

2021: Red Cross Responded To One Of The Country's Most Active Severe Weather Years, With New Major Relief Effort Every 11 Days

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ST. LOUIS — This past year has turned out to be one of the country's most active for natural disasters — many communities still reeling from the previous year's devastation were impacted once again even as they faced the challenges of an ongoing pandemic. The American Red Cross launched a new major relief effort every 11 days to provide thousands of people refuge, food, and care.

“Our most vulnerable neighbors are facing unique and pressing struggles when crisis strikes on top of COVID-19,” Beth Elders, Greater St. Louis executive director, said. “On Giving Tuesday and throughout the holiday season, we ask everyone to join us by making a financial gift that will ensure the Red Cross can provide ongoing support to our communities when emergencies happen.”

This year, a family displaced by a disaster in the U.S. spent an average of nearly 30 days in a Red Cross-supported emergency shelter. These extended stays were largely due to a lack of savings and community housing shortages — signs that disasters are compounding the financial hardships of the pandemic.

During the last fiscal year, July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021, the Missouri-Arkansas Region assisted over 12,000 individuals following local disasters, primarily home fires as well as other storm and flooding damage. This breaks down to close to 7,500 individuals in Missouri (which does include counties in Kansas and Illinois along the Missouri and Mississippi rivers) and over 4,700 individuals in Arkansas. Over \$2.6 million dollars in financial assistance was provided to these individuals.

“If you aren’t in a position to help financially, consider donating the gift of time by volunteering for one of our missions or donating blood,” Elders said.

Drop-in new blood donors were seen in 2021; Blood supply at its lowest in more than a decade

To meet the increasing needs of hospital patients, the Red Cross distributed 250,000 more blood products in 2021 than last year, until the delta variant began to spread in August. The ongoing pandemic resulted in fewer blood drives at schools and colleges, contributing to a 34% drop in new blood donors from last year — one of the largest year-to-year decreases that could threaten essential medical care for patients. Locally, the Missouri-Arkansas Red Cross Region has experienced a 13.4 % decrease in new blood donors this year.

As a result of low blood donor turnout in recent months, the Red Cross is heading into the holidays with its lowest blood supply in more than a decade at this time of year. Blood donations are desperately needed now to meet the needs of accident and burn victims, heart surgery and organ transplant patients, and those receiving treatment for leukemia, cancer, or sickle cell disease.

Red Cross supported families displaced from Afghanistan and other areas

Around the world, massive humanitarian needs emerged in 2021 for a growing number of families displaced by the overlapping challenges of conflict. This year, at the request of federal government partners, Red Cross workers from Missouri-Arkansas deployed to other states joining with Red Cross responders across the U.S. to distribute more than 2.1 million essential items — like blankets, diapers, medicine, and toys — for Afghan evacuees arriving on U.S. military bases and unaccompanied children seeking asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border.

“We are thankful for our financial donors, volunteers who generously donate their time, and to those who donate blood,” Elders said. “Each of these actions makes a significant difference to someone in need and also saves lives.”

About Our Regional Holiday Supporters:

The Red Cross is grateful for corporate partners who contribute to our Holiday Campaign. Thanks to the generosity of these and other supporters, the Red Cross is able to bring help and hope to people in need.

About the American Red Cross:

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides comfort to victims of disasters; supplies about 40% of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; distributes international humanitarian aid; and supports veterans, military members and their families. The Red Cross is a nonprofit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to deliver 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).