



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS For Partner Companies



What is Ready When the Time Comes (RWTC)?

Ready When the Time Comes (RWTC) is a program of the American Red Cross. The purpose is to prepare teams of corporate employees to be ready immediately to help in a time of a local, large-scale disaster. RWTC volunteers serve as “reserves” that can be called when disaster response requires more than the normal corps of chapter volunteers.

Why is RWTC needed?

Each year, the American Red Cross responds to over 70,000 disaster incidents – hurricanes, fires, storms, floods, tornados, explosions, etc. – serving those affected with shelter, mass care and financial assistance. This requires not only Red Cross employees and trained disaster volunteers but also specially-trained, quickly mobilized volunteers who can fill specific needs. RWTC is designed to recruit and prepare those volunteers.

Is RWTC available in every Red Cross chapter?

No. The program was first developed in 2001 as a partnership between the American Red Cross of Greater Chicago and W.W. Grainger, Inc. It has grown through local chapter initiatives in Denver, and four communities in Florida (Broward County, Tampa Bay, Northeast Florida and Greater Palm Beach).

Now, with the support of W.W. Grainger, Inc. as the National Founding Sponsor, RWTC is being rolled out as a national pilot project in a limited number of chapters. The goal of the three-year pilot program is to have 16 chapters working in partnership with 100+ corporate partners with several thousand trained RWTC volunteers in place and to have created a model that can be efficiently replicated nationwide.

How does RWTC work?

Companies partner with their local Red Cross chapter, recruiting employees as volunteers who then are trained by the chapter as disaster-response volunteers. Partner companies commit to making these employees available for service at least one day per year. When a local, large-scale disaster occurs, the Red Cross contacts their RWTC company liaisons, who then call their RWTC employee volunteers into action. The chapter then assumes responsibility for their deployment and management.

What are RWTC volunteers trained to do?

RWTC volunteers may be trained in such specialty areas of service as:

- Sheltering
- Mass Care and Feeding
- Damage Assessment
- Bulk Distribution
- Casework
- Medical or Mental Health (licensed professionals only)
- Community Response Center
- Intake and Management of Spontaneous Volunteers
- Media and Public Relations
- Partner Liaison
- Other services, as needed by the local Red Cross Chapter

How do local RWTC Partner companies benefit?

Partner companies benefit in a number of ways, including:

- Supporting employees in their desire to help, particularly in times of great local need, which in turn raises employee morale, increases loyalty and helps companies retain valuable employees;
- Visibility – companies are seen to be a supportive community partner, which leads to good public opinion toward the company as being socially responsible;
- RWTC associates the name of the company and brand with one of the most trusted and charitable organizations in the world, the American Red Cross;
- RWTC companies are acknowledged in the local chapter's communication materials – including website and newsletters.

What is required of RWTC Partners?

Partner companies are asked to:

- Sign a letter of agreement, the content of which is jointly developed with the chapter, which helps establish the partnership;
- Identify primary and secondary coordinators for the RWTC Program who can be available 24/7 as contacts for the chapter and, in turn, to activate their volunteer teams;
- Take the lead in recruiting their employees as volunteers to fill specific needs identified by the chapter;
- Provide logistical support and space for training of their RWTC volunteers by the Red Cross;
- Allow their volunteers to respond to a deployment request during normal work hours if required;
- Allow their volunteers to participate in at least one mock disaster drill each year.

Are partner companies required to make a financial contribution to the Red Cross?

RWTC is first and foremost an opportunity for employee volunteers to support Red Cross disaster response. We hope that as our relationship grows that partner companies will look for additional opportunities to support our work – through involvement by employees in non-disaster volunteer opportunities, financial and in-kind contributions, participation on our board of directors or committees, etc. But there is no requirement for such additional involvement to be an RWTC partner company.

What do RWTC employee volunteers gain?

RWTC volunteers gain vital training enabling them to assist in a large-scale disaster. Participating in the RWTC Program increases confidence, as well as involving employees in meaningful and rewarding volunteer work. Volunteers have the opportunity to make a real difference in their community, meet new friends, and learn new skills.

What are the requirements for volunteers?

Volunteers are required to:

- Participate in Red Cross provided training in one or more specialty areas of service;
- Be prepared to deploy within 24 hours when requested;
- Participate in at least one annual disaster drill.

All Red Cross volunteers are required to participate in an online national criminal background check, either before they volunteer or at the time of deployment. The company may also sign a statement that the company's background check policy meets or exceeds the American Red Cross minimum requirements for background checks.

They may be asked to:

- Stand ready for on-site training to take on additional roles;
- Consider participating in non-disaster volunteer opportunities in the chapter.

Who can be an RWTC volunteer?

If the partner company agrees, not only active employees but also members of their families and retirees and their family members are welcome to participate in RWTC.

Who will manage RWTC volunteers when they are deployed?

RWTC volunteers will be managed by chapter employees or trained disaster volunteers.

Does the Red Cross provide insurance coverage for RWTC volunteers?

Yes. Our commercial general liability insurance covers volunteers for personal liability that may incur while acting as agents of the Red Cross. A volunteer is considered to be an agent of the Red Cross when he or she is acting under the direct control and supervision of the Red Cross and within the scope of his or her Red Cross duties. We normally do not indemnify another party in these situations. Also, workers' compensation does not extend to volunteers in most situations. Full details of insurance coverage are available upon request.

Are RWTC volunteers deployed to national disasters outside of the chapter's service area?

Not usually. RWTC volunteers are expected to respond to disasters within the service area of their host chapter or in neighboring areas with which the chapter has cooperative agreements. Those wishing to be available for national disasters must let their chapter know and undertake additional training.

The location and contacts for the 16 pilot chapters are:

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