

Statement of
Understanding Between the
National Association
for the
Advancement of
Colored People and
The American National Red Cross



American
Red Cross



I. Purpose

The purpose of this statement of understanding is to provide a written basis for a cooperative working relationship between the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and The American National Red Cross on all levels—national, regional, state, and local—in disaster preparedness and response. The statement suggests a pattern by which the two organizations may coordinate their personnel and service facilities.

II. Definition of Disaster

A disaster is an occurrence such as a hurricane, tornado, storm, flood, high water, winddriven water, tidal wave, earthquake, drought, blizzard, pestilence, famine, fire, explosion, building collapse, commercial transportation wreck, or other situation that causes human suffering or creates human needs that the victims cannot alleviate without assistance.

III. Authority of The American National Red Cross

By act of Congress on January 5, 1905, The American National Red Cross was granted a congressional charter under which it is designated the nationwide agency through which the American people voluntarily extend assistance to individuals and families in need as a result of disasters. In part, the charter provides that The American National Red Cross—

. . . Continue and carry on a system of national and international relief in time of peace and apply the same in mitigating the sufferings caused by pestilence, famine, fire, floods, and other great national calamities, and to devise and carry on measures for preventing the same.

IV. Organization of The American National Red Cross

The national headquarters of the American Red Cross is located in Washington, D.C. For administrative purposes the United States is divided into four field offices with each having jurisdiction covering a certain number of states. Field offices are located as follows: eastern United States, Alexandria, Virginia; southeastern United States, Atlanta, Georgia; midwestern United States, St. Louis, Missouri; and western United States, Burlingame, California. Each field office has an administrative staff

and a field office staff. The field offices report to national headquarters.

The chapter is the local unit of the Red Cross and is responsible for all local Red Cross activities within its territory, subject to the policies and regulations of the corporation. There are approximately 3,050 chapters across the United States. Field office jurisdictions are divided into divisions, which report to the field office. Divisions are made up of groups of chapters that report to a division headquarters chapter.

Each Red Cross chapter is responsible for developing a special disaster preparedness and relief organization comprising the best qualified volunteers available. The chapter disaster committee studies the disaster hazards of the territory and surveys local resources for personnel, equipment, and supplies, including transportation and emergency communications facilities, available for disaster relief. The chapter disaster committee also formulates cooperative plans and procedures with local government agencies and private organizations for carrying out relief operations should a disaster occur. Through its nationwide organization, the Red Cross coordinates its total resources for utilization wherever needed and required for large disasters.

V. Organization of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

The NAACP was founded in 1909 by a group of black and white citizens appalled at the injustices that some Americans suffered solely because of their race. The NAACP has grown steadily since then and is, today, the largest and most influential civil rights organization in the country. The basic strength of the NAACP derives from its historic victories in the courts, Congress, and state legislatures.

The NAACP covers the country in 50 states, the District of Columbia, West Germany, and Panama. The strength of the Association lies in its 450,000 members, organized into 1,700 branches (including 23 prison branches), youth councils, and college chapters. There are seven regional offices, with the national office located in New York City. There is also a Washington Bureau for legislative work and contact with federal agencies. Most of the national staff operate from field offices around the country. Augmenting this small but effective force are thousands of volunteers who carry the burden of the NAACP mission.

The Annual Convention, the governing body, sets policies and mandates the 64-member Board of Directors to carry out these policies and to determine other policies and programs between sessions of the Annual Convention.

The NAACP played a vital role in the passage of the Civil Right Acts of 1957, 1960, 1964, 1965, and 1968, which were created to provide equality for all citizens, regardless of race or color. These laws forbid racial discrimination in public accommodations, voter registration, employment, housing, and any federally assisted programs. Securing full enforcement of these laws is a major goal of the NAACP. Until that goal is reached, the NAACP will continue as the standard-bearer of justice, pressing the United States to honor the letter and essence of its Constitution.

VI. Method of Cooperation

The NAACP, with its 1,700 branches in 50 states, will participate with the Red Cross in disaster relief operations in the United States. The NAACP, through its units, will be an additional source of professional personnel and volunteers particularly sensitive to the concerns and needs of minorities and capable of human responses to needs in time of disaster. The commitment of any resources to meet the needs of persons affected by disaster shall be given without racial discrimination.

In order that The American National Red Cross and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People may work in harmony during an emergency, both organizations have agreed to the following:

1. In the event of a major disaster, volunteers in NAACP branches will participate on the local level, in cooperation with the local chapter of the Red Cross.
2. Close liaison will be maintained between the Red Cross and the NAACP at the national and local levels.
3. Each NAACP branch will be asked to engage in preparedness discussions with appropriate groups having trained professional staff active in disaster.
4. NAACP branch officers and members may be asked to serve on local Red Cross disaster preparedness committees, to serve as nurses, and to assist in registration, transportation, and the like during the emergency period.

5. This agreement will be widely distributed through Red Cross and NAACP chapters.

This agreement is in force as of the date indicated below and shall remain in effect until terminated by written notification from either party to the other.


George M. Elsey
President
The American National Red Cross


Benjamin L. Hooks
Executive Director
National Association for the
Advancement of Colored People

August 14, 1981