

# Disasters and Relief

## Special Guidelines for Helping During Disasters and other Emergencies

This page provides some detailed information for those seeking to help out following disasters or during emergency situations.

To contact a relief support group directly involved in such work please study the Resource Directory carefully. You will also find organizations specializing in patient transport and medical flights, as well as non-patient transport missions such as search and rescue, flights for veterans, emergency preparedness, educational flights for youth, international work, animal transport, environmental flying, etc. Contact groups that can solve your or your community's need.

And the easiest way to find them and send your inquiry is to use the "Request a Flight or Info" button to the left.

The following information is more detailed information about the best ways to help out in disaster or community emergency situations:

Updated for the Haiti Earthquake disaster:

This information was originally compiled for prior general aviation volunteer relief efforts such as for the Loma Prieta, Northridge, and Haiti earthquakes, 9/11 attacks, Hurricanes Hugo, Andrew, Katrina, Rita, and Gustav, and the international Tsunami response.

## General Aviation Disaster Relief Information:

The following information provides guidance on how to help. Please read it thoroughly and watch for updates below, on our main page, and on the pages of major aviation associations as described below.

Volunteer Pilots - be sure to download and read the AOPA Air Safety Foundation Safety Guide described below.

Our information below can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Be safe and be careful not to interfere in relief efforts by others.
- 2) Be available to help, even if the best way to help is through making a donation to relief groups. Research carefully what can and should be done when providing your aircraft or services to help during a crisis. We provide links to excellent information below.
- 3) It is best to work through organized groups which have relations with relief agencies and can coordinate your participation. See the information regarding listed groups below.
- 4) The most useful and productive volunteers are those who have prepared prior to an emergency situation and know exactly how to respond.

## What You Can Do Now and What We Have Learned in Prior Relief Efforts:

We received many inquiries from individuals and groups about how they could help following 9/11. At first there was little call for general aviation services for disaster relief, although some groups were being called upon to transport blood or fly other missions. However, demand picked up quickly and ultimately several hundred missions were flown by volunteer pilots over a multiweek period, flying blood, medical supplies, and relief workers, and evacuating residents.

Following Hurricane Katrina many hundreds of volunteers from general aviation were involved and we have heard estimates of more than two thousand missions flown.

During and following hurricanes and other disasters we have learned that there is often a more widespread call for help. General aviation volunteers will provide essential services during relief efforts.

If you wish to help in a current or some future crisis please carefully read and consider the following guidelines:

First, regarding general aviation participation, please work directly with your own flying organizations to contribute in any pre-arranged efforts coordinated by them and their local emergency planning agencies.

Many volunteer pilot public benefit flying groups will have an emergency services coordinator who can provide information. See the information about volunteer pilot organizations below.

### **Sources of General Information:**

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association: AOPA has collected much useful information for pilots flying relief missions or needing to fly into the affected areas. We expect AOPA to publish updated information regularly, so keep an eye on [www.aopa.org](http://www.aopa.org) [1] and subscribe to AOPA's eNews alerts such as ePilot.

AOPA has published information about the current Haiti relief work. Please visit:

AOPA's Page on General Aviation Haiti Relief work and resources  
also: Craig Fuller's message regarding pilot support for Haiti.  
AOPA update on 1-19-2010  
GA relief flights to Haiti start

National Business Aircraft Association: NBAA has excellent information and has developed a database to provide information about available aircraft and pilots to the Department of Homeland Security, relief agencies and groups providing transportation services. It includes information about the CARE program - Corporate Aircraft Responding to Emergencies. Please visit the following pages:

NBAA main page with links the Haiti Relief Articles  
NBAA: Haiti Aircraft Operations  
Corporate Aircraft Responding in Emergencies - CARE

You can register yourself and your aircraft with NBAA by using the links above. NBAA has provided the database to the Air Care Alliance to distribute to its listed groups involved in Haiti relief work.

The Experimental Aircraft Association: EAA also publishes excellent coverage of relief efforts involving GA; please subscribe to their eNews alerts and keep an eye on their website. <http://www.eaa.org/> [2]

AVweb has also presented good coverage and useful information on their NewsWire pages found at [www.AVweb.com](http://www.AVweb.com) [3] and in their emailed AvFlash bulletins. Mary Grady of AVweb recorded a short interview with Doug Clements of Wings of Hope, which has operations in Haiti, and it provides an excellent perspective regarding what GA can do there. Listen to it at: <http://tinyurl.com/ycpookc> [4]. Pilot Share the Ride: following the Katrina hurricane this general aviation rideshare service organized hundreds of flights. In association with Operation Teacup they are offering their help again. Log on to the site and register yourself as a pilot, or register your relief organization's transportation needs, and see if a match can be

found. <http://www.pilotsharetheride.com> [5]

Donate Blood: During the first days of 9/11 the Red Cross coordinated a blood drive, with certain types especially needed. If you are interested, call your local Red Cross chapter or 1 800 GIVE LIFE, 1 888 BLOOD-88 or do a search for a Red Cross web site serving your area. You should also check with your own local or regional independent blood banks too.

Individuals should avoid inundating overburdened emergency service workers with calls during emergencies, especially in the affected areas. Try to get your information first from your own groups or from public sources such as local news announcements, especially from local FEMA offices or other local emergency management agencies. See the FEMA "How You Can Help" page.

