



**American
Red Cross**

Tuesday, August 25, 2020

Dear Red Crossers:

I want to take a few minutes to let you know how very proud I am of all that our amazing volunteers, our dedicated staff, and our committed partners are doing during this very challenging Disaster Response Operation.

Since our part of California was subjected to a severe middle-of-the-night lightning storm on Sunday, August 16, our Red Cross teams have responded quickly, tirelessly, and with great impact on behalf of the many people affected by the resulting fires.

It is an understatement to say that the need in the Northern California Coastal Region communities we serve has been great. As of last night, in our region alone:

- The LNU Lightning Complex (350,030 acres burned) and SCU Lightning Complex (347,196 acres burned) are now the second and third largest fires in California history.
- The CZU Lightning Complex, which has burned some 78,000 acres across San Mateo and Santa Cruz Counties, has by itself led to the evacuation of almost 75,000 people.
- The Monterey County Fires (River, Carmel, and Dolan) continue to defy containment and have burned 75,210 acres.
- More than 1,400 structures have been destroyed or damaged, and half of those are homes.
- Almost 95,000 homes are still threatened and almost 250,000 people have been evacuated.

I know that you all share my sorrow for the impact this has had on so many of the people who reside in our NCCR counties. And I want to send an extra amount of care and comfort to the members of our Red Cross team who have been personally affected by one of these fires. I know of at least one regional volunteer who lost her home to one of these fires, and other members of our team also remain under worrisome evacuation orders. Please know that those of you who are most affected by these fires are in our collective thoughts, and please do not hesitate to reach out for help.

Our team members, joined by other Red Crossers from elsewhere in the country, have stepped up in too many ways to accurately describe: You've helped set up and staff sheltering sites, both congregate and non-congregate; you've helped organize feeding and stocked partner shelters with Red Cross cots, blankets, and other supplies; you've worked closely with partners to ensure that we are providing evacuees with a level of service that is defined by quality rather than jurisdiction; you've worked tirelessly in support of one of the DRO's many teams; and you've help tell the Red Cross story and interacted with the donors who so generously support of our efforts.

And your work in support of our region's fire evacuees has come during an unsettling time defined by a global pandemic. You have performed heroically, supporting the needs of so many people while also employing our [enhanced safety protocols](#).

In this message, I also want to salute our volunteers and staff who have *not* been assigned to this DRO. As you know, our Red Cross work in other areas doesn't stop just because we are responding to a large disaster. You have not only kept our regular work going, in some cases you've done it with fewer team members. So thank you for all you are doing too!

During responses like our current wildfires one, we share numbers that speak clearly about our work. Here are just a few from this one. As of Monday night:

- The Red Cross and our partners had provided more than 2,500 people in our region with refuge from the wildfires with emergency lodging, including shelters and in hotels.
- With the help of partners, the Red Cross had provided more than 8,000 meals and snacks.
- Volunteers had also made more than 800 contacts with people who had medical or disability needs, and they continued to provide emotional and spiritual support to affected individuals during this challenging time.

The quantity and quality of this kind of response takes teamwork and leadership, and I want to give a special shout-out to Terry Unter, the Job Director for this DRO. But, knowing Terry, who is a devoted Disaster Cycle Services volunteer leader and the Board Chair in our Silicon Valley Chapter, he would be the first to say "it takes a village." And he's right; it really does.

The good news is that progress is being made on the fire fronts. But the people affected by these fires are going to need our help for much longer; and another large disaster could be just around the corner.

So, if you are currently a Disaster Responder, we encourage you to enter your [availability in Volunteer Connection](#). As additional needs are identified, these are being added to the [Disaster Relief Operation – Volunteer Shifts](#) in the Volunteer Connection Shift Tool. These opportunities will be updated daily, so we encourage you to check back regularly to see what is needed. And if you have family members or friends who would like to become a Red Cross volunteer, to help with this response, or to help with future responses like this one, please ask them to apply online to become a Red Cross volunteer at redcross.org/volunteer.

In closing, I'd like to underscore this: We are only beginning the most dangerous part of our fire season. So pace yourself and take care of yourself. In fact, please remind yourself of a few mental health tips that are contained in [this press release](#) our team distributed this week.

In closing, please know how very grateful I am for each and every one of you — and I'm so proud to work along side you in delivering Red Cross assistance to our communities when they most need it.

Thank you again for all you do!

Jennifer Adrio
Regional CEO,
American Red Cross, Northern California Coastal Region

Please stay up to date about this large disaster response by going to this status post on our [regional blog](#); and please share the post with others as it speaks to the amazing work being done.