

# SEVERE WEATHER

AND NATURAL DISASTERS > READINESS GUIDE

FREE



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Improving Home Improvement®

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When severe weather or natural disasters threaten, your primary concern is for the safety of your family. Lowe's presents this guide to help you plan and prepare your home in advance, so when a disaster strikes, you can concentrate on your family's safety.

The American Red Cross' Community Disaster Education Program is available to help build disaster-resistant communities and to challenge businesses and individuals to take action to reduce the effects of natural disasters. By following the prevention and preparedness tips in Lowe's Severe Weather and Natural Disaster guide, you can help keep your family safe.

For more information on how you can help or for more extensive disaster safety information, please contact your local American Red Cross chapter and your local Emergency Management Agency.

You can help the Red Cross assist the victims of thousands of disasters across the country each year by making a financial gift to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund, which enables the Red Cross to provide shelter, food, counseling and other assistance to those in need. DONATE NOW – Call 1-800-HELP NOW (1-800-435-7669) or 1-800-257-7575 (Spanish). Or you may send your donation to your local Red Cross or to the American Red Cross, P.O. Box 37243, Washington, D.C. 20013.



**American Red Cross**

*Together, we can save a life*

Thanks to the American Red Cross for providing content and technical assistance with this publication. The American Red Cross recommends individuals prepare for severe weather and natural disasters;

however, the American Red Cross neither recommends nor endorses any specific products.

Front cover photo: Courtesy of NOAA

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## General Preparation for Any Severe Weather or Natural Disaster

- Educate yourself and your family early, well before a natural disaster becomes an issue
- Be aware of the incidence of tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, wildfires, floods, heat wave and severe winter weather in your area
- Determine your insurance eligibility now by contacting your insurance agent
- Contact your local American Red Cross chapter and Lowe's for disaster preparedness tips and supplies
- Develop a family disaster plan
- Prepare your property by repairing defective wiring or gas connections to prevent fire; make structural repairs if necessary; have shutters or wood panels handy to cover windows if necessary; have emergency equipment stored, smoke alarms installed and an escape route planned
- Some helpful Web sites for important emergency and safety-related information:
  - American Red Cross – [redcross.org](http://redcross.org)
  - National Weather Service – [nws.noaa.gov](http://nws.noaa.gov)
  - Federal Emergency Management Agency – [fema.gov](http://fema.gov)
  - Home Safety Council – [homesafetycouncil.org](http://homesafetycouncil.org)
  - Hurricane Intercept Research Team – [hurricanetrack.com](http://hurricanetrack.com)
  - Lowe's – [Lowe's.com](http://Lowe's.com)

# Create A Family DISASTER PLAN

Have you prepared a plan to help you and your family cope with a weather or natural disaster? Take time as a family to follow the steps and complete the checklists located throughout this guide to ensure you are prepared before disaster strikes. With careful planning and practice you can reduce property damage and safeguard your family. Be sure to remember your pets when making your emergency preparations.

- Leave well before the weather becomes threatening and go to a pre-determined destination if authorities issue an evacuation order.*

Our Emergency Evacuation Destination is:

\_\_\_\_\_

- Gather in a safe room if you are not advised to evacuate by authorities, but severe weather is threatening. Choose the safest location inside your home. For a tornado, choose an interior room without windows, such as a bathroom or closet on the lowest floor. For a hurricane or chemical emergency, choose a room above the ground floor, if possible. Hurricanes can cause severe localized flooding, and some chemicals can seep into rooms below ground, so that is why you need to choose a room on an upper floor, if available.*

Our In-Home Safe Room is:

\_\_\_\_\_

- Choose an out-of-town friend or relative who will be your family contact, and each of you will call this person to convey your location if you should become separated.*

Emergency Family Contact Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number:

\_\_\_\_\_

- Identify two locations to meet in the event of a disaster. One outside the home in case of a fire and one outside the neighborhood in case you cannot return home.*

Destinations are:

\_\_\_\_\_

- Make sure all mature family members know how and when to turn off water and electricity.*
- Secure important papers in a waterproof container and/or send copies to a friend.*
- Prepare a list of emergency phone numbers and include a copy in your disaster supplies kit.*

