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APPS WE LOVE

Apps We Love September 2017: Disaster Relief Apps

When natural disasters strike, Americans naturally want to help. And that feeling of compassion is doubled when those catastrophes happen to our neighbors, our fellow citizens.

Isaac M. O'Bannon • Sep. 19, 2017



When natural disasters strike, Americans naturally want to help. And that feeling of compassion is doubled when those catastrophes happen to our neighbors, our fellow

citizens.

Such was the case recently in the aftermath of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma in Texas, Florida and other states. But sometimes, the disaster can be so overwhelming and widespread, that a prospective good-doer doesn't know where to start.

Don't Try to Send Clothes and Physical Goods

As a result of the hurricanes, many of the roadways, railways and other transportation routes in southern Florida and central Texas were flooded and impassable for days, even for weeks after the storms. While sending physical goods is noble, the logistics of getting those goods to affected areas, and the people who need them most, may diminish the value of the goods. If they're stuck in a warehouse, nobody benefits.

Cash is Best

By cash, however, we don't mean the green stuff, we mean digital donations when possible. According to federal officials and many experts, financial donations are the most immediate way to assist in recovery. The safest way is to donate to organizations that already have infrastructures in place that can handle mass disaster assistance programs, and also have the recognition and respect of local officials. This means they will have the ability to quickly establish operations in towns and rural areas affected by the storm.

Reputable Charities Helping with Hurricanes Harvey and Irma

The **American Red Cross** is often the first organization to set up shelters for disaster victims across the country. Donations can be made directly via text (text Harvey or Irma to 90999), or by phone at 800-RED-CROSS.

Donations can also be sent to the **Salvation Army** via text (text Storm to 51555) or phone 800-SAL-ARMY. Both organizations also accept donations via their websites, and some companies collect on their behalf. Amazon and Whole Foods are matching cash donations to the Red Cross up to \$1 million total.

The **United Way** is helping with immediate housing needs such as home repair and services, while **Catholic Charities** is coordinating food, clothing and shelter operations for victims of both storms. They accept donations via their website and texting CCUSADISASTER to 71777.

Save the Children is helping deliver baby supplies such as cribs, strollers, formula and diapers, as well as setting up children's areas in shelters. Local religious organizations across the country also often work through their national body and through additional charitable organizations to reach those who need help.

Avoid Disaster Relief Scams

Unfortunately, there are always a few unscrupulous people who will try to benefit personally from disasters. While the last thing on your mind when you drop a few bucks into a jar may be whether it is tax deductible, such status from an organization means they follow certain protocols and report their revenues through the IRS. A few websites can help:

Charity Navigator has a list of organizations helping storm relief efforts. If a group is in question, check out the [IRS charity checker](#) to see if the organization is tax-exempt. If you think you've found a group that is a scam, you can report them to the [National Center for Disaster Fraud](#).

Disaster Relief and Charity Apps

For those who are inclined to get involved through their mobile device, there are several apps that enable charitable giving, including for disaster relief operations for Hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

[Charity Navigator](#)

[CharityBox](#)

[Catholic Charities MobileCause](#)

[Givo Charity](#)

[One Today](#)

[PhilantrhoPal](#)

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