processes in Maui while federal funding for the program was being mobilized.

Sadly, with more than 100 lives lost to the wildfires, the Red Cross also stepped up to support families as they navigated this tragedy, increasing our fatality-related financial assistance by 150%. In addition, we established a new Family Travel Assistance Program, helping to defray the costs resulting from the fatalities and hospitalizations of loved ones.

Supporting Ongoing Recovery for Individuals, Families and the Community

Nearly a year after the wildfires struck, we continue to work closely with other nonprofits, government and community organizations to help with unmet needs and connect survivors with recovery resources and additional support—including grants to partners with deep local knowledge and expertise to meet ongoing critical needs.

Maui Food Bank

Prior to the wildfires that decimated Lahaina, the Maui Food Bank (MFB) was projected to serve approximately 33,000 individuals in 2023. They hit this number two months after the fire alone. With grant funding from the Red Cross, the MFB has expanded its disaster response operating capacity to serve survivors of the recent wildfires throughout the recovery and rebuilding process, which will likely take years.

The MFB set up a Disaster Relief Food Hub site with a direct service “market”—the first of its kind on the west side of Maui—to provide nutritious food and household items most requested by fire survivors, such as toiletries, diapers, formula and paper goods. This model allows survivors to “shop” for free items and identify what they need most, giving them the dignity and autonomy of a regular market experience. By establishing a hub to provide the goods most needed by affected residents, MFB can tailor and adapt its distribution program as the needs of the community evolve.

With much of the Lahaina community severely damaged or destroyed, many residents were dispersed to other parts of the island, hampering their access to the market. This presented an increasing strain on the capacity of MFB to safely transport perishable food items to areas across Maui where fire survivors had relocated.

To meet this rising need, the Red Cross also funded the purchase of a food distribution vehicle so MFB could extend its services to a wider area. Implementing this mobile pantry service increased access to fresh produce for thousands of Maui residents. It ensures that community members can access nutritious foods at no cost, maintain healthy diets and focus on rebuilding their lives and community. Finally, the grant has allowed the MFB to hire three new full-time employees designated to the Disaster Relief Food Hub and the Mobile Pantry vehicle to staff and manage these capacity-increasing initiatives.

MICHELLE'S STORY: Michelle and her husband lost their smoothie business in Lahaina twice — first to the Covid-19 pandemic, when they were forced to close, then again when it was destroyed by the wildfires. Discouraged, but not one to give up easily, Michelle took this as a sign that she needed to do something else, something that would help her community in the wake of the devastating blazes. So, she took a job at Maui Food Bank, where she is the site lead for the first food bank of its kind on the west side of Maui.

The new food bank site, called “Da Market,” was funded in part by a grant from the Red Cross and has provided the community access to free food and household goods while recognizing the cultural and food preferences of Latino, Filipino and native Hawaiian communities. Many Lahaina residents lost their vehicles in the fire, so bringing the food bank closer to this community offers greater access without the travel challenges.

“I’m so grateful to the Red Cross,” Michelle said.

“My hope for this place is if I can get people to gather here, and I can get people to see each other here and just share joy and talk story, then Lahaina is still here.”

MICHELLE



Photo by Sarah Anderson/American Red Cross

“Together, we are able to help survivors find interim housing solutions that speak to that deep culture and tradition, giving them a temporary home while they prepare for what’s next.”

**AMANDA REE, RED CROSS
WILDFIRE LONG-TERM
RECOVERY DIRECTOR**

Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement: Host Housing Support Program

To support survivors in their search for housing, the Red Cross has partnered with the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement (CNHA) to co-create and fund two unique initiatives to meet these needs. Those are the Host Housing Support Program, known familiarly as the Host Family Program, and the Rental Assistance or Direct Lease program.

