



# RESPONDING TO DISASTERS

2023

## Disaster Response Toolkit

As the frequency and intensity of natural disasters and wide-scale emergencies increases, and as government resources are stretched thin, communities are turning more often to companies to assist in immediate relief and long-term recovery efforts. This toolkit provides your company with do's and don'ts of how best to respond, as well as additional resources around how best to engage employees in responding to a disaster.

# Give Better: A Playbook for Effective Giving in a Disaster

## Overview



Companies can play an important, valuable role in different phases of disasters - from preparedness to immediate response to longer-term recovery. Companies bring a lot to a disaster context; in addition to critical funding, they can leverage a workforce with specific skills, innovative resources, and cutting-edge technology that can help prepare communities to be more resilient and also save communities from a downward spiral post-disaster.

But HOW companies show up and partner with communities before, during, and after a disaster is critical. Many companies end up making mistakes that can reduce the effectiveness of their support - and sometimes cause more harm than good to those facing disaster.

"Business as usual" would be simply cutting a big check to one or two big-name disaster response charities, selected by company leaders. But there are so many other ways to have an impact, and to diversify that impact. For instance, companies can empower their employees to show up in the moment and donate in a way that makes them feel most connected to what's going on, whether it's to a local animal shelter rescuing abandoned animals, a homeless shelter helping an influx of those displaced, or a food bank distributing to families in need.

In this toolkit, Groundswell's team shares what companies should - and shouldn't - do, when it comes to sending resources to support when disaster strikes.



# RESPONDING TO DISASTERS

## Facts and Data

**50%**

percentage of donations that arrive within the first two weeks of major disasters, and the rest coming over the next six weeks, leaving longer-term work under-funded

**\$3.6 Billion**

donated in disaster-related funding from corporate giving programs in 2020



**1\$ invested,  
\$6 saved**

it is estimated that every \$1 invested in disaster preparedness can save \$6 when a disaster hits

# Demystifying the Phases of Disasters

## Mitigate | Prepare | Respond | Recover

Disasters are complex. Our eyes are drawn to images of destruction left in a storm's path or after the earth stops shaking - but the true effects of disasters and the lives impacted often go far beyond what makes news headlines. The majority of donations in a disaster strongly correlate with the moments of immediate relief - when lives are at risk, critical infrastructure is damaged, and the media is laser focused on it.



Disasters should be viewed on a longer continuum, to not only include the immediate response and relief, but also longer-term recovery (rebuilding homes, roads, and livelihoods), as well as critical mitigation and preparedness activities - such as hardening structures, improving evacuation and communications protocols, etc - to help prevent future devastation.

It's important to consider these different phases when determining how and when to provide support for a disaster. Donations before, during and after disasters can be game-changing, but figuring out the right, most impactful approach isn't always easy.

In the following pages, we offer tips to help you make the right choices not only when disaster strikes but also how you consider support in the longer-term.

# Do's and Don'ts of Corporate Disaster Philanthropy

Here are some tips from the team at Groundswell, leveraging years of experience in the disaster relief space:

## #1: Don't send stuff, send money

Sending clothes or supplies (also known as “in-kind” donations), while well-intended, can clog already complex supply and logistics operations. And they often don't get to those most in need, or worse - are entirely inappropriate for the context.

People don't need paper towels thrown at them when they don't have drinking water. And they don't need winter coats if they live in a tropical climate. Sending hundreds of pounds of frozen chicken to a disaster zone when there's no way to keep it frozen, much less transport it to those needing food, can end up being more trouble than help.

The disaster response organizations on the ground have the best understanding of what supplies are needed and where to deploy it - and the best way to support those organizations is through cash donations.

## #2: Sometimes it's ok to send stuff, here's how:

In some instances, in-kind donations CAN be very effective in an emergency, but they need to be tightly coordinated with nonprofits. In-kind donations are also most helpful if they can have impact at scale and fill a critical gap; in other words, it is important that these products fill a need that others on the ground cannot fill.

