



**American
Red Cross**

Western Wildfires 2020 **ONE-YEAR UPDATE**

October 2021



A message from Trevor Rikken, senior vice president, Disaster Cycle Services



Through the summer and fall of 2020, people across the West once again faced the life-changing impacts of a record-setting wildfire season — compounded by the challenges of a deadly pandemic. In Oregon, California, and other states, including Colorado, Montana, Washington and Wyoming, massive fires blanketed major cities with clouds of smoke, threatened entire towns with destruction and forced tens of thousands to flee their homes ahead of advancing flames.

To help families facing stressful evacuations and devastating losses, thousands of American Red Cross volunteers and employees deployed — both on the ground and virtually — to provide sorely needed relief and comfort. While taking extra steps to keep people safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, they worked night and day for months to provide shelter, food, water, cleanup supplies and health, mental health support and spiritual care for the individuals and families impacted by these blazes — many of whom lost nearly everything they owned.

While meeting emergency needs like food and shelter, we also provided financial assistance to wildfire survivors to help with other pressing concerns. People who turned to the Red Cross for aid, who are often among the most economically vulnerable members of the community, could use these funds to cover expenses like groceries, transportation, clothing, housing costs and more.

With our deep local presence in the affected communities, the Red Cross has remained by the sides of impacted residents over the past year — providing additional funds for recovery and helping families plan and locate resources to help them rebuild their lives. Critically, as a changing climate continues to result in longer and more severe wildfire seasons across much of the West, we are also helping communities become more resilient and better prepared for future emergencies.

Our relief, recovery and preparedness efforts wouldn't be possible without our generous donors and dedicated volunteers, who put their lives on hold to bring compassionate aid to people in need. Today, as we are in the midst of responding to another devastating wildfire season across much of the West, I am profoundly grateful for your support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Trevor Rikken". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Trevor Rikken

Delivering Recovery Assistance to Impacted Residents and Communities

The 2020 wildfire season broke records and impacted communities across the West. In Oregon, thousands of homes were reduced to ash by some of the most devastating wildfires the state has ever seen. California's massive Lightning Complex and other major fires like the August Complex and Glass Fire scorched millions of acres. Incredibly, Colorado experienced the three largest wildfires in that state's history.

Across the western U.S., the American Red Cross was on the ground for months to deliver vital aid for tens of thousands of residents who faced evacuation orders, imminent fire threats and heartbreaking losses amid an ongoing pandemic.

While taking extra steps to keep people safe from COVID-19, thousands of Red Cross volunteers and employees worked night and day for months to provide safe shelter, meals, water, cleanup supplies, and health, mental health and spiritual care for survivors — many of whom saw their homes and belongings consumed by the flames. We also provided immediate financial assistance to help families address urgent needs for food, clothing, transportation and lodging.

The Red Cross strives to serve everyone in need, including the most vulnerable in our communities who may not be able to easily access our services. As part of our response to these wildfires, we deployed a Red Cross Latino Engagement Team in Northern California to help ensure that Red Cross services reached Hispanic communities where language and other barriers might otherwise impede the delivery of wildfire relief and recovery support.

Today, as people across the western U.S. are experiencing another long and active wildfire season, many continue to need assistance for recovery from last year's destructive blazes. Thanks to generous support from compassionate donors, the Red Cross has stood by the sides of individuals and families to help meet their pressing recovery needs, providing additional funds for recovery to hard-hit residents, aid with recovery planning and much more as survivors get back on their feet and begin to rebuild their lives.



Top: In September 2020, members of the Red Cross Latino Engagement Team partnered with the United Farm Workers Foundation to distribute water, food, N-95 masks, diapers and other wildfire relief to farmworkers and their families in Salinas, California. Photo by Anna Kariel/American Red Cross

Bottom: Long-time volunteer Patty Albin checks on Travis Wagner at a Red Cross shelter in Jackson County, Oregon. Photo by Eric Carmichael/American Red Cross

Visit our [Western Wildfires story map](https://redcross.org/2020wildfiresstorymap) (redcross.org/2020wildfiresstorymap) for more about the Red Cross response to the devastating 2020 wildfire season.

Two-Time Evacuees Grateful for Red Cross Refuge

As flames from the dangerous Glass Fire roared toward them, Mike and Ila Ervin — like so many on the night of September 27, 2020 — were forced to flee their rural home near the Northern California city of Santa Rosa.

“The sheriff came around and said we had to get out,” recalled Mike. “There was barely any time to even pack anything. We had to go — now.”

The couple were no strangers to wildfire threats, having been evacuated for nearly two weeks during the 2017 Tubbs Fire. They quickly loaded some essentials along with their dog and two cats into their vehicles and drove down from the mountains as the evening sky above glowed bright orange.

Unable to find a pet-friendly hotel, the Ervins spent that first night sleeping in their cars with their animals. After moving to the Sonoma County Fairgrounds, where people were camping to wait out the evacuation, the Ervins learned about a Red Cross shelter that was open at Sonoma State University.