- **The Host Housing Support Program** offers financial support to households who are hosting individuals and families displaced by the Maui wildfires. The program aims to support families who have opened their homes to survivors by providing financial assistance to cover expenses such as utilities, food costs and increased housing needs. This partnership integrates extensive Red Cross disaster response experience, including administering international host family programs, with CNHA's local knowledge and expertise in delivering culturally supportive rental assistance programs in Hawaii.
- **The Rental Assistance/Direct Lease Program** provides suitable housing options on Maui for survivor families currently residing in NCS, for a 12-month term. Housing will be offered to the most vulnerable households impacted by the wildfires, including Compacts of Free Association (COFA), undocumented people and individuals who receive the fewest recovery resources, including ineligibility for financial assistance from government sources. In coordination with the Red Cross, priority is given to families with children, the elderly, people who lost a family member in the fire and those with medical conditions.

To date, the Red Cross has provided a \$1.5 million grant to CNHA to administer the Host Family Program and a \$4.9 million grant to support the direct leasing program for people ineligible for federal assistance. The Red Cross Long-Term Recovery team provides grants like these to community organizations to accelerate local recovery initiatives and expand capacity for critical community services. The Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement is uniquely positioned and embedded in the Maui community to serve those affected by the wildfires.

Through the Host Housing Support Program, 219 local families are hosting nearly 600 disaster-impacted individuals. In addition, the Red Cross has supported CNHA in securing 50 direct leases for disaster-affected individuals in our care.

“We’re proud to support CNHA in administering this program,” said Amanda Ree, Red Cross Wildfire Long-Term Recovery director. “The tradition of families taking in others in cases of disaster is deeply embedded in Hawaiian culture. Together, we are able to help survivors find interim housing solutions that speak to that deep culture and tradition, giving them a temporary home while they prepare for what’s next. We are so grateful to CNHA for their partnership and dedication.”

Standing with Survivors Through a Challenging Year

TAMARA'S STORY: Tamara Akiona, like many of her Lahaina neighbors, lived in a multi-generational household. In addition to her immediate family, she also housed her uncle. All of them were displaced when her home was destroyed by the Maui wildfires.

In addition to receiving immediate and bridge financial assistance, Tamara moved into a new home in Wailuku and was able to take in her uncle once again, thanks to support from the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement (CNHA) Host Family Program, a program co-created and funded by the Red Cross.

She hopes to return to Lahaina someday, along with members of her close-knit community who, like her, had to scatter across the island to find a place to live. But in the meantime, taking in her uncle brought her family back together. And that's a step in the right direction.

She hopes to return to Lahaina someday, along with members of her close-knit community who, like her, had to scatter across the island to find a place to live.



Photo by Sarah Anderson/American Red Cross

SANTIAGO'S STORY: Santiago Montiel's wildfire story began on August 8, 2023, when he waited at a bus stop in Ka'anapali after work. The bus never came, so he decided to walk home, and that's when he saw the huge dark cloud over Lahaina.

"When I got there, a lot of people were running around, and cars were leaving town," Santiago told a Red Cross worker, speaking in his native Spanish. "I was able to get into my apartment, but wasn't able to recover any of my belongings," he added. "The smoke was already in the apartment and you could hear the explosions. Part of the roof collapsed and I fell to my knees. I don't know if I fainted, but I lost sense of time and I couldn't recover my belongings. I lost everything."

Starting over isn't easy. Santiago's home was destroyed. With no other family in Hawaii, there was no place for him to go, so he lived in a car for about 20 days after the fires. It was one of the darkest times in his life. But that's when a friend mentioned that the Red Cross was in Lahaina helping with recovery efforts.

Santiago visited the Red Cross and received medical attention for his knee, which was injured during the fire. In addition, Santiago was placed in temporary housing through our NCS program, which provided him with a hotel room for five months.

“This was the first time something like that happened in my life,” he said. “For me, it was terrible. It was something I couldn’t believe — that the whole town of Lahaina had disappeared.”

After the fire, there was no work available, but with the help from Red Cross volunteer Wanda Hernandez, he applied for and received financial assistance.

“I am eternally grateful to the Red Cross for their help,” said Santiago. “The help that we all got from the Red Cross, everyone that lost something in Lahaina, everyone is grateful to the Red Cross for how we were treated, for the help, for everything.”