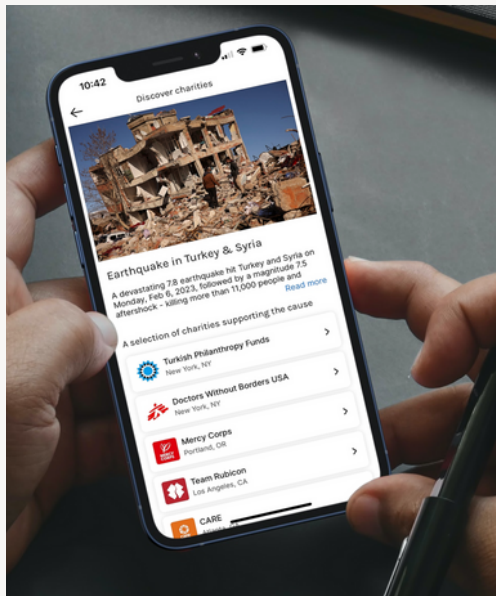
Examples include: providing access to large machinery to clear roads, technicians to restore power and communications infrastructure, aircraft to send relief workers to the frontlines, and free advertising to increase awareness of what's happening and drive cash donations.

## #3: Move quickly

In many emergency situations, early donations are critical for organizations responding on the ground - enabling emergency teams to mobilize and purchase life-saving supplies.

You can launch a gift or match program for your employees in a matter of minutes using the Groundswell platform, immediately allowing your company, via your entire employee base, to send support to disaster relief organizations on the ground.

In a disaster, one large corporate check to a single organization, while impactful for that organization, risks deprioritizing what your employees care most about. Empower all of your employees to move quickly and meet the moment using Groundswell.



## #4: Leverage expert vetting

You may want to move quickly, but you also want to protect against fraud and ensure the donations go to worthy recipients. You can move fast knowing that Groundswell handles all the vetting - researching and evaluating the organizations responding to disasters to give you the peace of mind that your donation is going to be well used.

Groundswell is also launching a partnership with GlobalGiving to provide access to thousands of rigorously-vetted international nonprofits responding to disasters that hit beyond U.S. borders.



## #5: Think holistically (and empower your employees to respond holistically)

Responding to a disaster includes far more than repairing homes, infrastructure, or providing shelter and food to those displaced.

Often those who are already vulnerable before disaster strikes (homeless populations, women confronting domestic violence, low-income communities, refugees) are disproportionately impacted by natural disasters, especially if they don't have immediate access to emergency services or social safety nets. Below are a few examples.

### Poverty

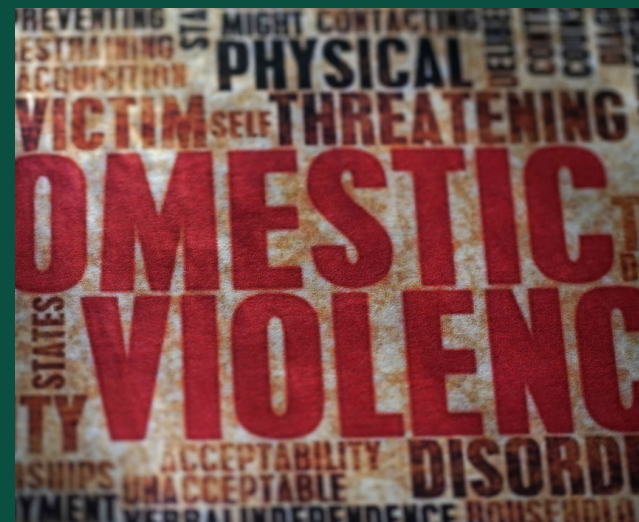
- An assessment of the impacts of Hurricane Harvey in Houston shows that low-income neighborhoods experienced far greater damage and longer-term recovery challenges than wealthier areas. For example, only 17% of homeowners held flood insurance policies, which tend to be held by wealthier households.

### Domestic Violence

- Disasters also exacerbate violence against women. Studies have shown that in the aftermath of large-scale disasters, intimate partner violence increases. The percentage of women reporting violence increased from 33.6% to 45.2% following Hurricane Katrina.

