



Tips for Donating & Volunteering Responsibly

Cash is the most efficient method of donating – Cash offers voluntary agencies the most flexibility in obtaining the most-needed resources and pumps money into the local economy to help businesses recover. Remember, unsolicited donated goods such as used clothing, miscellaneous household items, and mixed or perishable foodstuffs require helping agencies to redirect valuable resources away from providing services to sort, package, transport, warehouse, and distribute items that may not meet the needs of disaster survivors.

Donate through a trusted organization – At the national level, many voluntary-, faith- and community-based organizations are active in disasters, and are trusted ways to donate to disaster survivors. In addition to the national members, each state has its own list of voluntary organizations active in disasters. If you'd like to donate or volunteer to assist those affected by Irene, these organizations are the best place to start.

Affiliate with existing non-profit organizations before coming to the disaster area. Immediately following a disaster, a community can become easily overwhelmed by the amount of generous people who want to help. Contacting and affiliating with an established organization will help to ensure that you are appropriately trained to respond in the most effective way.

Be safe. Do not self-deploy until a need has been identified and the local community impacted has requested support. Wait until it is safe to travel to volunteer sites and opportunities have been identified. Once assigned a position, make sure you have been given an assignment and are wearing proper safety gear for the task.

Be patient. Recovery lasts a lot longer than the media attention. There will be volunteer needs for many months, often years, after the disaster - especially when the community enters the long-term recovery period.