## Emergency Phone Numbers

- Police/Sheriff Departments

\_\_\_\_\_

- Fire Department

\_\_\_\_\_

- Local American Red Cross

\_\_\_\_\_

- Local Emergency Management Agency

\_\_\_\_\_

- Pharmacy

\_\_\_\_\_

- Humane Society

\_\_\_\_\_

- Bank

\_\_\_\_\_

- Hotel

\_\_\_\_\_

- Weather Service

\_\_\_\_\_

- Insurance Company/Agent and Policy Number

\_\_\_\_\_

- Power Company

\_\_\_\_\_

- Relative or Friend

\_\_\_\_\_

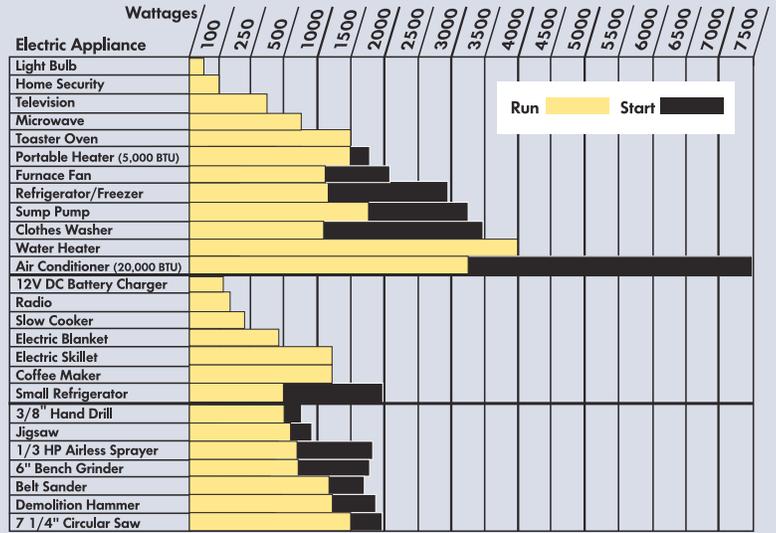
- Other

\_\_\_\_\_



# Important Information about Generators

- Never operate a generator inside a home or enclosed area – the exhaust can be lethal
- Protect generators from outdoor conditions, but do not impede the airflow needed for cooling both the engine and generator
- To connect a generator to your home, have a licensed electrician install a Power Transfer System
- Refer to the instruction manual for all important safety information



Products above are intended for general guideline information. Wattage usage will depend upon the size of the appliance. For your specific needs consult a Lowe's Certified Sales Associate.

Information provided by Generac Portable Products (Web site: generac-portables.com)

# Prepare for Severe Weather or Natural Disasters at Lowes.com

You will find more valuable disaster preparedness resources at Lowes.com.

## Online How-To Library

Learn more about how you can prepare your family and home for a disaster. On Lowes.com, you'll find:

- Hurricane and Severe Storm Preparedness Tips
- Staying Safe After a Natural Disaster
- Don't Get Stuck Out in the Cold Guide
- Lowe's Severe Weather and Natural Disaster Guide

## Online Shopping Cart

Shop online for disaster preparedness supplies, tools, post-storm recovery supplies and more at Lowes.com. Have items delivered or pickup at store.

## Store Locator

Locate the Lowe's store nearest you where you can find the supplies on your preparedness disaster supplies checklist.





## Have a Safe Place to Take Your Pets

Red Cross disaster shelters cannot accept pets because of state health and safety regulations and other considerations. Service animals that assist people with disabilities are the only animals allowed in Red Cross shelters. It may be difficult, if not impossible, to find shelter for your animals in the midst of a disaster, so plan ahead.

## Know What to do as a Disaster Approaches

Often, disaster watches or warnings are issued hours, even days, in advance. At the first hint of disaster, act to protect your pets:

- Using your Family Disaster Plan, verify the temporary housing arrangements for you and your pets
- Bring pets inside so you won't have to search for them if you have to leave in a hurry; if you do need to evacuate, take your pets with you
- Do not leave your pets home during a weather disaster. A secure room and several days supply of food and water does not mean your pet will be safe
- Make sure all pets are wearing collars and securely fastened, up-to-date identification. If you have time, attach the phone number and address of your temporary shelter or of a friend or relative outside the disaster area to your pet's ID tag
- Make sure your pets' vaccinations are up to date
- Keep current photos of your pets with other important papers and medical records
- Assemble a portable pet disaster supplies kit including medications, leashes, food, portable water and the name and number of your veterinarian



# Winter Weather

A major winter storm can last for several days and be accompanied by high winds, freezing rain or sleet, heavy snowfall and cold temperatures. People can become trapped at home, without utilities or other services. Before the winter weather season begins, take time to prepare your home and property to protect you and your family from the elements.