There, they were able to stay together, with their pets, in one of the private rooms that — because of the pandemic — the Red Cross and Sonoma County were providing.

Fortunately, their home survived the Glass Fire, though the surrounding areas were scorched by flames and covered in thick ash. After 10 days, the Ervins were able to leave the Red Cross shelter and return home.

“Thank you so much for everything you’ve done,” said Ila. “I just can’t thank you enough.”



Red Cross disaster worker Leigh Elliott meets with Ila and Mike Ervin at the Ervin's Santa Rosa area home following the Glass Fire. Photo by Dave Skutnik/American Red Cross

Response at a Glance



More than **923,200 meals and snacks** served with partners



More than **450,100 overnight shelter and hotel stays** provided with partners



More than **61,200 individual care contacts** made to provide health, mental health and spiritual care services



More than **58,700 relief items** distributed

Cumulative figures as of August 31, 2021, including responses in California, Colorado, Montana, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming.

Delivering Recovery Assistance to Impacted Residents and Communities

As many people who were severely affected by the 2020 western wildfires struggled to pick up the pieces, the Red Cross provided immediate funds to help. Over the past year, the Red Cross has offered additional financial assistance to some of the most severely impacted survivors, helping them on their path to recovery.

As of August 31, 2021, we had provided relief and recovery assistance totaling approximately \$4.6 million, reaching thousands of households impacted by wildfires in the western U.S.

Recovery from destructive disasters like these is a team effort, and trained Red Cross volunteers and disaster workers have worked closely with nonprofit and civic organizations, local businesses and governments to care for communities and families through the recovery process.

They stayed in touch with wildfire survivors to help plan their next steps and identify available recovery resources from partner organizations and government agencies. They also offered emotional support and a listening ear for residents struggling to rebuild their lives — many of them for a second time as recurring wildfires continue to upend lives across the western U.S.

In addition to financial assistance and one-on-one support, the Red Cross is funding work carried out by partner organizations with specialized expertise to address unmet longer-term recovery needs in the affected communities and help their residents become better prepared for and more resilient against future crises.

Funding Community-Driven Recovery in Oregon

In response to the wildfires that ravaged large swaths of Oregon in 2020, the Oregon Community Foundation, in partnership with the Meyer Memorial Trust and the Ford Family Foundation, launched the Community Rebuilding Fund — a source of vital recovery resources that have been identified by the governor of Oregon to support the community-driven recovery efforts across the state.



Top: Red Cross volunteer Rhianna Strobel-Farmer speaks with resident Brian Witherspoon while serving water and snacks at the Santa Cruz Fairgrounds in Watsonville, California. Photo by Dennis Drenner/American Red Cross

Bottom: Red Cross volunteer Ann Gragert hands a cleaning kit to Shyanne Peterson at a Red Cross distribution site for families affected by the wildfires, near Lyons, Oregon. Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross



American Red Cross volunteers at work handing out wildfire and cleaning kits to families affected by the wildfires, near Lyons, Oregon. Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross

Making a stand alongside these partners for an equitable and responsive recovery in Oregon, the Red Cross has committed \$1.5 million to the fund to date. The Red Cross is focused on supporting an effective, equitable and inclusive recovery process—and one that is continually responsive to the needs of the diverse communities throughout Oregon.

“Together, with these incredibly well-respected local organizations, the American Red Cross is able to magnify the impact of the investment in communities that were devastated during the 2020 Labor Day wildfires,” said Dale Kunce, chief executive officer of the Red Cross Cascades Region. “Our volunteers responded to provide help, hope and comfort on day one, and through this partnership our commitment to our communities continues.”

“Fire is inevitable, catastrophes are not,” said Sonia Worcel, chief community impact officer of the Oregon Community Foundation. “Working together,

we can reduce the risks of devastating fires now and in the future, while ensuring that communities and philanthropic organizations are able to respond effectively. We will continue to be collaborative, nimble, and forward-thinking, as we support community-led solutions to address crisis in our state.”

The Community Rebuilding Fund has been designed to engage affected communities in shaping its activities—driving its priorities and directing its resources. In particular, the fund aims to address the needs of the most vulnerable survivors of the fires, including low-income families, rural communities and those that are socially and culturally isolated, as well as those with limited access to the full breadth of recovery services including Latino/a/x, tribal and rural community members. As its name implies, the Community Rebuilding Fund supports community-led rebuilding that engages residents in shaping the future of the diverse and dynamic places they call home.

Generous Donors Enable Relief and Recovery Support for Western Wildfires

Thanks to our compassionate supporters, the Red Cross has raised \$48.9 million, including the value of critical donated goods and services, to help people affected by the 2020 Western Wildfires.

As of August 31, 2021, the Red Cross had already spent or made commitments to spend approximately \$46.7 million on emergency relief and recovery efforts

for these wildfires in California, Colorado, Montana, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming, including specific expenses of \$13.2 million that were reimbursed by the states of Oregon and Colorado. With the remaining funds, we will continue to provide services for long-term recovery in the impacted communities.

