

Haiti Earthquake Response: In-Kind Donations

In response to international disasters, the American Red Cross often experiences an outpouring of generosity from the American people. As long as disasters continue to happen, we know that people will want to find ways to help. In addition to tremendous financial support, we typically receive myriad offers of product from individuals and community groups.

If you are an individual or community group who would like to make a product donation (such as clothing, hygiene products, medicine or food), please understand, though your generosity is sincerely appreciated, the American Red Cross cannot accept this type of donation.

Though unsolicited offers of goods and services from individuals and community groups are well intentioned, they have hidden costs and pose a number of complications for relief efforts.

For these reasons, the American Red Cross is unable to accept any large collections of items, such as clothing, hygiene items, furniture, toys, blankets, canned goods, or medicine. We are also unable to accept small individual donations of these items.

Why does the Red Cross discourage donations of collected goods and individual items for disaster relief?

- The cost of processing and transporting these types of donations often outweighs the cost of the donated items themselves. Donations of collected goods require time, money and personnel to accept, clean, sort and distribute them.
- The influx of unsolicited donations distracts relief workers on site from critical emergency response activities – feeding and sheltering the affected population.
- In addition, because we cannot anticipate what these spontaneous donations of collected items will include, we cannot ensure that the donated products will be appropriate for the relief effort or that there will be enough of a particular item to distribute them equitably.
- Shipping donated goods is costly and particularly difficult in the aftermath of a disaster. Routes into disaster sites are often damaged or impassable and can be clogged easily with shipments of non-priority items.
- The Red Cross makes every attempt to procure items locally, which minimizes transportation and storage expenses. By procuring goods locally, the American Red Cross can also ensure the items distributed to disaster victims are appropriate for the culture and diet.

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Where can donations of collected goods and individual items be most effective?

Individual donations of goods and collections of items are put to the best use possible and have the greatest impact economically, when they are donated to charitable organizations in your local community. Donating these items locally eliminates transportation costs and ensures disaster workers are not overwhelmed with sorting unsolicited donations, allowing them to focus on the critical response activities.

Local charitable organizations are not operating in the crisis environment that characterizes disaster relief, so they will have the time and resources to sort, clean and repair goods and identify how and where they can be most beneficial.

Does the American Red Cross ever accept in-kind donations for international disaster response?

If you represent a corporation that would like to offer a bulk donation of items for a Red Cross international response that you sell or manufacture, you may contact your local Red Cross chapter, which will direct your call appropriately. Please keep in mind that due to the time sensitivity, transportation costs, and complex nature of our product needs, we have greatest success procuring product as close to the disaster site as possible, which avoids delays in getting basic necessities to disaster victims.

What is the best way I can support the relief efforts?

We are especially appreciative of the financial contributions made by individuals, corporations, and foundations. Financial contributions allow us to support the greatest needs in the most efficient manner. Financial contributions can be used to purchase items locally, eliminating the added costs involved in transporting goods. Cash contributions also allow our relief workers to purchase culturally appropriate items in the country and stimulate the devastated economy.

How can I make a financial donation?

You can help the victims of countless crises around the world each year by making a financial gift to the American Red Cross International Response Fund, which will provide immediate relief and long-term support through supplies, technical assistance and other support to help those in need. The American Red Cross honors donor intent. Donations can be sent to the American Red Cross, P.O. Box 37243, Washington, D.C. 20013, or made by phone at 1-800-REDCROSS or 1-800-257-7575 (Spanish) or online at www.redcross.org.