## Before a Winter Storm Threatens:

- Insulate walls and attic to conserve electricity
- Caulk and weather strip doors and windowsills to keep out cold air
- Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside
- To keep pipes from freezing, wrap pipes in insulation or newspapers
  - Cover with plastic to keep out moisture
  - Let faucets drip to avoid freezing
  - Know how to turn off water valves
- Stock a supply of fireplace wood

## During a Winter Storm:

- Stay indoors unless you have an emergency
- Listen to news broadcasts for storm updates
- Keep your Disaster Supplies Kit accessible
- Use a professionally installed wood stove with proper ventilation or portable heater for alternative heat if necessary; when using alternative heat sources, follow all safety precautions



Comstock Images

- If pipes freeze, remove any insulation and wrap pipes in rags to absorb moisture when defrosting  
*Do not use a blow torch to thaw waterlines*
  - Open all faucets completely
  - Pour hot water over pipes or use a hairdryer, with caution, to warm areas exposed to the cold

## After a Winter Storm

- Stay clear of downed power lines and notify city officials or power company
- Use snow removal equipment properly to avoid injury
- Beware of flooding that may result from melted snow
- Have a professional check your roof for damage
- Beware of ice under snow or snow that may melt and refreeze overnight
- For additional general disaster recovery tips, please refer to page 14

## Terms to Know:

- **Winter Storm Watch:** Significant winter weather is expected, but not imminent; provides 12 to 36 hours notice of possible severe winter weather
- **Winter Weather Advisory:** A significant winter storm or hazardous winter weather is occurring and imminent
- **Winter Storm Warning:** A significant winter storm or hazardous winter weather is occurring, imminent, or likely, and is a threat to life and property
- **Blizzard Warning:** Winds that are at least 35 mph or greater, blowing snow that may reduce visibility to a quarter mile or less for a duration of at least 3 hours, and dangerous wind chills are expected

# Tornadoes

A tornado is a violently rotating column of air in contact with the ground and develops from severe thunderstorms in warm, moist, unstable air along and ahead of cold fronts.

## Vital Facts

- 1,000 tornadoes strike in the United States annually
- Tornadoes have occurred in every state
- Most prevalent between April and July
- Multiple tornadoes can emerge from one storm
- Wind speeds reach 30 to more than 300 mph

## Warning Signs:

- Dark, greenish sky
- Large hail
- Strong winds
- Flying debris
- Wall cloud
- Funnel cloud
- Roaring noise

**Take Shelter** – Where and how you take shelter safely varies depending on where you are when a tornado threatens

## Frame Home:

- Stay away from windows
- Go to the basement or ground level
- Choose a center room, an inner hallway or a closet
- Cover your head and eyes with a blanket

## Mobile Home:

- Never stay in a mobile home; seek a sturdier, nearby structure

## Outside:

- Go to a protected space with no windows
- Avoid large-span roofing found in gyms, arenas or malls
- Don't try to outrun a tornado in a car. Stop driving, get out and take shelter
- Don't hide under a bridge or overpass
- Crouch beside a strong structure or lie down in a ditch or depression

## After the Tornado:

- Please refer to page 14 for general disaster recovery tips



## Terms to Know:

- **Tornado Watch:** Tornadoes are possible in your area
- **Tornado Warning:** A tornado has been sighted or indicated by radar

# Wildfires

Wildfires often begin unnoticed and spread quickly, igniting brush, trees and homes. If you live in an at-risk area, contact your local American Red Cross, fire department or forestry service for information on fire laws and wildfire safety, preparation and recovery tips.



