

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

DISASTER RESPONSE

Q: What is the Red Cross doing to ensure we are still able to respond to disasters?

A: Making sure that communities can turn to the Red Cross after a disaster is at the heart of what we do. We are closely monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic and are continuing to carry out our lifesaving mission. The Red Cross is working closely with local officials to ensure the safety of local communities and our workforce, while still providing the help and hope they need should disaster strike.

Q: Is the Red Cross still providing the same level of services after a disaster as you would normally?

A: COVID 19 has not changed our mission, and our volunteers are consistently answering the call, both virtually and in disaster-affected communities. We've created new protocols to help keep everyone safe in this environment. During this pandemic, while the nation is practicing social distancing, we're now providing some disaster relief virtually, including mental health support and financial assistance. And, depending on the circumstances of the disaster, we'll prioritize individual hotel rooms over group shelters.

Q: Does the Red Cross have enough workers to respond to disasters during COVID-19?

A: The Red Cross is made up of over 300,000 volunteers who support every aspect of our mission. During COVID-19, we have been regularly checking in with our disaster response volunteers to gauge their ability to support communities. Our volunteer workforce remains engaged and willing to step up to help in both critical in-person and virtual roles.

EMERGENCY SHELTERS & HOTELS

Q: What is your hotel capacity? What if you don't have enough hotels to house everyone that needs shelter?

A: While responding to disasters during this pandemic, one of our priorities will be to continue our work with partners to find shelter for those who can't go home or need to evacuate their home. This includes working with hotels in advance of disasters to understand room availability. We continually coordinate and connect with hundreds of hotel chains and local partners to continue to build this capacity. In addition to building these relationships with locally owned and managed hotels, we have also contracted with a travel vendor who has the ability to locate and secure hotel rooms nationwide and at scale.

Disasters require flexibility and planning for a number of variables — and sheltering is no different. Geographies, capacity, location in relation to damaged areas and room availability, all impact hotel capacity after a disaster. This is why we have backup plans to open congregate shelters, as we know there will be times when it is not possible to solely use hotel rooms.

Q: Who is paying for the hotel rooms?

A: Ensuring people have a safe place to stay during a disaster is a critical part of the Red Cross mission, but how we support sheltering efforts may be different in each community, depending on local plans, room and facility availability, and the scale of the emergency.

The Red Cross uses financial contributions from generous donors to provide shelter and food after disasters — this sometimes includes providing hotel rooms for people in need. During large evacuations and after large-scale disasters, state and local authorities may also place

people in hotel rooms and handle those expenses. Regardless of who pays for hotel rooms, the Red Cross is able to provide support services in all forms of emergency shelters — hotels, dormitories and congregate shelters.

Using hotels to help shelter people after a disaster is not new in this COVID-19 environment. The Red Cross responds to more than 60,000 disasters each year, the majority of which are home fires and after these smaller disasters, the Red Cross routinely helps families stay in hotels. If you wish to support our work, please consider donating at [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org). Your gift is a commitment to helping people affected by disasters big and small.

Q: Will the Red Cross still open evacuation centers or emergency shelters in response to a disaster amidst the coronavirus outbreak?

A: Yes, the Red Cross will continue to open evacuation centers and disaster shelters at the request of emergency management and in coordination with local public health authorities. Our goal is to provide anyone in need during or after a disaster with a safe place to stay where they feel comfortable and welcomed. To help keep people safe, we have, following guidance from CDC and public health authorities, put in place additional precautions. For example, we will work with local officials to set up a health screening process for everyone coming into the shelter, provide masks, add additional space between cots, and use enhanced cleaning and disinfecting practices.

Q: Can you provide additional details on the new sheltering protocols?

A: Specifically, these new protocols include:

- Providing health screenings for everyone coming into a shelter
- Setting up an isolation care area in the shelter
- Providing masks, tissues and plastic bags throughout the shelter
- Requiring face coverings for both staff and residents
- Following social distancing practices, as much as possible, by staggering meal times and adding extra spacing between cots, chairs, tables, etc.
- Providing additional handwashing stations, in addition to normal restroom facilities
- Increasing wellness checks to identify potential illness, including self-monitoring and checking temperatures of both shelter residents and staff
- Enhancing both cleaning and disinfecting practices throughout the shelter

Q: What if a person refuses to be screened before entering a Red Cross shelter?

A: Screening people before they enter a disaster shelter is a critical step in helping to protect both our workforce and the people we serve. The Red Cross shelter manager will handle these situations on a case-by-case basis in coordination with public health officials; however, we will strictly enforce health screening protocols.

Q: During the screening process to enter a shelter, would the Red Cross split up family members if one member displays symptoms or a high fever and other family members do not?

A: We will work with families on a case-by-case basis to keep families together, while ensuring the health and safety of our workforce and the people we serve. When entering a shelter, if one family member is displaying symptoms or a high fever, everyone in that family would be considered potentially exposed and directed to an isolation area, until health professionals further evaluate each person. Depending on the circumstances, we may seek an alternative solution, such as potentially placing the family member displaying symptoms or the entire family in a hotel room.

Q: I have recovered from COVID-19. Do I need to adhere to Red Cross safety protocols in shelters?

A: The World Health Organization says that there is not enough evidence to support the notion that you can't catch COVID-19 twice or that you can't remain a carrier for the virus once you have recovered from COVID-19. For the safety of everyone in Red Cross shelters, we are requiring that all residents, even those who have recovered from COVID-19, follow safety protocols set by the CDC in Red Cross shelters.

Q: What will we do if someone comes to a shelter showing COVID-19 symptoms?

A: If a person showing COVID-19 symptoms arrives at a Red Cross shelter, we will not turn away that person or his or her family. Each shelter will be equipped to set up isolation care areas and will have health service workers on site to help ensure symptomatic residents receive further care away from other shelter residents. During a disaster, the Red Cross is committed to ensuring that everyone who comes to us in need has a safe place to stay.

Q: What would you do if someone in your shelter develops COVID-19 symptoms?

A: If a person staying at a Red Cross shelter starts to develop COVID-19 symptoms, Red Cross health services workers will work with public health partners to assess the situation and provide an isolated care area for symptomatic residents to receive further care away from other shelter residents.