### Mental Health:

- Another less visible impact of a disaster is mental health, especially for those who have previously suffered from mental illness. Overwhelming evidence suggests that the stress of living through a disaster can exacerbate prior challenges or create new ones. Many of the mental health challenges that emerge after a disaster present themselves about 18 months later, which is often when most funding support ends.



## #6: Support longer-term recovery needs and future resilience

While it is important to support disaster relief nonprofits that are working on the frontlines to quickly provide immediate relief for impacted communities, it is also important to be mindful of the longer-term recovery needs that emerge weeks and even months after a disaster, when most donations dry up. Most donations are made within the first few weeks of a disaster, and then when attention wanes, so does the funding.

### **Recovery:**

- Yes, we are motivated to provide relief in the moment to those in need of immediate lifesaving food, water and shelter. And that support is important for organizations on the ground. But equally critical is the long-term recovery work, like repairing homes, roads and businesses, which requires immense resources. For example, there are reports that the recovery from Hurricane Ian in September, 2022 could be the costliest in history for the state of Florida. Moreover, when the media's attention goes elsewhere, so do donations. So a donation to support longer-term recovery can have immense impact.

### **Calculating the Value of Preparedness & Resilience:**

- Equally important is investing in disaster preparedness - sometimes known as resilience - that helps communities be better prepared to withstand the impacts of the next natural disaster. This can mean fortifying structures, and also investing in systems for evacuation and communication in a disaster. Preparedness is historically under-funded, but it's where every dollar can have a huge impact. It is estimated that every \$1 invested in preparedness and disaster mitigation can save \$6 when a disaster hits. It is also an opportunity to test more innovative prevention and mitigation approaches that governments are less willing to invest in.





# DISASTER RESPONSE

## Engage Your Employees

### Acknowledge the Crisis

There will likely be an awareness of the disaster - depending on the scale and amount of media attention. But communicating early to your employees via a company-wide email or blog post can help display empathy with those impacted and signal a commitment to step up and support those impacted by the crisis.

### Call to Action

Share details of a specific gift or match program for the disaster. This communication can highlight specific nonprofits that your company wants to support, or point employees to other featured nonprofits found on the Groundswell app dashboard specifically focused on responding to the disaster. The company may be offering a special, time-sensitive match as a way to encourage employees to participate.

### Report Results

Share the results of the ways that your company came together - collectively - to support communities impacted by the disaster. This might include how many employees participated/donated, the number and amount of donations, the range of nonprofits that received support, etc.

If there is a time-sensitive match that expires at the end of a set time-frame, remind employees to log into their Groundswell account to contribute and donate.

### Emergency Giving Program: Gifting and Matching

- Keep a portion of your annual budget in reserve so that you can match and/or gift employees to have greater impact in response to the emergency. You can set up an ad hoc program with Groundswell in a matter of minutes, and meet the moment with urgency and intention.
- Consider launching a combined Gift and Match program - that both empowers employees to donate in the moment, while also incentivizing them to contribute their own funds.
- Being immediately responsive and pointing your employees to vetted nonprofits to donate to shows that you are responsive as a company and giving your employees the agency to take action.

# DISASTER RESPONSE - U.S. Focused

## Nonprofit Spotlights

There are many nonprofit organizations working to respond to disasters that impact communities in the United States. Many of these organizations also respond to disasters outside the U.S. Listed below are a selection of nonprofits you can find on the Groundswell app:



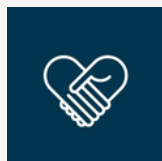
### SBP - St. Bernard's Parish

SBP is a nationally recognized disaster resilience and recovery organization whose mission is to shrink the time between disaster and recovery. Founded in 2006 after Hurricane Katrina, SBP has grown to an organization with more than 80 employees and 240 AmeriCorps members. Still headquartered in New Orleans, SBP has nine additional active operating sites around the country.



