Florida established its Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan in 1993 to include a system of Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) to oversee the state’s response to disasters. Each of the 18 ESFs in Florida is headed by a lead agency that unites supporting agencies with similar functions in effective disaster operations.

The Governor’s Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service, Volunteer Florida, is the lead agency for ESF 15, Volunteers and Donations. In pursuit of its mission, Volunteer Florida maintains a strong network of partnerships to ensure the needs of disaster survivors are met through donations and volunteer service.

As lead agency, Volunteer Florida:

• Matches disaster needs identified by federal, state, and local agencies with resources offered by faith and community-based organizations.
• Operates the Florida Volunteer and Donations Hotline and Web site in times of disaster.
• Routes disaster donations to local agencies.
• Trains Florida AmeriCorps members to support disaster-impacted communities.
• Coordinates disaster volunteer placement with local volunteer organizers.
• Develops networking and training exercises to enhance voluntary agencies’ response capabilities.

This document is available in large print, Braille and electronic formats. Please contact Volunteer Florida at 850-921-5172 with your request.
Helping Floridians Recover in Times of Disaster through Volunteerism and Donations

Train to respond
Volunteers can:
• Educate the public on disaster response and recovery needs.
• Prepare and serve meals to survivors and relief workers.
• Connect survivors with relief agencies.
• Provide child care for disaster survivors.
• Manage Volunteer Reception Centers.
• Organize debris removal or clean-up assistance to the elderly and disabled.
• And much more!

Think before acting
An influx of unexpected or unneeded volunteers and donations creates an additional burden for communities already struggling to respond to and recover from a disaster. Before traveling to a disaster area:
• Learn where and when your skills will be needed.
• Discuss with volunteer organizers how your needs for food, water and shelter will be met while you are volunteering.

When Making Donations …
Financial gifts make the greatest impact
Relief agencies use monetary donations to meet survivors’ specific needs, while avoiding the burdensome expense of sorting, packing and transporting goods. These organizations purchase supplies in impacted communities, helping to regenerate the local economy.

Confirm the need before collecting items
Some relief agencies that have the ability to store and distribute donated goods may request specific items. Get precise information and coordinate with relief agencies to ensure that only needed items are collected. Follow their specific instructions for packaging and transporting your donations. Be wary of claims that “everything is needed.” The gridlock caused by unneeded donated items prevents the flow of more crucial supplies from reaching impacted communities.

Volunteer Florida administers the Florida Donations Portal, which ...
• Allows donors to offer large-quantity donations online and specify their intended use.
• Allows relief agencies to post specific needs and accept or decline the offers.
• Prevents unneeded donations from choking the response effort.
• Connects donors wanting to give cash with all state ESF 15 Support Agencies.

CARE - The Best Way to Help