

# AMERICAN RED CROSS

The presence of the Red Cross on the Coastside is primarily through the San Mateo County Office, located in Burlingame. Several of our volunteers live on the Coastside and participate in many of the disaster related activities in place to prepare the Coastside for what may come. The office is a small part of the American Red Cross whose mission is as follows: The American Red Cross prevents and alleviates human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.

The San Mateo County office of the American Red Cross is part of the Bay Area Chapter, one of many Red Cross chapters, headquartered in San Francisco. The American Red Cross is an NGO (Non-Government Organization) funded by donations, and not supported financially by the U.S. Government. One fact that makes the Red Cross unique among NGOs is that it is essentially a volunteer organization and approximately 92% of the workforce are volunteers. A second unique aspect of the Red Cross is that it relies on partnerships with a range of volunteer, government and private groups to deliver needed services to the served communities.

In total the Red Cross has several functional areas including Blood Products, Instructional Programs and Supplies, Services to Military Families, International Services, and Disaster Cycle Services. The San Mateo Office is essentially focused on Disaster Cycle Services (DCS). Under DCS are three functional groups as follows: Preparation for Disasters, Response to Disasters, and Disaster Recovery.

Under Preparation, the San Mateo office provides a range of workshops and classes on preparedness, shelter fundamentals, shelter management, and psychological first aid. The team also does one-off workshops to meet the specific needs of partners or other agencies. Red Cross partners in San Mateo include San Mateo County organizations such as HSA and OES, private groups such as the Peninsula Humane Society and the Lions Club, faith organizations, and municipal organizations, including law enforcement and fire departments/districts.

Disaster Response includes responding to local events such as floods, fires, evacuations, etc., for rendering immediate financial and housing assistance to those impacted. The San Mateo office also responds to large disasters within the state as

well as disasters in other states or territories. The office does not self-deploy to local or out-of-state disasters; rather the office is called upon by partners or the National Office of the Red Cross.

Recovery activities assist people impacted by disaster through a combination of Red Cross Resources and referrals to our partner agencies who meet clients' needs. San Mateo caseworkers do face to face recovery work locally, as well as remote services for clients in other parts of the state or the country when called upon.

San Mateo volunteers represent a broad section of the community, are ethnically diverse, and often bilingual. There are a few requirements including a minimum age of eighteen and the ability to pass a background check. The main requirement is a desire to contribute to the needs of various communities impacted by disasters, and a willingness to participate in a range of training programs. A few positions require professional certification especially those in Disaster Health Services and Disaster Mental Health. Volunteer time commitments are those offered by a prospective volunteer including those volunteers who only have a few hours a month to give. People interested in volunteering can explore opportunities at [redcross.org](http://redcross.org).

For further information contact [Jim Holley](#) the Community Engagement Administrator

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