
Excerpt from the Meeting Minutes of the Emergency Preparedness Plan Committee August 5th, 2022

Reviewed April 3, 2025 by Mel Miller and determined to still be accurate & appropriate

Guests: Mel Miller, Coconino County Community Volunteer Leader, American Red Cross, Dave Curtis, Volunteer/Yavapai County, American Red Cross

American Red Cross: Gwen Hanna welcomed and introduced Mel Miller and Dave Curtis from the American Red Cross.

Mel began by presenting the Mission Statement for the American Red Cross (ARC), emphasizing that the ARC is not a government agency and is completely funded by donors, grants, and the like.

Their Mission: 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.

He noted five areas of focus.

1. Disaster cycle services
2. Blood Services (drives)
3. Service to the Armed Forces (Armed forces assistance)
4. International services
5. Preparedness and education (CPR, Lifeguard, Emergency)

The disaster “cycle” services are to Prepare-Respond-Recover. Prepare emphasis is placed on communication, education, and home fire safety. More deaths occur in home fires than all other natural disasters combined. ARC has a Smoke Detector Program in partnership with First Alert who sponsors/donates the smoke detectors, where community member volunteers will install smoke detectors in homes free of charge. Neighborhoods with high fire risks and typically lower income areas are selected for this program. The local fire department provides recommendations, and ARC deploys its volunteers for home visits. Over 1000 smoke detectors are installed annually and these alarms have a battery life of ten years. Mel then introduced Dave Curtis who further explained this program with examples of lives saved by the new smoke alarms. He also noted that smoke alarms need to be kept clean (air-sprayed) of dust and spiders, and that even hardwired alarms should be replaced every ten years as the sensors deteriorate over time.

The ARC has local Disaster reaction/Action Teams (DAT) who in the event of an emergency offer health services, mental, and even spiritual support as needed. They will provide prescription refills, a place to stay, and provide some financial support if required. ARC works directly with the clients (people impacted by the emergency). Local examples are four recent home fires in the Greater Sedona area. The Sedona Fire District responded to the home fires and called ARC, who immediately sent a crisis trained volunteer to work directly with the client at the scene.

For major national disasters such as wildfire and flooding, the ARC will provide shelter and food. They partner with other relief agencies such as the Salvation Army and First Baptist Church to deliver food to clients in disaster areas who may be without power for long periods of time. The request to the ARC to open a shelter comes from local Emergency Management, and in the case of a fire in our area, the request would come from the Sedona Fire District (SFD) to the Yavapai County Office of Emergency Management (YCOEM) who will then activate the ARC. Typically, shelters are in a high school gym or church with shower facilities. Sometimes the ARC will be put on stand-by if a situation appears to be escalating and a rapid response may be needed. An Emergency Operation Center will be set up by the County if the incident is large enough.

Wildfire response can include sheltering, some feeding, client recovery, damage assessment and providing cleanup supplies. Often in addition to the Salvation Army, restaurants will provide donations of food and other needed supplies. The goal after an incident is to put clients back as close to their pre-disaster conditions as possible. Caseworkers assist with recovery efforts. Occasionally hotels or private homes might be available for temporary client quarters after a shelter is closed. Generally, 24-hour notice is given to clients before a shelter is closed.

The ARC has regular meetings with their network of response partners to maintain communication and relationships. They keep in touch with community churches, healthcare providers, foodbanks, etc. The ARC also maintains shelter trailers which are preloaded and kept fresh so that they can be prepared to open a shelter within two hours or less for an emergency. In our area, there is a trailer in Prescott and another in Flagstaff. They try to have a volunteer nurse available at the shelter, but do not have portable medical units. There is a National Shelter System which lists accredited local shelters. This list is available to the ARC, but not to the public. Choice of a shelter location varies depending upon the situation. In the event of an emergency, YCOEM will advise on the location of the shelter.

In answer to a question on including the National Guard in a response, Dave noted that a State of Emergency would need to be declared by our local and State government, and the Federal government would subsequently authorize deployment.

In answer to a question on pets, Dave noted that only service animals are permitted in the shelter, and they partner with groups such as LASAR who will set up a small animal shelter near the ARC shelter so that owners can visit and care for their pets.

ARC care goes beyond food and shelter. Support is provided for logistics, supplies, and information technology. Data is kept and client support tracked. Where normal communication channels are disrupted, ham radio operator volunteers assist. Case workers will follow up with clients 24-48 hours after an emergency to continue to assist in recovery.

ARC is always in need of volunteers. If interested in serving, go to www.redcross.org/volunteer.

All of ARC services are aligned with FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and NIMS (National Incident Management System) standards.

Their advice was to be what they call “Red Cross Ready: Get a Kit – Make a Plan – Stay Informed.

Get A Kit: 5 P’s of preparedness:

1. People & pet supplies
2. Prescriptions
3. Papers (Important records)
4. Personal Needs
5. Priceless Items

Make A Plan:

1. How to get out
 - a. Which roads
 - b. Which exits
2. Communicate
3. Plan where to stay
4. Plan/know what you need to take with you

Stay Informed

1. Go to Ready.gov/kit for more information
2. Go to the YCSO website and sign up for CODE RED

All thanked Mel and Dave for their time and great information.