## When Wildfire Threatens:

- Listen to local radio or television stations and be ready to evacuate
- Keep pets close in case of evacuation
- Open fireplace damper and close fireplace screens
- Close all windows, vents, doors, noncombustible window coverings and heavy drapes. Remove flammable drapes and curtains
- Move flammable furniture into the center of the home
- Clear firewood, brush and debris from your home creating 30 feet of defensible space
- Clear the roof and gutters of debris that may be ignited
- Evacuate when told to do so by local officials

## If Time Allows, Follow These Tips to Help Protect Your Home on the Outside:

- Seal attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals
- Remove combustible items from around the house
- Connect the garden hose to outside taps and wet the roof and shrubs

## During an Evacuation:

- Wear protective clothing and a handkerchief to protect your face
- Lock your home
- Remember your Disaster Supplies Kit and choose a route away from fire hazards

## After the Wildfire:

- Inspect the roof immediately and extinguish any sparks, embers or smoldering debris to prevent the fire from relighting
- Recheck for smoke and sparks throughout the home, including the attic
- Wet debris to minimize breathing dust particles
- Please refer to additional general disaster recovery tips on page 14

## People start four out of every five forest fires.

Wildfire Preparation Tips are available on [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org) and [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org):

- See Firewise resources for the Homeowner Firewise Checklists
- See Disaster Safety resources for wildfire preparation safety tips

## Terms to Know:

- **Surface fire:** Burns along the forest floor, moving slowly and killing or damaging trees
- **Ground fire:** Usually started by lightning and burns on or below the forest floor
- **Crown fires:** Spread rapidly by wind and move quickly by jumping along the tops of trees

# Heat Wave

A heat wave is a serious weather emergency that occurs when temperatures and humidity levels rise to dangerous levels. Older adults, young children and those who are sick or overweight are more susceptible to heat-related illnesses.



## Warning Signs:

- Temperature and/or humidity have been unusually high for several days
- Humidity reaches levels commonly associated with moist, tropical regions
- Excessively dry conditions are present (strong winds and blowing dust worsen situation)

## Avoid Exposure:

- Stay indoors and avoid extreme temperature changes
- Use air conditioning or move to the lowest floor of your home if air conditioning is not available
- Make sure your home is properly insulated
- Cover windows with drapes, blinds or awnings for added shade
- Keep electric and ceiling fans running
- Drink fluids, like water and juice, often
- Avoid alcohol, which dehydrates the body
- Eat small, frequent meals
- Avoid foods high in protein, which increase your body's heat
- Keep pets indoors, and frequently refill their water bowls

- Never leave children or pets alone in vehicles
- Check on relatives, neighbors and friends who live alone
- Avoid strenuous activity

## Heat Wave Emergencies:

- **Heat Cramps:** Muscle pains and spasms caused by heavy exertion, which trigger heavy perspiration. To relieve, massage cramping muscles and sip water.
- **Heat Exhaustion:** Mild form of shock marked by heavy sweating, fatigue, cold and clammy skin, headache, dizziness and/or nausea. Rest in a cool place; loosen clothing; apply cool, wet cloths; and slowly sip water. Seek medical attention if vomiting occurs.
- **Heat Stroke (Sunstroke):** A life-threatening condition – call 9-1-1 immediately. Marked by hot, red skin; altered states of consciousness; rapid, weak pulse; and rapid, shallow breathing. Ability to sweat stops and body temperature rises so high brain damage and death could occur in less than 10 minutes. Remove clothing, use cool water or fan to lower body temperature.

## Terms to Know:

- **Heat Index:** Body's perception of temperature in degrees Fahrenheit
- **Heat Wave:** Prolonged period of excessive heat, often coupled with excessive humidity
- **Heat Advisory:** Heat and humidity levels could pose minor problems
- **Excessive Heat Warning:** Heat and humidity are at dangerous levels and pose serious health threats

# Hurricanes

Hurricanes, known in other parts of the world as cyclones and typhoons, are the intense weather systems born in warm tropical waters over the Atlantic Ocean.

Before hurricane season begins, update your family disaster plan and disaster supplies kit.

