



**American  
Red Cross**

# Oklahoma Tornadoes

One-Year Update | May 2014

## Oklahoma Tornadoes Response



Activated more than **45 response vehicles**.



Provided more than **6,300 overnight stays** in shelters.

Distributed nearly **400,000 relief items**.



Provided approximately **23,000 health and mental health contacts**.



Served nearly **460,000 meals and snacks**.



Mobilized more than **2,500 workers and volunteers**.

Right: The Red Cross brought assistance and hope to hard-hit neighborhoods.

On the cover: Retired U. S. Air Force master sergeant Steve Brown sits by the storm shelter entrance in his rebuilt home. His old home was completely destroyed during the May 19 Moore tornadoes, and he and his family were trapped underground for 45 minutes in a storm shelter because of debris covering the door. Brown has been approved for the Moore shelter rebate program, which is funded by the American Red Cross, to help construct a new shelter that can hold up to 10 people. Photo by: Jason Colston/American Red Cross

To see a video of Steve Brown's story, please click [here](#).



## A Message From the President and CEO



The destruction in Oklahoma following last May's deadly tornadoes is one of my most vivid memories in nearly six years at the American Red Cross, and I am deeply inspired by the resiliency of people as they have worked to recover and rebuild.

The Red Cross has stood with Oklahomans, delivering food, shelter, relief supplies and other support immediately after the tornadoes struck. We were with tornado survivors as they began the recovery process—and we will continue to help people in the months and years ahead.

Recovery takes time, and the pace of recovery is different for every family. Caseworkers are still meeting one-on-one with residents to help with unmet needs and create recovery plans. We awarded grants to Moore and other communities to help homeowners purchase and install storm shelters in homes throughout the area. Our funds have also helped communities rebuild, such as through the installation of a new water well for the Steelman Estates housing association near Shawnee.

The tornadoes destroyed two Oklahoma schools, and the Red Cross is using donations to help teachers and students recover and prepare for future storms. At the beginning of this school year, we gave more than 400 teachers grants so they could replace classroom supplies lost in the tornadoes.

To help communities stay safe through future storms, Red Cross volunteers are going door-to-door in impacted areas to talk with residents and to hand out preparedness kits. We are also reaching out to the growing Hispanic community with Spanish-language preparedness information and resources.

Our work is made possible by the generosity of donors and our partnerships with other nonprofit and community groups. As of April 30, the Red Cross has spent or has commitments to spend approximately \$48.1 million for our Oklahoma emergency relief and recovery efforts. This is nearly 92 percent of our \$52.4 million in donations for the Oklahoma tornadoes.

We are committed to being good stewards of the donations entrusted to us. Money donated for Oklahoma will be spent in Oklahoma, and funds not spent on immediate relief will support long-term recovery and resiliency efforts in affected communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gail McGovern". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gail McGovern

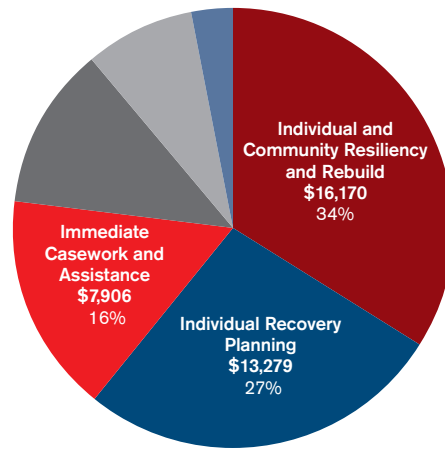
# Financials

## Oklahoma Tornadoes Expenses and Commitments\* Through April 30, 2014 – \$48.1M (of \$52.4M raised)

(in thousands)

- Emergency Food, Shelter and Relief Items  
\$5,601, 12%
- School Preparedness and Recovery  
\$3,664, 8%
- Immediate Physical Health and Mental Health Services  
\$1,543, 3%

\*An average of 91 cents of every dollar the Red Cross spends is invested in humanitarian services and programs.



### Individual and Community Resiliency and Rebuild

The Red Cross helps individuals, families and communities assess and overcome barriers to community recovery, including preparedness and mitigation measures for future disaster events. Projects can include providing disaster preparedness education and partnering with other community organizations on sheltering programs. In coordination with our partners, we are also providing grant funding for community rebuilding initiatives, including repairing infrastructure.