California Wildfires (2020) Expenses and Commitments¹ (in millions)

as of August 31, 2021

Expense Categories	Food, Shelter and Relief Items	Health and Emotional Support	Financial Assistance	Total	Expense %
Financial assistance, food and other relief items	\$7.7	\$0.3	\$1.7	\$9.7	58%
Deployment of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$2.7	\$0.2	\$0.1	\$3.0	18%
Full-time Red Cross employees	\$1.0	\$0.1	\$0.2	\$1.3	7%
Freight, postage and warehousing	\$0.6	—	—	\$0.6	3%
IT, communications and call centers	\$0.2	—	—	\$0.2	1%
Temporary disaster hires	\$0.1	—	—	\$0.1	1%
Kitchen, shelter and other logistics that enable service delivery	\$0.1	—	—	\$0.1	1%
Equipment, maintenance and fueling of Red Cross emergency vehicles and rented trucks	\$0.1	—	—	\$0.1	1%
Total Program Expenses	\$12.5	\$0.6	\$2.0	\$15.1	90%
Management, general and fundraising ²				\$1.7	10%
Total Expenses				\$16.8	100%

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

²Management, 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 our approximately 18,500 employees and more than 300,000 volunteers, fundraising and communications functions, and other support services across all program lines. 90 cents of every dollar spent for the California Wildfires will support delivering care and comfort to help people affected by these wildfires.

Oregon Wildfires (2020) Expenses and Commitments¹ (in millions)

as of August 31, 2021

Expense Categories	Food, Shelter and Relief Items	Health and Emotional Support	Financial Assistance	Community Recovery	Total	Expense %
Financial assistance, food and other relief items ²	\$14.8	\$0.2	\$2.7	—	\$17.7	66%
Deployment of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$2.0	\$0.2	\$0.1	—	\$2.3	9%
Full-time Red Cross employees	\$1.1	\$0.1	\$0.3	—	\$1.5	6%
Freight, postage and warehousing	\$1.1	—	—	—	\$1.1	4%
Long-term recovery programs to help unmet needs	—	—	—	\$0.8	\$0.8	3%
Temporary disaster hires	\$0.3	—	—	—	\$0.3	1%
IT, communications and call centers	\$0.2	—	—	—	\$0.2	1%
Kitchen, shelter and other logistics that enable service delivery	\$0.1	—	—	—	\$0.1	0%
Equipment, maintenance and fueling of Red Cross emergency vehicles and rented trucks	\$0.1	—	—	—	\$0.1	0%
Total Program Expenses	\$19.7	\$0.5	\$3.1	\$0.8	\$24.1	90%
Management, general and fundraising ³					\$2.7	10%
Total Expenses					\$26.8	100%

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

²Includes specific expenses reimbursed by the State of Oregon of \$12 million.

³Management, 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 our approximately 18,500 employees and more than 300,000 volunteers, fundraising and communications functions, and other support services across all program lines. 90 cents of every dollar spent for the California Wildfires will support delivering care and comfort to help people affected by these wildfires.

Other Western Wildfires (2020) Expenses and Commitments^{1,2} (in millions)

as of August 31, 2021

Expense Categories	Food, Shelter and Relief Items	Health and Emotional Support	Financial Assistance	Total	Expense %
Financial assistance, food and other relief items ³	\$2.1	—	\$0.2	\$2.3	74%
Deployment of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$0.2	—	—	\$0.2	7%
Full-time Red Cross employees	\$0.2	—	—	\$0.2	6%
Freight, postage and warehousing	\$0.1	—	—	\$0.1	3%
Total Program Expenses	\$2.6	—	\$0.2	\$2.8	90%
Management, general and fundraising ⁴				\$0.3	10%
Total Expenses				\$3.1	100%

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

²Includes wildfires responses in Colorado, Montana, Washington and Wyoming.

³Includes specific expenses reimbursed by the State of Colorado of \$1.2 million.

⁴Management, 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 our approximately 18,500 employees and more than 300,000 volunteers, fundraising and communications functions, and other support services across all program lines. 90 cents of every dollar spent for the Western Wildfires will support delivering care and comfort to help people affected by these wildfires.

Western Wildfires (2020) Total Budget (in millions) (in millions)

as of August 31, 2021

Expense Categories	Total
Total Program Expenses ¹	\$42.0
Management, general and fundraising	\$4.7
Total Expenses	\$46.7
Program Dollars Remaining	\$13.9
Management, general and fundraising remaining to be applied	\$1.5
Total Budget	\$62.1

¹Includes specific expenses reimbursed by the States of Oregon and Colorado of \$13.2 million.

Thank you!

In this challenging time for people across the country, those in need turn to the Red Cross for vital support when help can't wait. Your donation helps us fulfill this promise. The Red Cross is deeply grateful for the remarkable commitment of our donors, which has already made a meaningful impact for those we serve and will continue to enable vital services as we carry out our lifesaving mission amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.



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