

Superstorm Sandy update from Napa Red Cross

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“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.” — Benjamin Franklin.

On behalf of the Napa County Red Cross, we want to thank the community for the continuous support that has been given to those who have suffered, and continue to suffer, from the devastation that Superstorm Sandy left in its wake. The response in Napa has been extraordinary.

Since Sandy’s touchdown 11 weeks ago, the Red Cross has deployed more than 16,800 responders, 90 percent of those being volunteers. Locally, Napa County Red Cross deployed seven of our own volunteers to assist with relief and recovery efforts.

We have provided food, shelter and health services, have handed out more than 6.9 million relief items, provided more than 109,000 health services and emotional support contacts, and (in partnership with the Southern Baptist Men and Women) served 11 million meals and snacks.

Thank you, Napa County, for supporting our mission and those affected by the superstorm.

In addition to expressing our deep gratitude to the community, Napa County Red Cross also wants to take this opportunity to remind everyone of the vital importance of preparedness.

We in Napa County, like those affected by Superstorm Sandy, have the same chance of being hit by a disaster here on the West Coast as those back on the Eastern Seaboard. We, however, will not have a week’s warning to prepare, but will only have seconds to react as the ground starts shaking (in an earthquake: drop, cover, hold on).

Understanding our risks locally leads to awareness that preparedness efforts need to encompass everything from an earthquake to wildfires, floods and possible home fires. Are you and your loved ones prepared? How does one even start to be prepared?

The solution is simple and can be summed up by following the Red Cross mantra: Get a kit. Make a plan. Be informed.

By teaming up with our local energy company, Pacific Gas & Electric, the Red Cross is out stomping the pavement and letting our Napa County residents know the basic preparedness fundamentals and how we as a community can become resilient.

- Get a kit. Actually, let’s get three: one for your house, one for your car and one for work (or school). Preparedness doesn’t need to be expensive. In fact, for every \$1 invested in preparedness, you can save up to \$10 in response costs.

So stock up on nonperishable food items (that don’t require electricity), a manual can opener, flashlight, and one gallon of water per person, per day.

Plan for a three-day emergency kit. Include your emergency point of contact (someone out of

the area whom all family members can contact to relay information), important papers, medical records (pack your furry friend's rabies certification), and other pieces of valuable information. Include in this kit loose change and small bills — ATMs will be down.

Store sturdy shoes in your vehicle and try to drive with no less than half a tank of gas at any time. Big family? Store emergency items in a trash can or other storage container with wheels. Be creative.

- Make a plan. Does your family have two evacuation routes out of the home? What about out of your community? Discuss this information ahead of time and share your plan with even the youngest of the household. Assign roles and responsibilities — small children love having a job. Who is responsible for getting the dog? Who's grabbing the kit?
- Be informed. Do you know your local resources? Where are the local hospitals, fire stations and police stations? How do you get there on foot? What AM radio station will broadcast emergency information in your area (KVON 1440 AM, KGO 810 AM, KCBS 740 AM)?

Do you know CPR and first aid? What about how to use a fire extinguisher? Do you know how to turn off your gas or contact PG&E if you see a downed power line? So many questions.

Preparedness doesn't have to be scary, overwhelming or expensive. The Red Cross is here to support you in your preparedness efforts. Whether it's teaching your Neighborhood Watch group, church organization or parent-teacher association on how to be prepared, we are here for you.

Although Superstorm Sandy left many feeling helpless, please know that we can be prepared. Your local Red Cross office has information and help close at hand.

Join us in our New Year's resolution of getting prepared by following our Facebook and Twitter page in early February as we show, over a 15-week period, many preparedness items.

To help with disaster relief efforts, please consider donating to the American Red Cross by visiting your local chapter at 1790 Third St., Napa. Checks, cash and credit are all being accepted.

You can also donate to the Red Cross by texting "REDCROSS" to 90999 on your cellphone to make a \$10 donation.

To get involved and start preparing our community, contact the Napa County Red Cross at 257-2900.

Together, we can all prepare our homes, families and community.

Houser and Revord are the board chair and disaster preparedness coordinator for the Napa County Red Cross, respectively.