### Individual Recovery Planning

We help families plan their recovery and connect them with community and government resources beyond their immediate disaster-caused needs. Assistance can include support with housing, such as repairs, rent, security deposits and utility deposits; furniture and appliances; transportation; health and mental health; and other needs identified by disaster case managers.

### Immediate Casework and Assistance

Client caseworkers meet with individuals affected by disasters to offer assistance with their immediate disaster-caused needs. Assistance can include groceries, clothing, lodging and other assistance to help families get back on their feet.

### Emergency Food, Shelter and Relief Items

Working with our partners, the Red Cross serves meals at shelters and from emergency response vehicles and fixed feeding sites in affected communities. Through effective partnerships, the Red Cross opens shelters and ensures they meet the needs of individual communities. The Red Cross also distributes to clients, who have lost everything, a broad range of relief items, including cleaning supplies, tarps, shovels, coolers and comfort kits containing hygiene items, such as toothbrushes and toothpaste.

### School Preparedness and Recovery

We are providing resources for school building repair, as well as equipment and supplies to help schools return to effectively delivering educational services. Along with community partners, we will also be delivering education programs designed to increase schools' preparedness levels for future disaster events.

### Immediate Physical Health and Mental Health Services

We provide physical and emotional support services to clients, including first aid and replacement of prescription medicines.

## Bringing Relief in the Wake of the Tornadoes

A series of powerful tornadoes and storms struck central Oklahoma in May 2013, devastating homes and inflicting heartbreaking losses on families and communities throughout the region. Tornadoes and flash flooding caused billions of dollars of damage across 18 counties and destroyed two elementary schools in the city of Moore.

The Red Cross moved quickly to address emergency relief needs. More than 2,500 Red Cross workers—91 percent of them volunteers—provided people affected by the storms with shelter from the elements, nourishing meals and snacks, water, hygiene and cleanup supplies, and hope and comfort for survivors.

Our work, which is bolstered by an outpouring of support from compassionate donors, is far from over. One year after the tornadoes changed so many lives and devastated communities, the Red Cross remains committed to Oklahoma's ongoing recovery.

Further, because each disaster presents unique challenges, the Red Cross tailors recovery efforts to address the specific needs of the people who are affected. We are part of the Oklahoma Disaster

Recovery Project—along with partner organizations Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Oklahoma United Methodist Church and Church of the Harvest.

Working together with these and other community partners, we are providing individuals, families and communities vital support as they continue to rebuild their homes, schools and lives and prepare for a safer, more secure future.

## Helping Families and Communities Recover

In the immediate aftermath of the storms, the Red Cross and its partners staffed Multi-Agency Resource Centers (MARC)s, where survivors could meet with caseworkers to find the assistance they urgently needed. During our response, the Red Cross opened more than 6,300 cases to help more than 20,000 people. And as individuals and families moved beyond immediate emergency needs to the challenges of recovery, trained Red Cross case managers have continued working tirelessly to ensure that people affected by the storms are getting the right help at the right time.

With our partner agencies, we are now operating long-term recovery centers in El Reno, Shawnee and Moore. Storm survivors turn to these recovery centers for a wide range of assistance, which could include support with housing, such as repairs, rent, security deposits and utility deposits; furniture and appliances; transportation; health and mental health services; and other needs identified by the survivors or disaster case managers. Working with our partners, the Red Cross has helped almost 2,700 families and individuals—an estimated 8,000 people—with recovery needs since the Oklahoma Disaster Recovery Project was launched in September.



Jason Colston/American Red Cross

Jamie Baker stands where her new home will soon be built. The tornado destroyed her home while she sheltered in a closet. She later sought help from the Red Cross at the Multi-Agency Resource Center, where survivors could meet with Red Cross caseworkers. The newly constructed Plaza Towers Elementary School, one of two Moore schools destroyed, is visible in the background.

To see a video of Jamie Baker's story, please click [here](#).

William Harris and his wife have lived in a travel trailer since the tornadoes hit eastern Cleveland and Pottawatomie County. Their make-shift home sits parked next to the storm shelter that likely saved their lives when one of those late May tornadoes destroyed their house.

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“They [the Red Cross] have done almost everything for us. They have been our heroes.”

—William Harris, tornado survivor

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After the tornado, the Red Cross assisted the couple with food, clothing and the travel trailer that serves as their temporary home. And William Harris found comfort in a familiar face. At the MARC, he recognized a Red Cross case manager who had helped the family following a house fire the year before. For a second time, they sat down together and started mapping out the road to recovery

Their Red Cross case manager identified volunteer groups who could assist with construction of a new foundation for their house, and he has stayed in close contact through every step of their recovery. “It’s personal with him,” Harris said. “He cares for people.”

