



NOVEMBER 2023

Southern and Midwest Tornadoes and Storms: Six-Month Report

RESPONSE AT A GLANCE



Served more than **854,300 meals and snacks** with partners



Provided more than **124,900 overnight shelter stays** with partners



Reached an estimated **73,100 people** with disaster relief and recovery services



Provided relief supplies to more than **21,000 households**

*Cumulative figures in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Tennessee, as of September 23, 2023.

Delivering Relief and Comfort After Devastating Tornado Outbreaks

Beginning in late March 2023 and continuing through much of the spring, a series of devastating tornado outbreaks tore through communities in Mississippi, Arkansas and a dozen other states across the South and Midwest. In the wake of widespread destruction, more than 4,200 American Red Cross volunteers and employees fanned out across this vast area, bringing vital aid to heartbroken residents — many of whom lost almost everything.

Alongside our government and community partners, compassionate Red Cross disaster workers helped shelter thousands of people who had seen their homes destroyed or severely damaged by the storms. They delivered nourishing meals, essential relief items and sorely needed emotional support, both at disaster hub centers and directly to affected neighborhoods in our emergency response vehicles. In the weeks following the storms, the Red Cross also provided Immediate Assistance to hard-hit individuals and families. These funds helped tornado survivors replace lost clothing, buy food and gas, or meet other pressing needs.

Even before the storms, many of the affected areas faced high poverty levels and scarcity of affordable housing, vulnerabilities that were further heightened by the tornadoes' devastation. In Mississippi, more than 100 tornado survivors were still living in hotel rooms six months after the disaster, and caring Red Cross teams continued to visit them daily to

▶ **To learn more about our response and the people we've helped, please visit our [Southern and Midwest Tornadoes and Storms Story Map](https://www.redcross.org/southern-midwest-tornadoes-2023) at [redcross.org/southern-midwest-tornadoes-2023](https://www.redcross.org/southern-midwest-tornadoes-2023).**

Volunteer Elnita Barnett helps tornado survivor Jacqueline Robinson apply for Red Cross Bridge Recovery Assistance. Jacqueline's home and belongings were severely damaged by a March 31 tornado in Jacksonville, Arkansas. Photo by Jason Colston/American Red Cross

provide meals, recovery casework and other support as they sought stable longer-term housing.

Mississippi residents experienced some of the most severe impacts from the tornadoes. Building on relationships we have established with local partners, such as churches and food banks, helped us recruit volunteers from the community and better understand and support the unique needs of the affected residents.

For example, as part of our commitment to meeting the varying needs of the communities we serve, the Red Cross partnered with local beauty stores. Through their generous contributions, volunteers were able to assemble toiletry kits specifically designed for people with textured and curly hair. These kits included shampoos, conditioners, hair oils and styling products curated to maintain and nurture diverse hair types.

The impact of this small act was profound. Families devastated by loss were not only receiving essential supplies, but also experiencing a powerful sense of inclusion and support. They felt seen and valued, knowing that their specific needs were being acknowledged and addressed.

**“I love what I do,
and I love to see
the smiles on
their faces.”**

SUSAN JOHNSON

Volunteers Still Providing Daily Support. Having a regular point of contact makes a real difference for individuals and families who can't return to their homes. Six months after the tornadoes, Red Crosser Susan Johnson and other volunteers were still delivering hot meals to hotel shelter residents throughout Amory, Mississippi, forging close relationships in the process. Susan would call ahead to notify residents that breakfast, lunch or dinner will be arriving shortly. Many of them worked in the area and would drive over to pick up their meals. If they were in the hotel, Susan delivered the meals to their rooms.

“I have come to know everyone. I know what time they like to eat, what foods they prefer and what their needs are,” said Susan. “I love what I do, and I love to see the smiles on their faces.”



