



Home Fire Campaign

Fiscal Year 2021 Update (July 1, 2020–June 30, 2021)



**American
Red Cross**

Making a Powerful Impact in Communities Across the Country



A note from the senior vice president, American Red Cross Disaster Services

Over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the lives of people across the country. The American Red Cross adapted our services to safely meet our mission through the challenges of this public health emergency while still responding to tens of thousands of home fires during our 2021 fiscal year. As dedicated Red Cross workers met with survivors virtually in the wake of these tragic events, they were often among the first to offer relief, comfort and hope to heartbroken individuals and families.

Because we see the devastating impact of home fires every day, the Red Cross also works to prevent injuries and deaths through our Home Fire Campaign. While we paused home visits when COVID-19 struck in 2020, the Red Cross reached out to people digitally to promote home fire preparedness and also worked with partners, such as fire departments, who continued to visit at-risk homes in some areas. This spring, we resumed our lifesaving *Sound the Alarm* activities with a nationwide day of action in more than 50 cities—rallying Red Cross volunteers and community partners with a goal to once again educate thousands of families in at-risk communities about home fire safety.

As you'll see in this update, the Red Cross response, recovery and preparedness programs continued to make a powerful impact for people in need during a difficult year. We are grateful for the generous donors, community partners and selfless volunteers who made this lifesaving work possible. On behalf of those we serve, thank you.

Trevor Rigger

Above: Red Cross volunteers Celeste Carrola and Benjamin Quick provide education about a smoke alarm—which was installed by the local fire department—and share home fire safety information with San Antonio resident Julia Garcia as part of the *Sound the Alarm* day of action on May 8, 2021. Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross

Response and Recovery: Providing Critical Aid to Home Fire Survivors

During fiscal year 2021¹, Red Cross disaster workers:



Responded to more than **60,000 home fires**.



Opened **88,647 cases** for affected families, helping more than **242,000 people**.



Provided more than **\$56 million** in financial assistance to home fire survivors.

The Red Cross responds to a disaster every eight minutes, and most of these responses are for single and multi-family home fires. During fiscal year 2021, Red Cross Disaster Action Team responders once again were there for thousands of people in need following these heartbreaking emergencies.

Due to COVID-19 safety concerns, response procedures were modified to enable Red Cross responders to connect virtually with those impacted by home fires. This allowed the Red Cross to continue to meet the needs of distraught families who may have lost everything. When necessary, responders also met in-person with families, following safety protocols. Our compassionate volunteers and employees, whether virtually or in-person, offered home fire survivors relief and comfort in their darkest hours.

As part of our home fire response and recovery support, the Red Cross also provided impacted individuals and families financial assistance to meet pressing needs like food, clothing and diapers, as well as helping them locate a safe place to stay. And Red Cross workers continued to stay in touch virtually, working with home fire survivors to plan their next steps and locate available resources to help them get back on their feet.

Swift relief comforts Philadelphia fire survivor

In December 2020, 29-year-old Melissa Haley was displaced from her third-floor apartment after a home fire. The local fire department referred Melissa—who had nothing but the clothes on her back and her cat, Nelita—to the Red Cross for emergency assistance.

Red Cross Disaster Action Team (DAT) members provided funds for food, clothing, toiletries, and other essentials. The Red Cross also offered Melissa emotional support and checked back with her regularly.

“I honestly feel like [the Red Cross] made it super easy and super convenient by guiding me through the process,” she said.



“I felt very supported.”

Melissa Haley, Philadelphia

¹July 1, 2020–June 30, 2021

Photo: Back in her now-renovated apartment, home fire survivor Melissa Haley plays with her cat, Nelita. Photo courtesy of Melissa Haley.

Preparedness: Making a Lifesaving Difference for Families

In the United States, seven people die and 30 more suffer injuries due to home fires every day, most of them in homes without working smoke alarms. To make families and communities nationwide safer and better prepared for the country's most frequently occurring disaster—including older residents and lower-income families who are among those most vulnerable to these fires—the Red Cross uses data and mapping technology to identify and target communities where home fires pose the greatest risk.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, volunteers would join fire departments and community groups at *Sound the Alarm* events all over the U.S., visiting homes to provide free smoke alarms, conduct fire prevention and safety education, and help families make an escape plan together.