After months in NCS housing, the Red Cross helped him transition into a more stable situation. On March 1, he moved into CNHA housing, funded by a grant from the Red Cross. This program has allowed displaced residents, like Santiago, to move into one-bedroom, two-bedroom, or studio apartments free for a year.

“It was difficult, but in the end, you see the light at the end of the tunnel,” said Santiago. “I am very, very grateful to the Red Cross and the people who gave me the room.”

“I am eternally grateful to the Red Cross.”

SANTIAGO MONTIEL



Wildfires survivor Santiago Montiel gets a hug from Red Cross volunteer Wanda Hernandez after receiving bridge financial assistance to help with his recovery. Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross

Generous Donors Power Relief and Recovery for Wildfire Survivors

Thanks to generous donors, the Red Cross raised \$93.2 million designated for our Hawaii Wildfires response — including the value of critical donated goods and services — to help people affected by this disaster.

As of July 8, 2024, the Red Cross had already spent or made commitments to spend approximately \$89.5 million on emergency relief and recovery efforts for the Hawaii Wildfires. We will continue to program any remaining donated funds to provide and support services for both individual and community recovery in the impacted region. The Red Cross will also make an additional investment of \$6 million to support critical long-term recovery needs.

Hawaii Wildfires One-Year Expenses and Commitments ^{1,2} (in millions)						
As of July 8, 2024						
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	\$14.2	\$0.3	\$12.5	\$7.1	\$34.1	38%
Long-term recovery programs to help unmet needs	–	–	\$12.6	–	\$12.6	14%
Deployment of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$8.0	\$2.5	\$1.9	–	\$12.4	14%
Temporary disaster hires	\$7.2	\$2.3	\$1.7	\$0.3	\$11.5	13%
Full-time Red Cross employees	\$3.9	\$0.2	\$1.1	\$0.6	\$5.8	6%
IT, communications and call centers	\$0.9	\$0.3	\$0.6	–	\$1.8	2%
Kitchen, shelter and other logistics that enable service delivery	\$1.1	\$0.3	\$0.3	–	\$1.7	2%
Freight, postage and warehousing	\$0.4	–	–	–	\$0.4	0%
Equipment, maintenance and fueling of Red Cross emergency vehicles and rented trucks	\$0.3	–	–	–	\$0.3	0%
Total Program Expenses	\$36.0	\$5.9	\$30.7	\$8.0	\$80.6	90%
Management, general and fundraising ³					\$8.9	10%
Total Spent & Committed					\$89.5	100%
Program Dollars Remaining					\$3.3	
Additional investment in long-term recovery to be applied					\$6.0	
Management, general and fundraising remaining to be applied					\$1.0	
Total Budget					\$99.8	

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

² Does not include expenses incurred for emergency hotel stays and associated meals for more than 6,000 wildfire survivors. These significant expenses are to be reimbursed by the state of Hawaii.

³ 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, payroll and similar systems to support nearly 18,000 employees and approximately 275,000 volunteers, fundraising and communications functions, and other support services across all program lines. Ninety cents of every dollar spent for the Hawaii Wildfires will support delivering care and comfort to help people affected by this disaster.



Thank you!

Your Help Made a Real Difference

Generous donations from the public helped tens of thousands in need after the devastating Hawaii Wildfires. To learn more about our response and the people we've helped, please visit our **Hawaii Wildfires Story Map** at redcross.org/hawaii-wildfires.

The Red Cross must be ready for every disaster, big or small, and we respond to an average of more than 65,000 disasters each 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 throughout their recovery. Your donation helps us fulfill this promise. We are grateful for your trust.



**American
Red Cross**

Mission

The American Red Cross prevents and alleviates human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.

Above: American Red Cross volunteer Caitlin Harrowby embraces Teresa Randolph-Sherlock before she boards a shuttle bus in front of the Red Cross congregant shelter at the South Maui Community Park Gymnasium in Kihei. Randolph-Sherlock moved into a nearby hotel room where she continued to have access to Red Cross care and support. Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross