

Suggestions for Donating Items Following a Disaster

While money is by far the best type of donation for disaster relief, for varied reasons, many people feel more comfortable donating “things” that they feel have a tangible use to people who have been victimized by a disaster. This guideline is designed to give ideas for practical donations, and is categorized by disaster type to give you a better idea of what items are most needed for each particular disaster.

What NOT to donate

Clothing is rarely needed following a disaster, except for NEW underwear, socks, etc. Manpower to sort, size and display used clothing is often in short supply at the disaster site.

Water is another item that is normally brought in at the request of government officials. Individual bottles or jugs of water are hard to transport and store, and can cause more problems than they fix.

Do not donate broken or soiled items – there is no one there who has the time to repair those things, and your well-meant donation may be discarded to make room for more useable items.

What to Donate

As a general rule, non-perishable (canned or dried) food is welcome. Also include a hand-operated can opener or two with your donation. Personal-care items (soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, combs, hairbrushes, shampoo, feminine care products, etc.) are also useful. NEW underwear and socks (in the original packaging), and cleaning supplies are always needed, as are baby products. Bedding, towels and washcloths, kitchen items (new dishes, pots and pans, coffee makers, paring knives, etc) are always welcome by those who have lost everything.

Be sure to use common sense in choosing items. A general rule-of-thumb is to purchase what you would buy for yourself. Someone there at the disaster site is probably your size and has your tastes.

Following is a list of items that are usually in short supply after a particular kind of disaster. Please remember that you must arrange for transportation

for your donation to the disaster site. It would be helpful to call around and see who is taking a load to the disaster site and ask to include your donation with that load. Often drivers are looking for enough donations to maximize the value of their trip. If possible, try and find out which agencies are handling in-kind donations for that disaster and ship your items to them.

Donations by Disaster Type

Tornadoes, Hurricanes and Severe Windstorms

Emphasis should be on quick repair, drying-in, etc.

1. Blue plastic tarps (various sizes)
2. Rolled plastic
3. 30lb rolled roofing
4. Roofing nails
5. Regular nails
6. 5/8" plywood or chipboard
7. 2"X4"s
8. Hand tools (hammers, skillsaws, prybars, etc)
9. Boxes, barrels, heavy-duty plastic bags (for survivors to collect their possessions in)
10. Work gloves

Floods

Emphasis on sanitation, cleaning

1. Boots
2. Cleaning rags
3. Detergent, disinfectant
4. Mops
5. Brooms (regular and push)
6. Plastic buckets
7. Scrub brushes
8. Dust masks
9. Shovels (flat-bladed and regular)
10. Rakes

Winter Storms

Emphasis on food, warmth

1. Non-perishable, high-energy foods that can be eaten un-cooked
2. Blankets
3. Warm coats, gloves, scarves
4. Fuel cans

Wild Fires

Emphasis on cleanliness and energy restoration

These items will mostly be used by firefighters

1. Chapstick
2. Bandannas
3. NEW T-shirts and underwear,
4. Work gloves
5. Hi-energy food and drinks