



# MONEYWISE

VALUING PEOPLE. VALUING MONEY.

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## BEING A RESPECTFUL GIVER: HOW TO HELP AFTER A NATURAL DISASTER

After a natural disaster or emergency, there is often widespread need. The desire to help those most affected is a normal and often well-intended response from those not affected. However, despite the best of intentions, most aid and donations after a disaster do not best help those in need. Many areas are overwhelmed with unusable in-kind donations that need to be sorted, distributed, and even discarded. This adds to the chaos that often engulfs communities after a disaster strikes. Instead, learn tips for how to help after a natural disaster by being a respectful giver.

### SO. MUCH. STUFF.

When a natural disaster hits a neighboring community, a knee-jerk reaction is to go through your home and gather things your family no longer wears, wants, or needs to give to storm survivors. When hundreds or thousands of people do this, however, disaster-affected areas can quickly become overwhelmed with stuff. Most often the stuff is not needed; rather it is tattered, dirty, or broken – or the donated items are irrelevant. Used clothing is one of the most-donated but least-needed items after an emergency. Unless an organization specifically requests clothing (for example, winter coats after an ice storm), wait to donate clothing.



### DONATE MOST-NEEDED ITEMS

If you choose to donate goods or items after a natural disaster, confirm that your items are needed. Reach out to the county Cooperative Extension Office, a local community center (like the YMCA or Red Cross), or a local place of worship, for example, which will be familiar with the specific needs of community members.

Also, consider providing new items that support common donations. An example of this would be manual can openers (as canned goods are frequently donated), or new baby bottles along with canisters of unopened, non-expired baby formula. Dry shampoo, baby wipes, diapers, feminine hygiene products, and work gloves are other examples of needed items that go overlooked after a large-scale disaster.



## CONTACT RECOGNIZED AND TRUSTED ORGANIZATIONS WHO KNOW IF AND WHERE VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED



### DONATE TIME, ENERGY, MONEY, OR GIFT CARDS

According to FEMA, financial contributions are the most flexible and most effective method of donating. Contact recognized charitable organizations who are on the ground in an affected area. They know what items and quantities are needed – and who needs them. Your time and energy may also be helpful in the days, weeks, and months after a disaster. However, never “self-deploy” to disaster areas. Again, contact recognized and trusted organizations who know if and where volunteers are needed. Disaster response and recovery efforts must be well-coordinated within a local community to be safe and effective.

### BE WARY OF SCAMS

Finally, be wary of donation-related scams after an emergency. Unfortunately, scammers prey on generosity and compassion during times of widespread need. Before donating – especially cash or gift cards – research the charity. Also, be careful of crowdfunding scams. These happen when a person asks for help through a crowdfunding

website, which is an online site where you can make financial contributions to an individual, family, or personal cause. Some crowdfunding sites do little to make sure the money goes where the organizer says it will.

Contact your local County Extension Office for suggestions of community organizations collecting money or in-kind donations.

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