## When a Hurricane Watch is Issued:

- Listen to news broadcasts for storm updates
- Inspect and secure mobile home tie-downs
- Clear yard of potential flying debris and anchor large objects
- Prepare to cover windows and glass doors

## When a Hurricane Warning is Issued:

- Listen to news broadcasts for storm advisories and evacuation announcements
- Close and cover all windows with hurricane shutters or plywood
- Close all doors and brace double-entry and garage doors at top and bottom
- Store drinking water in clean bathtubs, jugs and bottles
- Turn refrigerator and freezer to coldest settings and open only when necessary

## If You Stay Home (assumes local officials have not advised evacuation):

- Stay inside and away from windows, skylights and doors, even if they are covered
- Take your Disaster Supplies Kit and water to a safe place in the middle of your home
- Listen to a battery-powered radio for storm updates
- Have flashlights and extra batteries handy, and never use an open flame or candle when power is out
- If power is lost, turn off all major appliances at the circuit breaker or fuse box

## If an Evacuation Order is Issued:

- Turn off all utilities and unplug appliances before leaving
- Lock your home and leave immediately, avoiding flooded roads and bridges
- Leave natural gas on unless local officials advise you to turn it off

## After the Hurricane Passes:

- Please refer to the flood and general disaster recovery tips on pages 12 and 14



## Terms to Know:

- **Tropical storm:** An organized system of strong thunderstorms with a defined circulation and maximum sustained winds of 39 to 73 mph
- **Tropical storm watch:** Issued when tropical storm conditions may threaten a specific coastal area within 36 hours and when it is not predicted to intensify to hurricane strength
- **Tropical storm warning:** Winds in the range of 39 to 73 mph can be expected to affect specific areas of a coastline within the next 24 hours
- **Hurricane:** A warm-core tropical cyclone with maximum sustained winds of 74 mph or greater
- **Hurricane watch:** A hurricane or hurricane conditions may threaten a specific coastal area within 36 hours
- **Hurricane warning:** A warning that sustained winds of 74 mph or higher associated with a hurricane are expected in a specified coastal area within 24 hours

# Floods

Floods, the number one weather-related killer, can happen anywhere. They are the most frequent and costly of all natural disasters. Floods result from intense rainfall, overflowing rivers, melting snow, tropical storms and hurricanes.



## Before a Flood:

- Check with your local American Red Cross chapter or Emergency Management Agency to determine if you live in a flood-prone area
- Talk to your insurance agent about the National Flood Insurance Program
- Bring outdoor items indoors, and secure items that may be carried away by flood waters
- Place all valuables in waterproof containers and move them and your furniture to higher floors
- Fill clean bathtubs and water bottles with fresh water in case water becomes contaminated
- If you are not home, go to high ground and wait for help
- Fill vehicle with gas
- Install a sewer backflow valve

Most flood fatalities are caused by people attempting to drive through water or people playing in high water.

## If Evacuation is Advised:

- Turn off all utilities and unplug appliances before leaving
- Leave natural gas on unless local officials advise you to turn it off
- Bring your disaster supplies kit, including extra blankets and sleeping bags

- Lock windows and doors to your home before leaving
- Leave immediately

## During a Flood:

- Listen to a portable radio for emergency information updates
- Keep family and pets away from storm drains, sewers and floodwaters
- Never drive your car through flooded areas
- If your vehicle becomes surrounded by rising water, abandon it and climb to higher ground

## After a Flood:

- Contaminated floodwaters can cause infections. Immediately seek any necessary medical attention
- Stay out of any building where floodwaters remain, and do not enter any building before local officials have said it is safe
- Use extreme caution when entering your home – snakes and other animals may have been forced into your home by floodwaters
- Gradually pump out flooded basements to avoid structural damage
- Watch for loose plaster, drywall and ceilings that could fall
- Please refer to page 14 for general disaster recovery tips

## Terms to Know:

- **Flood Watch:** Flooding is possible in a given time period
- **Flood Warning:** Flooding conditions are occurring
- **Flash Flood Watch:** Rapid flooding can happen quickly and without further warning
- **Flash Flood Warning:** Flash flooding is occurring

# Earthquakes

An earthquake is a sudden, rapid shaking of the earth caused by the breaking and shifting of rocks beneath the earth's surface. Earthquakes come without warning, but that doesn't mean you can't be prepared. Check with your local American Red Cross or Emergency Management Agency to learn if earthquakes are a risk in your area. Also, keep the following tips in mind to prepare for and respond to an earthquake.

