

2020: Need For Emergency Disaster Lodging Surges Amid COVID-19

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**American
Red Cross**

ST. LOUIS — Facing a relentless disaster season, families in the U.S. have spent more nights in emergency lodging in 2020 than in any other year over the past decade.

“As the coronavirus pandemic wears on, disasters like home fires, floods and tornadoes — plus relentless hurricanes and wildfires — have upended hundreds of thousands of lives across the country,” said Mary Jane Thomsen, Executive Director, Greater St. Louis Red Cross, American Red Cross. “Through it all, more people are stepping up as Red Cross volunteers to help others — even as they cope with various events and COVID-19. It’s a true testament to the humanitarian spirit of people in Greater St. Louis and in our country.”

More than **1 million** times this year, a person relied on the Red Cross for a safe place to sleep after a disaster in the U.S. That’s more than four times the annual average from 2011 to 2019.

- This year, so far, the **Red Cross of Greater St. Louis** has responded to more than **475 home fires** and helped more than **1,980 individuals**, helping them secure a safe place to stay and providing food, emotional support and other assistance.

THOUSANDS ANSWER CALL TO HELP

This year, more than **70,000** people across the country joined the Red Cross as volunteers — who represent more than **90%** of its workforce. As the local community and the country grapples with the pandemic, young people have played a critical role in disaster response— with Millennials and Gen Z representing more than **half** of new Red Cross volunteers.

Nationwide, **75%** of new volunteers also stepped up at a pivotal time to fill mission-critical positions, such as shelter and health workers addressing urgent disaster needs, as well as blood donor ambassadors and transportation specialists helping to provide cancer patients, trauma victims and others with lifesaving blood.

- Just since July 1, when hurricanes began impacting the U.S., the **Missouri-Arkansas Region of the Red Cross** deployed 197 volunteers and staff, either in-person or virtually, to fill 357 assignments - to support devastated communities. This means several of those who deployed did so more than once.

BLOOD DONORS SAVE LIVES

In 2020, Red Cross blood drive cancellations **tripled** compared to the year prior — mostly due to COVID-19. Since March, over **50,000** blood drives were canceled as the pandemic forced schools, businesses and community organizations to close, impacting over **1 million** blood donation appointments. Still, people rolled up their sleeves — more than a **half-million** of them giving for the first time.

Blood donation is an essential service, and everyone's well-being is our top priority. The Red Cross follows the latest public health guidelines, as well as has put additional precautions in place to ensure everyone's safety.

This pandemic has also caused the Red Cross to adapt its collections to include plasma from COVID-19 survivors to potentially help those battling the virus recover. Thousands of COVID-19 survivors have stepped up to share their potentially lifesaving antibodies by giving plasma. Since April, nearly **25,000** COVID-19 survivors have rolled up a sleeve — many of whom are new to blood donation. Their donations have enabled the Red Cross to ship nearly **50,000** units to hospitals across the country treating COVID-19 patients.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

On **Giving Tuesday** and during the holiday season, help people in need by donating at [redcross.org/gift](https://www.redcross.org/gift). A gift of any size makes a difference. If you're healthy and feeling well, we also urge you to donate blood this holiday season. Your blood donation can make a lifesaving difference for a patient in need. Visit [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.RedCrossBlood.org) to schedule an appointment today.

About the American Red Cross:

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies about 40 percent of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a not-for-profit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please visit [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org) or [cruzrojaamericana.org](https://www.cruzrojaamericana.org), or visit us on Twitter at [@RedCross](https://twitter.com/RedCross).