Red Cross volunteers like Yolanda Gainwell (left) have provided comfort and care to hard-hit Mississippi residents like Karebya Christmas since the tornadoes struck, and they continue to offer daily support to meet ongoing needs. Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross

Sheltering the Wolfe Family. Jennifer Wolfe and sons, Dillan, 16, and Hunter, 17, survived a tornado that destroyed their Wynne, Arkansas, home. Once they arrived at the Red Cross shelter, they immediately pitched in to help. “If it weren’t for the Red Cross help, we would be out on the street with no place to go and no food and no hope,” Jennifer said. “They made sure our medications were delivered to us because we had no way to go get them,” she added.

Hunter said he now wants to become a Red Cross volunteer because, “I want to help people.”

“If it weren’t for the Red Cross help, we would be out on the street with no place to go and no food and no hope.”

JENNIFER WOLFE



Jennifer Wolfe and her sons took refuge in a Red Cross shelter after a tornado destroyed their home in Wynne, Arkansas. Photo by Kevin Suttlehan/American Red Cross

Meeting Ongoing Recovery Needs in Hard-Hit Communities

Six months after the life-changing impact of these destructive twisters, individuals, families and communities are still struggling to recover from the damage caused to homes and livelihoods. Powered by the compassionate commitment of generous donors, the Red Cross will remain by the sides of the most severely affected individuals and families to understand and help meet their ongoing recovery needs. We are providing ongoing support with recovery planning, help locating available community resources and much more as heartbroken residents strive to rebuild their lives, homes and communities.

In addition to our Immediate Assistance funds that were provided shortly after the most widespread and destructive tornado outbreaks in Mississippi and Arkansas, the Red Cross has also provided additional Bridge Recovery Assistance to many of the most severely affected residents — whose homes suffered major damage or were destroyed — helping them overcome significant recovery roadblocks and begin to rebuild their lives.

As of September 23, 2023, we have provided **Immediate and Bridge financial assistance totaling approximately \$4.7 million**, reaching thousands of households reeling from these powerful tornadoes and storms. This financial assistance will allow people to make their own decisions and overcome the barriers standing in the way of their recovery, such as ongoing housing and transportation expenses, job-related needs, childcare, and accessing health and mental health services.

Recovery Assistance Helps Tornado Survivors Rebuild Homes and Lives

Powered by the generosity of countless donors who gave to help people when their lives were upended by these destructive tornadoes and storms, the Red Cross has provided financial assistance and more to help some of the hardest-hit residents get back on their feet.

MONIQUE'S STORY. Tornado survivor Monique Bass was at work when the tornado wiped out her home in Amory, Mississippi. For weeks, Monique paid for costly hotel rooms on her own and was worried about how she would continue to make ends meet. She knew that people were getting help but didn't think she would qualify—until she met with someone from the Red Cross.

In addition to financial assistance, including covering the costs of her previous hotel stay, the Red Cross helped Monique find temporary shelter in a hotel convenient to her job and located in a safe area. “The Red Cross has been such a blessing! I was struggling, but they helped me,” she said. “I'm safe, I'm fed, and I have met some amazing people. I'm so thankful.”

“The Red Cross has been such a blessing! I was struggling but they helped me.”

MONIQUE BASS



Monique Bass, who lost her Amory, Mississippi, home to a tornado in March, shares a moment with Red Cross volunteer Susan Johnson. Photo by Annette Rowland/American Red Cross

**“Today’s a good day.
I’m glad the Red
Cross is here.”**

MICHELLE MCGILL

MICHELLE’S STORY: Michelle McGill had tears in her eyes as she recounted the events of the March 31 tornado in Wynne, Arkansas. After her home of 35 years was severely damaged by the storm, her family needed food and clothing for the day, and that’s what she expected to receive from Red Cross. However, there was much more in store for her. Michelle and her family received Bridge Assistance funds from the Red Cross to help with their recovery.

“You pick up one stick at a time and move on, but it gets so overwhelming you get exhausted,” she said. “Today’s a good day. I’m glad the Red Cross is here,” she added. “Thanks for being here.”