### Team Rubicon

Team Rubicon's mission is providing relief to those affected by disaster, no matter when or where they strike. By pairing the skills and experiences of military veterans with first responders, medical professionals, and technology solutions, Team Rubicon aims to provide the greatest service and impact possible. Founded in 2010, Team Rubicon has deployed across the United States and around the world to provide immediate relief to those impacted by disasters and humanitarian crises.



### Convoy of Hope

Convoy of Hope is an American nonprofit humanitarian and disaster relief organization that provides food, supplies, and humanitarian services to impoverished or otherwise needy populations throughout the world.



### World Central Kitchen

World Central Kitchen uses the power of food to nourish communities and strengthen economies in times of crisis and beyond. WCK is first to the frontlines, providing meals in response to humanitarian, climate, and community crises. We build resilient food systems with locally led solutions.



### American Red Cross

The American Red Cross, also known as The American National Red Cross, is a non-profit humanitarian organization that provides emergency assistance, disaster relief, and disaster preparedness education in the United States.



### All Hands And Hearts

All Hands and Hearts an organization committed to effectively and efficiently addressing the immediate and long-term needs of global communities impacted by disasters. All Hands and Hearts arrives early for first response and stays late to rebuild schools and homes in a disaster-resilient way.



### Operation BBQ Relief

Armed with a caravan of cooks, mobile pits, kitchens and volunteers, Operation BBQ Relief delivers the healing power of BBQ in times of need, feeding first responders and communities affected by natural disasters along with year-round efforts to fight hunger through The Always Serving Project® and Camp OBR™ programs.

# DISASTER RESPONSE - International

## Nonprofit Spotlights

When disaster strikes around the world, there are numerous international nonprofits that have the ability to mobilize a fast response with staff and supplies. Many have decades of experience saving lives all around the globe. Listed below are a selection of nonprofits you can find on the Groundswell app:



### Doctors Without Borders

We provide medical assistance to people affected by conflict, epidemics, disasters, or exclusion from healthcare. Our teams are made up of tens of thousands of health professionals, logistic and administrative staff - most of them hired locally. Our actions are guided by medical ethics and the principles of impartiality, independence and neutrality.



### International Rescue Committee

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people affected by these crises—including the climate crisis—to survive, recover and rebuild their lives.



### International Medical Corps

International Medical Corps is a global, nonprofit, humanitarian aid organization dedicated to saving lives and relieving suffering by providing emergency medical services, as well as healthcare training and development programs, to those affected by disaster, disease or conflict.



### Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps acts as a connector, a collaborator, a catalyst, and an advocate for change. For 40 years and in more than 40 countries, Mercy Corps has helped communities forge new paths to prosperity in the face of disaster, poverty, and the impacts of climate change.



### Direct Relief

Direct Relief is a nonprofit humanitarian organization that provides emergency medical assistance and disaster relief in the United States and internationally. Direct Relief works to expand access to medicine and healthcare by equipping doctors and nurses with lifesaving medical resources.



### International Committee of the Red Cross

Established in 1863, the ICRC operates worldwide, helping people affected by conflict and armed violence and promoting the laws that protect victims of war. An independent and neutral organization, its mandate stems essentially from the Geneva Conventions of 1949. We are based in Geneva, Switzerland, and employ over 20,000 people in more than 100 countries. The ICRC is funded mainly by voluntary donations from governments and from National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.



### Americares

Americares saves lives and improves health for people affected by poverty or disaster so they can reach their full potential. Americares meets urgent health needs of survivors in shelters and those cut off from care, often in remote areas.



### CARE

CARE works around the globe to save lives, defeat poverty and achieve social justice. Whether it is a sudden emergency or an ongoing crisis, CARE works to aid people in need around the world.



## Groundswell is your ally in corporate philanthropy.

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Corporate giving programs aim to empower employees and help companies facilitate and support philanthropic efforts. As global access grows and corporations become more diverse, employee representation becomes an increasingly important subject.

Groundswell enables companies to lay the foundation for their employees to adopt a generous giving attitude towards charities and world-shaping efforts.

## Want access to other toolkits like this?

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Reach out to us [hello@groundswell.io](mailto:hello@groundswell.io)