## Providing Safer Refuge From Future Storms

Red Cross financial support has also helped communities repair damaged infrastructure and work toward a more secure and resilient future for local residents. With government and community partners, we are helping homeowners rebuild and invest in storm shelters that will provide safer refuge against the ever-present risk of tornadoes and dangerous storms.

In January, the Red Cross awarded a \$3.75-million grant to the city of Moore to help homeowners purchase and install up to 1,500 storm shelters. Storm shelters are a crucial need for residents of Moore, which has been directly hit by seven tornadoes in the past 40 years. Similar shelter grant programs are planned for other communities impacted by the 2013 tornadoes and storms.

Linda Danes rode out last May’s tornadoes in a storm shelter with her daughter, sister and three grandchildren while her own house was being leveled by a tornado. Now, Danes is moving into a house that lacks a storm shelter, and she plans to apply for a grant from the Red Cross-supported shelter program. “I’m so thankful donors provided

the funds to make this type of a program available,” she said, “because there’s no way I could afford this on my own.”



## Supporting Resilient Schools and Neighborhoods

### Helping Schools Recover

After the tornadoes caused injuries, deaths and extensive damage at area schools, the Red Cross has provided both material and emotional support for teachers and schools as they work to recover and ensure the security and safety of children in their care.

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**“The Red Cross has been there for us. We’re not just friends; we’re family.”**

—Dr. Robert Romines  
Moore Schools Superintendent

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As children returned to school last fall, the Red Cross gave more than 400 Oklahoma teachers from the Moore, El Reno and Mid-Del districts grants ranging from \$500 to \$1500 to replace classroom materials lost in the storms. Additionally, the Red Cross helped purchase furniture in the badly damaged Moore school district administration building.

The Red Cross is supporting other initiatives to keep school children safe throughout the storm-affected areas. In Edmond, 150 seventh graders learned preparedness through games, acting out the “stop, drop and roll” technique for a fire and learning the safety position for a tornado drill. They left with a Red Cross preparedness cinch sack, along with preparedness and planning information to share with their families.

### Preparing Oklahoma Communities for Future Disasters

As another storm season approaches, Red Cross volunteers have delivered preparedness kits and emergency preparedness information to communities across the region. This February, more than 100 people packed the Little Axe Baptist Church for dinner and a kit at the

invitation of the Red Cross. Many acknowledged that they had been caught unprepared.

“We came out here to make sure we had all the things that we did not have on May 19th, 2013,” said Shalan Pearson-Despain, who lost her home in the tornado. “We were not ready for that day, and we want to make sure we are weather-ready this year. The Red Cross providing that for us is a blessing to this community.”

Dozens of Red Cross volunteers provided one-on-one briefings and distributed preparedness kits from Helping Oklahomans Manage Emergencies (HOME). The HOME kits include weather radios, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, a Red Cross whistle, flashlight and educational literature about what to do if a disaster strikes. These preparedness kits and community meetings help ensure that people not only have essential items to make them better prepared, but also have the know-how to use the kits effectively.



Jason Colston/American Red Cross

The Red Cross highlighted its Spanish-language outreach—la Cruz Roja—at a March event in Oklahoma City. After the May tornadoes and their impact on the Hispanic community, the Red Cross recognized an urgent need to better prepare Hispanic families.

# Thank You

The generous support the Red Cross received following the tornadoes and storms in Oklahoma has allowed us to deliver a sustained and comprehensive response. In addition to large-scale events like the Oklahoma storms, your contributions ensure we can respond to nearly 70,000 disasters of all sizes each year. Whether responding to a house fire or a hurricane, people rely on us to answer the cry for help with safe shelter, a warm meal and the heartfelt embrace of a Red Cross worker—whenever and wherever we are needed.

Constant preparedness is a major component of our disaster operations, and we maintain pre-identified shelters, warehouses stocked with supplies and a fleet of emergency response vehicles to mobilize in the moments following a crisis. Compassionate gifts from individuals, foundations and corporations aid our disaster relief efforts before, during and after a disaster strikes.

Thank you for your commitment to the lifesaving mission of the American Red Cross. We are grateful to count you as a partner as we care for those whose lives have been forever altered by these destructive storms.



**American Red Cross**

