



Embargoed until delivery  
Tuesday, November 27, 2007  
9:30 a.m. (PST)

For more information, contact:  
Larry Decker, Senior Director, Congressional Affairs  
Phone: (202) 303-4394

**TESTIMONY OF JOE W. CRAVER  
INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
SAN DIEGO/IMPERIAL COUNTIES AMERICAN RED CROSS**

**UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES**

**SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA**

Chairman Feinstein, Senator Allard, I am pleased to represent the American Red Cross at this very important field hearing. My name is Joe Craver, and I serve as the interim CEO of the San Diego/Imperial Counties Red Cross.

For more than 125 years, the American Red Cross has been our nation's partner in preventing, preparing for, and responding to disasters of all types and sizes. Each year, our more than 750 chapters across the country respond to more than 70,000 disasters – ranging from single family home fires to events like the California Wildfires and Hurricane Katrina. Our responsibilities are mandated in our Congressional Charter, and we take them seriously.

California Wildfires

I am pleased to report that the Red Cross performed well in responding to the largest evacuation in California history and our largest relief operation in more than two years.

More than 5,400 Red Cross disaster relief workers – 90 percent of them volunteers – came from across California and all 50 states to help shelter, feed and deliver comfort and hope to those affected by the fires. In total, the American Red Cross so far has fed over 350,000 meals, provided over 30,000 overnight stays in our shelters, distributed over 225,000 cleanup kits and needed items, provided mental health assistance to over 36,000 individuals, and provided health services to almost 15,000 people in need. And our operations here in southern California continue.

This level of response was enhanced by two specific investments the Red Cross made in wake of Hurricane Katrina. First, pre-positioning supplies was particularly effective in aiding our

response. The Red Cross had cots, blankets, cleaning supplies, comfort kits and other supplies nearby in easily accessible warehouses in San Pedro, California and Reno, Nevada.

The second is the importance of partnerships and relationship building. First and foremost, the strong collaborative working relationships with California Emergency Management and our federal agency partners were critical to the success of these operations. In addition to strong government relationships, collaboration with faith-based organizations and other local and national nonprofits significantly improved our ability to set up shelters and respond to community needs. With the diverse population in California, including many non-English speaking residents, our partnerships with diverse groups were pivotal to our success. I would like to highlight a few examples:

- Working with organization such as Farm Worker CARE Coalition and Border Angels, we were success in delivering clean-up kits, water, meals and supplies to under-served communities;
- Outreach to the non-English speaking Hispanic community was essential, and our partners in the Mexican Red Cross, Mexican Consulate, Catholic Charities, Las Floras Nazarene Church (Carlsbad shelter site), and the Missionary Church of the Disciples of Jesus Christ were of tremendous support;
- We gathered information from local community and faith organizations such as Muslim Community Center of Greater San Diego, NAACP, several local affiliates of La Raza Asian Pacific American Legal Center and Temple Adat Shalom for distribution to clients;
- We worked closely with our strategic partners such as the Southern Baptists, Salvation Army, the NAACP and the National Council of La Raza to identify needs and provide critical services to the communities affected; and
- Moreover, we continued proactive outreach to grown some of our newer relationships with the 100 Black Men of America, Asian American Justice Center, Legal Services Corporation, National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators, and the National Disability Rights Network and connected with their local affiliates by sharing information about disaster services and responding to any questions or assistance they needed.

Red Cross programs and services are only beneficial if those who need them can access them. Diversity and partnerships are key to ensure that we can reach all who are in need, and we are grateful to all our partners who helped us deliver our services during the wildfires.

Additionally, our partnership with the Business Roundtable and individual companies resulted in generous offers of assistance from corporate America.

### Observations

Madam Chairwoman, the one observation I would like to convey today is about the charitable sector. The very nature of charitable organizations is to address needs – needs that, perhaps, are not met by government or social services, or that are better left with a “neighbor helping neighbor” model.

The American people are generous in their support of our responses to large-scale disasters. During Hurricane Katrina, for instance, we told the American people it would cost our organization more than \$2 billion – and they generously gave. Our work so far on the wildfires has cost almost \$15 million, and Americans have given us enough money to cover these costs. We are thankful to each one of our donors for their compassion and generosity.

Americans want their charitable dollars to go directly into program activities – like feeding and sheltering – and the American Red Cross goes to great lengths to honor donor intent. Yet, somehow we must pay for our every day operational expenses in addition to enhancing our infrastructure to meet the expectations of our government, our clients and the American people.

Since Hurricane Katrina, the American Red Cross has spent more than \$100 million on improvements – including telecommunications, vehicles, warehouses, and supplies. This year, we are projecting a substantial deficit. As the numbers of disasters increase, and as expectations of charitable organizations and their services increase, we will look to the Federal government to partner with us and provide additional funding to augment our investment in infrastructure and capital projects to protect our communities.

#### Conclusion

Madam Chairwoman, Senator Allard, the American Red Cross is proud of the work we do for our nation every day. We are honored by the responsibilities bestowed on us by the government, and grateful for our partnerships with others in the nonprofit sector. I thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to our continued work together. I would be happy to entertain any questions you may have.

###