

Action Guide on Disaster Relief for Girl Scout Council Leaders

Introduction

This guide is to inform council leaders of guidelines for providing support and relief to sister Girl Scout councils that have been impacted by disasters such as severe weather, wildfires, etc. The guide highlights general disaster relief recommendations and fundraising policies that inform these efforts and should serve as a future council reference.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is split into three sections. Each includes links to additional online resources and reference information.

Section 1: READ THIS FIRST highlights important policies and guidelines that inform all Girl Scout efforts to support impacted Girl Scout councils.

Section 2: Supporting Councils Recovering from Disaster provides specific suggestions for mobilizing Girl Scouts to support councils impacted by disaster.

Section 3: Girl Scout Disaster-Relief Resources describes detailed policy resources and reference tools that councils can use during any Girl Scout disaster preparedness or relief activities, both now and in the future.

Section 1: READ THIS FIRST

Council leaders play a key role in guiding local council disaster relief efforts to ensure the following:

1. Girl Scouts adhere to established policies and safety standards in all disaster relief activities.
2. Disaster relief efforts result in the most good being done, while minimizing the possibility of negative consequences for a council.

The following table provides a quick summary of do's and don'ts for Girl Scout councils mobilizing to provide disaster relief to impacted Girl Scout councils.

Girl Scout Disaster Relief At-a-Glance	
DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus relief efforts specifically on the needs of Girl Scouts and impacted Girl Scout councils.• Honor GSUSA's and local councils' policies (know when any policy exceptions are made).• Give impacted councils time and space to assess damages and communicate their needs.• Ensure all support is based on known council needs and/or specific requests from councils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assume what a council or its girls need—find out the best way to help by asking.• Collect or send supplies or donations that may pose logistical (e.g., storage) or other burdens on an impacted council or its community.• Pursue relief efforts to the detriment of your own council's continued health and sustainability.• Fundraise for a Girl Scout council unless you have been notified that the fundraising ban has been lifted for that council.• Fundraise for organizations other than Girl Scouts (when identifying as Girl Scouts).

Section 2: Supporting Councils Recovering From Disaster

Girl Scout councils recovering from disaster need time to assess the event's impact and determine their immediate needs. GSUSA reaches out to those councils immediately and will update Movement leadership as more detailed information becomes available. In the meantime, council leaders are encouraged to consider the following:

Financial Support

NOTE: Movement leadership will be notified in the event that fundraising restrictions are lifted by the GSUSA Board of Directors to enable Girl Scouts to raise money for specific councils directly impacted by disaster. Those who choose to fundraise for such councils must do so with the sole intention of providing membership scholarships to affected girls. Scholarships are typically defined as dues, uniforms, credentials (e.g., insignia worn on uniforms), and Girl Scout materials.

Troop-to-Troop Support

Troops can allocate part of their own funds to an impacted council's scholarship fund or to support a remote sister troop doing a service project.

Examples:

- Write notes of encouragement and become pen pals with girls while they and their families struggle to recover.
- If a troop in an impacted area is helping a local animal shelter replace damaged supplies, another troop could organize a pet supply collection event and send animal food and blankets to the sister troop's project.
- The Girl Scout fall product sale is another way girls can raise money for sister troops. If a troop chooses to donate its product sale earnings to a sister troop in need, it should let potential customers know that their purchases help with council recovery efforts.

Direct Work with Relief Projects

If girls are able to safely travel to an affected area and permitted to do so, consider a trip to help with on-site relief activities.

Examples:

- Visit an evacuation shelter to provide activities to the girls staying there. This can serve as welcome emotional support for girls and their families.
- Contact a well-established relief organization working in the impacted area to explore appropriate participation opportunities for girls (e.g., [United Way](#), [American Humane](#), [American Red Cross](#), etc.).

Reminder: Girl Scouts are not allowed, when identifying themselves as Girl Scouts (such as wearing a uniform, sash or vest, official pins, and so on), to solicit money on behalf of another organization. This includes participating in a walkathon or telethon while in uniform. Girl Scouts as individuals are able to participate in whatever events they choose, as long as they're not wearing anything that officially identifies them as Girl Scouts (*Volunteer Essentials 2017/2018*, page 85).

Section 3: Girl Scout Disaster-Relief Resources

The following policies and guidelines may be helpful to council leadership when managing disaster relief efforts.

- See the “Fundraising” section on page 22 of the [2018 Blue Book of Basic Documents](#) for detailed policy information related to fundraising activities.
- Review specific guidelines for girl participation in money-earning activities—see “[Money-Earning Basics](#)” from Chapter 5 of [Volunteer Essentials 2017/2018](#).
- Ensure girl safety during on-site relief activities by referring to the “Girl Scout Safety Guidelines” on pages 6–7 of [Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018](#) and “Chapter 4: Safety-Wise” in [Volunteer Essentials 2017/2018](#).
- Encourage girls, volunteers, and parents to explore disaster preparedness and related Take Action projects by using the following materials:
 - [What Can a Girl Scout Do When Disaster Strikes?](#)
 - [What Girl Scout Leadership Looks Like in Times of Disaster](#)
 - [How to Talk to Your Kids About Natural Disasters](#)

Appendix: Summary of Tools and Resources Referenced in This Guide

Tool/Resource	Description	Audience/Purpose
What Can a Girl Scout Do When Disaster Strikes?	Outlines three categories of effort—immediate response, disaster preparedness, and longer-term Take Action projects	Girl Scouts of all ages and their parents
What Girl Scout Leadership Looks Like in Times of Disaster	Outlines three categories of effort—immediate response, disaster preparedness, and longer-term Take Action projects—while providing additional tips and examples for leading such learning efforts	Girl Scout volunteers and adult family members
How to Talk to Your Kids About Natural Disasters	Provides conversation guidance to parents and recommends ways to engage and respond to children’s questions related to natural disasters	Girl Scout parents and adult family members
“Fundraising” section in 2018 Blue Book of Basic Documents	Page 22, the subsections for “Ownership of Assets” and “Solicitation of Contributions,” describe these policies	Girl Scout council executives and other management staff
“Girl Scout Safety Guidelines” from Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018	Pages 6–7 provide general safety guidelines for all Girl Scout activities	Girl Scout program staff and volunteers
“Chapter 4: Safety-Wise” in Volunteer Essentials 2017/2018	Pages 59–75 outline detailed recommendations for safety considerations for a variety of activities	Girl Scout program staff and volunteers
“ Money-Earning Basics ” in Volunteer Essentials 2017/2018	Describes policies and recommended practices for girl participation in money-earning activities	Girl Scout program staff and volunteers