Michelle McGill recounts the events of a March 31 tornado in Wynne, Arkansas, to Red Cross volunteer Rosa Murillo. Photo by Jason Colston/American Red Cross

**“I don’t know what
I would have
done without the
Red Cross.”**

LARRY WESTBROOK

LARRY’S STORY: Mississippi tornado survivor Larry Westbrook was displaced and had been taking refuge in a Red Cross shelter since May. On this day, Larry was full of emotion, because he was informed that he will be moving into a new apartment at the end of this week — thanks to financial assistance and other support from the Red Cross.

“The Red Cross has been excellent!” Larry said. “Ya’ll have really taken good care of me during this time.” He added, “I don’t know what I would I have done without the Red Cross.”



The Red Cross provided Mississippi tornado survivor Larry Westbrook with shelter, meals, financial assistance and more. Photo by Annette Rowland/American Red Cross

Compassionate Donors Fund Relief and Recovery for Tornado Survivors

Thanks to generous donors, the Red Cross has raised \$17.0 million designated for our response to this spring's tornadoes and storms across the South and Midwest—including the value of critical donated goods and services—to help people affected by these disasters.

As of September 23, 2023, the Red Cross had already spent or made commitments to spend approximately \$33.8 million on emergency relief and recovery efforts for the Southern and Midwest Tornadoes and Storms. To fill this gap, we have used donations to Disaster Relief, as well as specific expenses to be reimbursed by the states of Arkansas and Mississippi.

Southern and Midwest Tornadoes and Storms Expenses and Commitments ¹ (in millions) as of September 23, 2023 (\$17.0 million raised)						
Expense Categories	Food, Shelter and Relief Items	Health and Emotional Support	Financial Assistance	Community Recovery & Resilience	Total	Expense %
Financial assistance, food and other relief items ²	\$13.7	\$0.6	\$4.7	–	\$19.0	57%
Deployment of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$3.3	\$0.6	\$1.9	–	\$5.8	17%
Full-time Red Cross employees	\$1.2	–	\$0.2	–	\$1.4	4%
Temporary disaster hires	\$1.1	\$0.1	\$0.2	–	\$1.4	4%
IT, communications and call centers	\$0.4	\$0.1	\$0.9	–	\$1.4	4%
Freight, postage and warehousing	\$0.8	–	–	–	\$0.8	2%
Equipment, maintenance and fueling of Red Cross emergency vehicles and rented trucks	\$0.4	–	–	–	\$0.4	1%
Kitchen, shelter and other logistics that enable service delivery	\$0.1	–	\$0.1	–	\$0.2	1%
Total Program Expenses	\$21.0	\$1.4	\$8.0	–	\$30.4	90%
Management, general and fundraising ³					\$3.4	10%
Total Spent and Committed⁴					\$33.8	100%

¹ Dollar figures are rounded to the nearest \$100K; therefore, expenses \$49,999 and below are represented as zero.

² Includes specific expenses to be reimbursed by the states of Arkansas and Mississippi.

³ Management, general and fundraising expenses support our work at its core and are indispensable to running the organization and helping people in need. They include the people and systems to maintain our enterprise-wide computer and telecommunications, HR and payroll systems to support our nearly 18,000 employees and approximately 275,000 volunteers, fundraising and communications functions, and other support services across all program lines. Ninety cents of every dollar spent for Southern and Midwest Tornadoes and Storms will support delivering care and comfort to help people affected by these disasters.

⁴ In addition to Southern and Midwest Tornadoes and Storms donations, the response is being supported through donations to Disaster Relief.

Thank you!



American Red Cross

The Red Cross must be ready for every disaster, big or small, and we respond to an average of more than 60,000 disasters each year—including home fires, severe weather, floods and wildfires. Those in need turn to the Red Cross in their darkest hours because they know they can depend on us right after the disaster and throughout their recovery. Your donation helps us fulfill this promise. We are grateful for your trust.