



Hurricane Season 2008 Response Continues September 23, 2008



At a Red Cross shelter in Baton Rouge, LA, Robin Johnson has some quiet time.

Photo credit: Talia Frenkel/American Red Cross.

The American Red Cross continues its large, lengthy relief effort along the Gulf Coast as the 2008 hurricane season marches on. Hurricane Ike, the most recent hurricane to make landfall, arrived early morning on September 13 in Galveston, Texas. The storm then moved through the Midwest, bringing rain, flooding and high winds to Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri and Ohio.

Yesterday, thousands of evacuees in Texas boarded buses from the Fort Worth area to shelters closer to their homes in Houston, Baytown and Beaumont—areas devastated by Ike. Some Galveston residents can return to check on their homes but cannot stay because there are few or no services in the region. As of September 22, nine days after Ike's landfall,

more than 800,000 homes and buildings are still without power.

The American Red Cross Responds

To date, more than 18,900 trained Red Cross disaster workers from every state helped the millions of people affected by Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. These volunteers are trained in services ranging from driving an Emergency Response Vehicle to preparing meals in the Spirit of America—a Red Cross mobile kitchen designed to produce as many as 30,000 hot meals daily—to ensuring that every family has a safe place to sleep while they wait to return home.

"It's been extreme," said Tracey Sparrow, southeastern Wisconsin's regional chapter executive for the Red Cross. Sparrow noted that in addition to assisting victims who lost food, shelter and power from Hurricane Gustav, the Red Cross is providing shelter, food and emotional support to the tens of thousands of residents affected by Hurricane Ike.

"Our volunteers are generally on the site for three weeks or so," Sparrow said. "Despite how hard it is for volunteers, it's worse for the victims." The days following a disaster are tumultuous. When a natural or other disaster strikes, life suddenly changes—daily routines are shattered, jobs disrupted and property destroyed. Throughout our delivery sites and shelters, residents are finding sage advice from our mental health workers and the strength to overcome difficult emotions brought on by such devastation.



Red Cross volunteer Dawna Morris tucks in Jamison Porch, 14 months old. West Livingston School shelter, Denham Springs, LA.

Photo credit: Talia Frenkel/American Red Cross

Facts at a Glance Hurricanes Gustav and Ike as of 09.23.08	
Shelters Opened	914
Shelter Overnight Stays Provided	More than 361,000
Meals and Snacks Served	More than 7,000,000
Clean-up and Comfort Kits Distributed	More than 130,000
Emergency Response Vehicles (ERVs)	523
Red Cross Disaster Workers	More than 18,900

Many of the victims have been away from their homes for weeks, and they don't know whether they have a home to return to, said Muriel Harper, 77. Harper, a retired social worker, is one of the Wisconsin volunteers stationed in Fort Worth as a mental health manager. Red Cross mental health workers not only help with displaced residents but also attend to the mental health needs of volunteers. "It can be emotionally draining," said Harper, who is expected to return in early October.

Our disaster mental health workers provide the following services:

- Psychological triage, crisis intervention and psychological support
- Referrals to community partners for long-term support
- Supervision and support to fellow Red Cross disaster workers

In response to Hurricanes Ike and Gustav, our mental health workers have had more than 33,000 15-minute contacts or interventions with individuals and families overwhelmed in the aftermath of these storms.

As the Red Cross continues helping individuals and families affected by the 2008 tropical storms and hurricanes—Dolly, Edouard, Fay, Gustav, Hanna and Ike—we are also actively preparing to come to the aid of those who will be affected by the next disaster. We accomplish this by ensuring we have trained volunteers who are ready to respond, and we are restocking and pre-positioning disaster supplies. Sparrow commended the efforts of Harper and other Red Cross volunteers like her who "drop their lives and go" where needed. "They don't really get compensation, other than their personal reward," she said. "That's what makes Red Cross volunteers so special."

We invite you to view the latest video and photos and listen to audio reports posted by Red Cross disaster workers in our online newsroom: <http://hurricaneike.wordpress.com/>.

How You Can Help

Since January 2008, the Red Cross has responded to thousands of house fires and more than 60 large-scale disasters—hurricanes, floods, tornadoes and wildfires—which have steadily depleted the Disaster Relief Fund.

We estimate spending as much as \$70 million helping those affected by Hurricane Gustav. The cost of the Hurricane Ike relief effort could easily climb higher than that. The Red Cross launched a national fundraising campaign to raise an initial \$100 million for the Disaster Relief Fund, which has been depleted by these disasters. This fund ensures that wherever and whenever a disaster strikes—be it a major hurricane or a small house fire—the Red Cross can help.

With your support of the Disaster Relief Fund, the American Red Cross can assist those who urgently need your help. The hurricanes of 2008 have changed so many lives. You can, too.

All American Red Cross disaster assistance is free, made possible by voluntary donations of time and money from the American people. You can help the victims of thousands of disasters across the country each year, disasters like the Hurricanes of 2008, by making a financial gift to the

American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund, which enables the Red Cross to provide shelter, food, counseling and other assistance to victims of disaster. The American Red Cross honors donor intent. If you wish to designate your donation to a specific disaster, please do so at the time of your donation. Call 1-800 REDCROSS (1-800-733-2767) or 1-800-257-7575 (Spanish). Contributions to the Disaster Relief Fund may be sent to your local American Red Cross chapter or to the American Red Cross, PO Box 37243, Washington, DC 20013. Internet users can make a secure online contribution by visiting www.redcross.org.