



GIMME SHELTER

Red Cross is there when it's needed

Severe weather and natural disasters seem to be striking with increasing regularity and ferocity. Locally, we're dealing with historic flooding after Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee soaked the east coast — just a few weeks after a rare earthquake shook the region.

Texas is suffering through severe drought and hellish wildfires. Deadly tornadoes ravaged Joplin, Mo., in the spring, just two months after Japan was devastated by an earthquake and tsunami.

Whether there is a common element connecting the causes of these events is subject to debate. There is something they all share that is undeniable though — the Red Cross has arrived to lend a hand after each one.

Since 1881, this organization has been delivering aid, in the form of food, medical care, shelter and more to war zones and disaster areas around the world. Its website, at redcross.org, is a terrific resource for victims of disaster, or anyone who wants to help those victims by donating time, resources or even blood.

The site's home page currently has an article covering the massive flooding in our area. A link in the story takes you to a section with general information about flooding. There are safety check-

lists, advice on what to do when flooding is imminent, lists of supplies you should have on hand, instructions on safely returning to your home after it's been flooded and more. There's even a free, 56-page booklet on repairing your home after flooding that can be downloaded.

Pick your disaster

Of course, flooding isn't the only type of disaster that can occur around here and this site has us covered. There are sections on fires, heat waves, hurricanes, thunderstorms, tornadoes and winter storms. There are even sections on volcanoes and tsunamis, but if we ever have to worry about either of those striking here, I don't think even the Red Cross will be able to save us.

The Red Cross provides help for more than major disasters and wars. Collecting blood from donors is a major service the agency provides. In fact, it is the largest supplier of blood and blood products in the country. A section on the website allows you to make an appointment to donate blood, set up a blood drive, volunteer to help at a blood drive and more.

Aid after house fires is another area where the Red Cross is active. Local chapters provide temporary shelter, clothing, meals and more to people with nowhere else to go who have been forced out of their homes by fire. The home page has a section where you enter your Zip code to get the location and contact information of local chapters.

Redcross.org is a very competent website that organizes a tremendous amount of information into a manageable arrangement. While the home page is busy, with lots of elements and moving parts, it doesn't feel cluttered or chaotic.

A set of tabs at the top of the page contains links to many areas of the website. There are sections on preparedness and training, getting assistance, donating and volunteering, giving blood, taking classes and more.

Well-done slide shows and articles take you to pages detailing the Red Cross' ongoing aid efforts around the world. The site also has the requisite sections on the organization's mission and history, contact information, etc., as well as links to major social networks.

Donations are of tremendous importance to the agency, so there are areas throughout the site that enable you to donate money, time or blood. Donations made through redcross.org will be used wherever the agency deems them necessary.

If you would like to donate money specifically to help those impacted by flooding in our area, go to localfloodrelief.com. This is a site that has been set up by Times-Shamrock Communications and WNEP-TV, Channel 16, in conjunction with the American Red Cross to raise money for local flood victims. All donations made will stay in the community.

KEVIN O'NEILL is a graphic artist for The Times-Tribune. Contact him at koneill@timeshamrock.com with links to your favorite websites.



KEVIN O'NEILL
InSites