

What Can a Girl Scout Do When Disaster Strikes?



When disaster strikes, Girl Scouts can...

Lend a Hand

Offer a thoughtful, immediate response

Educate and Prepare

Think ahead and be ready

Change the World

Think big and create solutions



How You Can Offer a Thoughtful, Immediate Response

When hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, fires, and other disasters strike, Girl Scouts like you wonder what you can do to help. But what makes a thoughtful response different from any other kind?

It means you've taken the time to learn what people who were directly affected need most during this stressful and scary time—and then thought about the best way to follow through.

People often have the urge to send clothing or canned food to disaster areas, but that stuff may not be what most people need. In fact, relief workers have said the time it takes to accept, sort through, and distribute all that stuff often gets in the way of the most important relief efforts.

GSUSA recommends raising and giving money to councils to meet the needs of sister Girl Scouts directly affected by the disaster. Restrictions on troop fundraising have temporarily been adjusted, allowing you to donate money to the affected councils.



Are You Nearby?

If you live within 100 miles of the disaster area and are fortunate enough to be safe and relatively unaffected, there may be additional ways your troop or group can give back. Check in with community leaders and local organizations to see how you can offer more hands-on help. For example:

- ◆ A school may request donations of backpacks and other school supplies.
- ◆ Shelters may need volunteers to help serve hot meals or entertain younger children.
- ◆ Relief organizations may be able to use donations of warm blankets or first-aid supplies.
- ◆ Animal rescue centers may be looking for people to foster pets displaced in the disaster.



3 Steps to Start Fundraising Like a Boss

Decided to raise money to help impacted councils and your sister Girl Scouts in affected areas? Awesome! Follow these tips to take your fundraising campaign to the next level.

1. Use your imagination

Think about what it might be like to live in the disaster area. Maybe your family home was destroyed, the place where your Girl Scout troop meets is being used as a shelter for other families that lost their homes, or the camp you love has been seriously damaged. How would that feel? When you put yourself in another girl's shoes, it will be easier for you to express the need to potential donors.

2. Know your stuff

Reading news articles about impacted areas can give you all the facts in case donors have questions. What are the names of the councils you're focusing on? Where are they located? Being knowledgeable about the who, what, when, and where of the issue will reassure donors that their money will be in good hands.

3. Think about what Girl Scouts means to you

After a disaster, people raise money for many causes related to the event. Take time to think about why helping Girl Scouts is an important way for people to give back so you can explain that to donors. Your reasons might include:

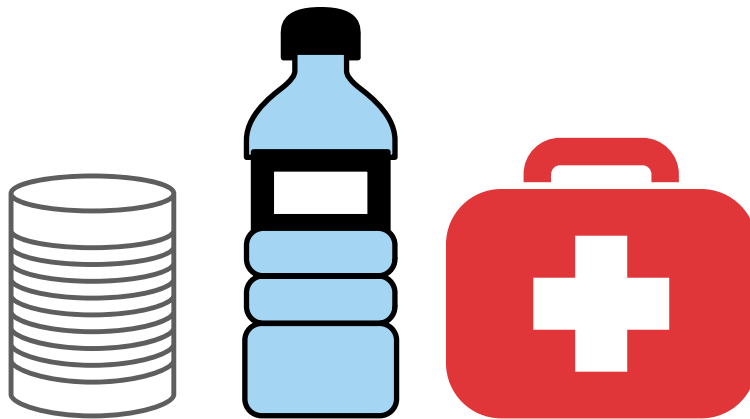
- ◆ Girl Scouts make their schools and communities better places. Any donation received will help Girl Scouts in the affected areas get back on their feet and back to creating positive change in the world.
- ◆ Girl Scouts gives girls a place to try new things, test their limits, and build the confidence to practice leadership. In times of disaster, we need strong leadership—and Girl Scouts creates the leaders of tomorrow today.
- ◆ Girl Scouts gives girls a space where they can relax and be themselves—something that's so necessary in stressful times. Girls who've survived a disaster need Girl Scouts more than ever. Donations will help them get back to troop activities as soon as possible.

Finally, brainstorm ways to thank the people who made your fundraiser a success. Crunched for time? Even a quick handwritten note will mean a lot to donors.

Prepare for Disasters and Help Others Prepare

In addition to lending a hand in the aftermath of an emergency, good leaders know it's important to be prepared before a natural disaster even strikes. When you prepare and educate others to do the same, you could be preventing extreme loss and helping save lives—powerful stuff. So harness your energy and check out these three things you can do to ensure your family, school, and community are ready in case a natural disaster ever happens in your area.

- ◆ Help your family gather non-perishable food, bottled water, and medical supplies that could be used in case of emergency. Also, discuss and agree on how you will communicate in the case that you're separated, and how and when to evacuate if necessary.
- ◆ Once you know your family is as prepared as possible, consider leading workshops to help other families prepare, or create a booklet or video to share information with a wider audience in your community.
- ◆ Find out how your school and larger community have already prepared—and where there might be gaps in readiness. Does a shelter need a stockpile of hygiene kits to hand out in case of disaster? Does a hospital or nursery school need assistance with evacuation identification cards? Does your school need volunteers to practice safety drills with younger students? Perhaps you and your troop could help fulfill these or other needs.



Change the World

While we might not be able to stop natural disasters from happening altogether, it's helpful to think of ways to lessen their effects and the damage they cause. For instance, you might ask yourself questions like: Are there actions people take that make disasters worse? What can be done about that? Are there technologies or other tools that might help family members stay in better touch during emergencies like these? You might not be able to answer these questions right now, but thinking about them can lead to innovations that keep people safer in the face of extreme storms, earthquakes, fires and other disasters.

GET THE FACTS

Before you can come up with solutions, you need to learn as much about the problem as possible.

- ◆ Talk to people like firefighters and other emergency response workers in your area to ask them if they've experienced a natural disaster, what it was like, and what they think could have gone better. Was there some small act of preparedness that could have made a big difference in the outcome?
- ◆ To understand these kinds of disasters on an even deeper level, interview an environmental scientist or check out the websites for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

LAY THE GROUNDWORK

Have a big idea but not sure how to get started? Talk to your troop leader and explain why you're passionate about natural disaster preparedness, and what your goals might be. Then, go on a Leadership Journey and learn all the steps to develop a Take Action project that will help others and make the world a better place.

TAKE ACTION

You can have the best ideas in the world, but they don't do any good unless you act on them! Completing a Take Action project takes dedication and focus, but seeing the results of your hard work—and knowing how it will benefit your community in the case of a natural disaster will make every step worthwhile.