In fiscal year 2021, this work looked different due to COVID-19 safety concerns, but the Red Cross continued outreach and education efforts—working with partners like local fire departments—while pausing our traditional *Sound the Alarm* events through 2020. Even with these events on hold for most of the year, the cumulative preparedness efforts of our Home Fire Campaign—launched in October 2014—continued to have a lifesaving impact. In fact, **an additional 137 lives were saved in fiscal year 2021** due to the efforts of the Red Cross and our partners, bringing the total for the campaign to 916!

Smoke alarms awaken Ohio resident in the nick of time

It was 1:30 a.m. when Ramona Martin heard smoke alarms sounding in her home and quickly ran outside. The fire spread rapidly, engulfing her house that had stood for more than a century in Arlington, Ohio.

The smoke alarms that alerted Ramona to the April 2021 fire had been installed three years earlier by Red Cross volunteers, Steve and Valerie Mahler, who shared another special connection—the Mahlers' son is married to Ramona's daughter.

Along with the smoke alarms, Ramona credits the home fire escape plan and safety information that Steve and Valerie shared with her to help her get out safely.

**“I never thought
it would happen
to me.”**

Ramona Martin, Arlington, Ohio



Above: Arlington, Ohio, resident Ramona Martin (L) escaped a devastating home fire thanks to smoke alarms installed three years earlier by Red Cross volunteers Steve and Valerie Mahler. Photo by Jim McIntyre/American Red Cross.



Sound the Alarm Returns for 2021 Day of Action

Home fire emergencies did not stop during the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, from January to March 2021, the number of devastating home fires increased by 16% over the same period in 2020. That's why the Red Cross was thrilled to join with partners and community volunteers to resume our signature *Sound the Alarm* visits to at-risk neighborhoods for a May 8, 2021, day of action.

For our re-imagined 2021 activities, volunteers met with residents by appointment in more than 50 cities nationwide — either virtually or on front porches, stoops or lawns while following COVID-19 safety protocols — to help families make emergency escape plans and partner with fire departments to install smoke alarms by appointment where safe to do so. We also invited people across the U.S. to make a pledge to prepare with two simple steps to keep their families safe:

- Practicing a 2-minute fire drill
- Testing smoke alarms monthly

Joined by national sponsors **Delta Air Lines** and **Lowe's Home Improvement**, our spring 2021 *Sound the Alarm* activities reached more than 73,000 people at the highest risk for home fires with vital safety and preparedness education. This year's initiative built on a nearly seven-year history of extraordinary success for our *Sound the Alarm* home fire preparedness activities.



To make communities and families safer, we have²:



Served more than **2.4 million people** through home visits in 50 states, 3 territories and the District of Columbia



Reached nearly **1.7 million children** through youth preparedness and education programs



Installed more than **2.2 million smoke alarms** in over 17,900 cities and towns

²Cumulative Home Fire Campaign totals as of June 30, 2021.

Above: During a May 2021 *Sound the Alarm* visit at the doorstep of Savannah resident Helene Byrd, volunteers Robert Brown and Hadeel Diab discuss the importance of smoke alarms and having a home fire escape plan. Photo by Stephen B. Morton/American Red Cross



Thank you!

The American Red Cross gratefully acknowledges the following individuals, companies, foundations and partner organizations that have made extraordinary contributions to our Home Fire Campaign.³

The Ahmanson Foundation

BMW of North America, LLC

Grainger

Anthem Foundation

Delta Air Lines

Lowe's Home Improvement

**Blue Cross and Blue Shield
of North Carolina**

Denise R. Sobel

Sandra J. Klein

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Verizon Up Rewards



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³Donations to Home Fire Campaign of \$250,000+ as well as special promotional partners from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

Above (left): In March 2021, Red Cross volunteers in Houston demonstrate how socially-distanced home visits would work as they prepared for *Sound the Alarm* activities—which were paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic—to resume later in May. Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross

Above (right): "I didn't have working smoke alarms, this is very important," Chantele Moss, of Rochester, New York, tells Red Cross volunteer Melanie Pandich. Moss received the free smoke alarm, which was installed by members of the Gates Fire Department, as part of a 2021 *Sound the Alarm* Day of Action event. Photo by Marko Kokic/American Red Cross