

Relief agencies jump into action

Reach out across state to provide meals and shelter for thousands

By HARVY LIPMAN
STAFF WRITER

Relief agencies were mobilizing Tuesday to offer assistance to Hurricane Sandy's victims across the state.

A Salvation Army mobile canteen unit was on its way to Teterboro in the afternoon, where it was to provide meals to people forced from their homes by flooding in Moonachie, Little Ferry and Carlstadt.

"We have ready-to-eat meals, where you just add water, but we also will prepare hot foods depending on the number of people," said Bramwell Applin, community relations manager for the Salvation Army's New Jersey division. "Our canteens have stoves, so we have the capability to make hot dogs and hamburgers, plus we have pre-made sandwiches. We'll also have coffee, tea and water."

Applin said Salvation Army volunteers have fed thousands of storm victims statewide, although he couldn't give a precise number.

"Counting them is the least of our worries at this point," he said.

Meanwhile, Red Cross volunteers are staffing shelters across the state, including one at Bergen Community College.

On Monday night, Red Cross staff cared for more than 3,500 people staying overnight at 23 shelters statewide, said Dianne Concannon, spokeswoman for the charity's North Jersey Region.

"Overall in response to the hurricane, we served 11,000 people in 258 shelters in 16 states," Concannon said. She said Red Cross emergency response vehicles will begin bringing relief supplies to New Jersey's towns "as soon as state officials tell us it is safe to move around. We will be doing damage assessments, working with government officials to determine if we need additional shelters."

The 211 phone and Internet help line operated by the state's United Ways has been fielding an unprecedented volume of emergency calls, according to Laura Marx, executive director of the 211 Partnership.

"We're getting about 1,000 calls a day," Marx said. "That's two or three times more than we get when we have local flooding. The website's getting 2,000 sessions an hour, because that's what the governor's promoting. That's where all the shelters are listed, along with information on evacuations as well as how to prepare and be ready for a storm."

Most of the phone calls Monday were coming from people who had been cut off in their homes, often without power, she added. "A lot of the calls were from people just looking for someone to talk to. They were isolated and scared, elderly people calling to say, 'I'm all alone,'" Marx said.

But on Tuesday, the vast majority of contacts were from people outside the state trying to get in touch with relatives — "adult children calling to say they can't reach their parents and they're really worried, a lot of those kind of calls," she said.

Tom Toronto, president of Bergen County's United Way, said the organization's Compassion Fund would begin reaching out to people who need financial aid once the response shifts into its recovery phase. "It's too soon for the Compassion Fund to be involved yet," he said.

How to donate

The charities most heavily involved in disaster response locally are the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army.

American Red Cross:

Text "REDCROSS" to 90999 to donate \$10 for disaster relief.

Online at redcross.org/charitable-donations

Call 973-797-3300

Mail checks to American Red Cross of Northern New Jersey, 209 Fairfield Road, Fairfield, NJ 07004

Salvation Army:

Text "SANDY" to 80888 to donate \$10.



The Record

Date: Wednesday, October 31, 2012
Location: HACKENSACK, NJ
Circulation (DMA): 153,847 (1)
Type (Frequency): Newspaper (D)
Page: L2
Section: Local
Keyword: NJ 211 Partnership

Online at use.salvationarmy.org/use/www_use_nj.nsf
Call 800-SAL-ARMY (725-2769) and specify NJ Storm Relief
Mail checks payable to The Salvation

Army, with NJ Storm Relief specified in the memo line, to:
The Salvation Army, PO Box 3170,
Union, NJ 07083

— Harvy Lipman



AMY NEWMAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Flood evacuees taking shelter Tuesday at Bergen County Technical High School in Teterboro.