## Preparing Your Home for an Earthquake:

- Bolt bookcases, china cabinets and other furniture to wall studs; brace or anchor high or top-heavy objects
- Secure large or heavy objects that might fall, such as televisions, books or computers
- Install strong latches or bolts on cabinets
- Store breakable items in low, closed cabinets with latches
- Store weed killers, pesticides and flammables in closed cabinets
- Hang heavy items, such as pictures and mirrors, away from beds and sitting areas
- Brace overhead light fixtures to ceiling joists
- Strap the water heater to wall studs
- Have a professional bolt down gas appliances
- Have a professional install flexible pipe fittings to avoid gas or water leaks

## What to do During an Earthquake:

- Drop, cover and hold on!
- Get under a desk or sturdy table, or take cover against an inside wall
- Cover your head
- Hold onto the furniture you've ducked under
- Stay inside. Never leave a building during an earthquake
- If in bed, stay there and protect your head with a pillow



## Measuring an Earthquake's Intensity:

The Richter scale measures an earthquake's intensity. Each one-point increase on the scale indicates 10 times the amount of shaking and 33 times the amount of energy.

### RICHTER SCALE DEGREES

4	.....	Minor Earthquake
5	.....	Moderate Earthquake
6	.....	Strong Earthquake
7	.....	Major Earthquake
8	.....	Great Earthquake

## After the Earthquake:

- Please refer to page 14 for general disaster recovery tips

# General Disaster Recovery Tips

## Inside Your Home:

- If there is no power, check to make sure the main breaker is on
- If the breakers are on and power is still not present, contact the utility company
- Use flashlights for emergency lighting. Do not use candles
- Secure your pets to keep them safe
- Use your telephone only in emergencies
- If you have a propane or oil heating system, have the system inspected before using
- Turn off any damaged utilities
- Clean up spilled medicines, bleach, gasoline and other flammable liquids immediately
- Take photographs of all damage before completing repairs and keep your receipts for insurance claims
- Make temporary repairs to correct safety hazards

## Outside Your Home:

- Use caution and exercise good judgment when re-entering a disaster-affected area
- Avoid damaged or fallen power poles or lines and downed wires
- Immediately report electrical damage to authorities
- Look for hazards
- Beware of downed trees
- Wear sturdy gloves when handling debris
- Check on your neighbors, especially older adults or people with disabilities
- Take photographs of all damage before completing repairs, and keep your receipts for insurance claims
- Make temporary repairs to correct safety hazards
- Look for electrical system damage
- Inspect the entire length of your chimney



# On-Going Disaster Relief

In recent years, local Lowe's stores have responded to more than 100 natural disasters across the nation. From California to North Carolina – when disaster struck, Lowe's was there. By donating truckloads of critical supplies, providing the American Red Cross with store credits and implementing price freezes and special credit terms, Lowe's customers and fellow local residents could begin rebuilding their lives without delay.



## Colorado Wildfires

In 2002, following the most destructive wildfires in Colorado's history, hundreds of farm animals were displaced from their homes. To aid in the relief effort, Lowe's of Pueblo, Colo. donated 80 tons of feed hay for relief efforts and distributed it free to local residents.

## Tornado Relief

Lowe's dispatched employees to communities hardest hit by the fierce tornadoes that swept through Alabama, Mississippi, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Tennessee in 2002 and provided emergency supplies such as plywood, tarps and garbage bags in tornado-ravaged areas. Lowe's also matched monetary donations to the American Red Cross for disaster relief efforts in these communities.

*"Disaster preparedness and recovery is an extension of Lowe's dedication to home safety and protection. Developing this relationship with the American Red Cross is a significant way Lowe's can contribute a wide variety of our resources to help people recover and rebuild their lives after the devastating impact of a natural disaster."*

- Robert L. Tillman, chairman and CEO,  
Lowe's Companies, Inc.

## Lowe's Heroes

Lowe's Heroes is a home safety volunteer program sponsored by Lowe's and the Home Safety Council and carried out by Lowe's employees. Lowe's and the Home Safety Council developed the program in 1996 to help make homes and communities across America safer for everyone. Each year, hundreds of Lowe's Heroes volunteer teams work together with homeowners, community groups and schools to complete home safety projects, reduce injuries and help people recover from disasters.



## The American Red Cross

Lowe's is a proud sponsor of the American Red Cross, which provides relief to victims of disasters and helps people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. In the past four years, Lowe's and its customers have raised more than \$5.8 million for the American Red Cross disaster relief efforts. Your financial contribution to the American Red Cross helps disaster victims quickly obtain basic necessities. For more information on how you can support the American Red Cross, see page 2, or visit [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).



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[Lowe.com](http://Lowe.com)