To familiarize yourself with the entire subject of the Haiti Earthquake and relief efforts please visit the following Wikipedia site, which is updated continuously: 2010 Haiti Earthquake on Wikipedia

Another source for suggestions on aiding those in need is the Network for Good.

### **Volunteer Pilots and Public Benefit Flying Groups**

If you wish to volunteer your services as a pilot or other volunteer for a nonprofit aviation organization, please see the [complete list of volunteer flying organizations maintained by the Air Care Alliance on this site](#). Contact the groups in your area or in areas likely to serve the disaster directly, using the information in the listings.

Note: The following ACA listed organizations have indicated they are facilitating relief flights: Angel Flight Soars of Georgia, Angel Flight East, Grace Flight, Cair Flight, Bahamas Habitat, Mercy Flight Southeast, Angel Flight West (airline ticket support), Pilots for Patients, Corporate Angel Network, Wings of Hope, Missions Made Possible, Servant Air Ministries, Angel Flight Central. Others are likely helping too but have not yet provided us their information.

Many of these groups have emergency service or medical transport programs which may be operating. During the 9/11 emergency when airspace was closed the blood missions were being flown utilizing the "LifeGuard" call sign flight procedures designated by FAA. As airspace reopened routine transport missions were flown utilizing the ACA "Compassion" call sign procedures published on this site. Some Angel Flight groups also used the "Angel Flight" call sign, with procedures derived from the ACA's Compassion procedures. Grace Flight of Texas also has a dedicated call sign for their operations.

Please note, however, that during an emergency FEMA and other relief groups tend to be overloaded with offers of help. Most of those who are actually asked to fly missions do so through the various flying organizations in our listings or for local agencies and social service organizations. Thus we urge you to volunteer and fly with them. Please investigate a number of organizations flying in your area and offer your help to them.

Quite often pilots will find that they can perform missions for their local social service agencies or nonprofit groups in order to help others, and that they can fly into airports that are not restricted. Do follow all pertinent NOTAMS and check the sites above for additional information before flying.

Note: most groups have an orientation and acceptance procedure to get new pilots involved. It is best to join groups and learn about their programs before an emergency. During an actual emergency situation new volunteers can get in the way if they are not careful.

In your haste to help please do not become part of a disaster!

**SAFETY FIRST !** Do not allow the urgency of the situation to compromise safety. In fact, pilots should add an extra margin to their own personal minimums to compensate for the pressure to be of help.

The AOPA Air Safety Foundation and the Air Care Alliance collaborated to present safety recommendations for volunteer pilots in the AOPA ASF Guide - "Volunteer Pilots - Recommendations"

for Enhanced Safety." Obtain a PDF copy of the guide by clicking this link: [AOPA ASF Volunteer Pilot Safety Guide](#).

Please be sure to read the guide.

Information for Groups: For those organizations such as volunteer pilot organizations, clubs, and airport associations wishing to help, EVAC - the Emergency Volunteer Air Corps - compiled much of the information shown here and has provided much useful information including a sample emergency operations guide, on its site at <http://www.evac.org> [6]

We will update this information periodically so please keep an eye on this site.

Whenever possible please call the listed groups directly to offer your assistance. ACA does not coordinate relief flights.

The listed groups do. Contact them using our listings at <http://www.aircareall.org/listings.htm> [7] . However, pilots who still must contact the Air Care Alliance directly regarding relief questions should use this email address:

[relief@aircareall.org](mailto:relief@aircareall.org) [8]

Do email us and let us know if you learn anything that we should know about and should report here or to others.

And please do not call our ACA phone help line except for an emergency or to get help finding a group to transport a patient or perform another service. We ask that you use our Listings and other information on the site first and call us if you can't find what you need.

FYI: Partial List of Volunteer Oriented Agencies Providing Relief - compiled by

NVOAD, National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster <http://www.nvoad.org/> [9]

Member agencies responding in Haiti :

- ACTS World Relief
- Adventist Community Services
- American Red Cross
- Billy Graham Rapid Response Team
- Brethren Disaster Ministries
- Catholic Charities USA
- Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
- Churches of Scientology Disaster Response
- Convoy of Hope
- Episcopal Relief and Development
- Feed the Children
- Habitat for Humanity International
- Hands On Disaster Response
- HOPE worldwide Ltd
- Humane Society of the United States
- International Critical Incident Stress Foundation
- International Relief and Development
- Latter-day Saints Charities
- Mercy Medical Airlift
- National Baptist Convention USA
- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
- Samaritan's Purse
- Southern Baptist Convention/ NAMB
- The Salvation Army

Save the Children USA

- Tzu Chi Buddhist Foundation
- United Methodist Committee on Relief
- United Way Worldwide
- World Hope International
- World Vision

Some History: Volunteer Pilots Responded to the September 11 Crisis: A number of magazines have printed stories about the relief flights and other missions flown in the hours and days following the terrorist attacks. For some examples of this and other disaster response stories please see the list of articles on our News Page.

This website has been built thanks to generous support from Gary, Jan, Chris, and Matt St. Peter of Operation Angel Planes and also from the Wolf Aviation Fund and the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association  
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**Source URL:** <http://www.aircarealliance.org/disasters-and-relief>

### Links:

- [1] <http://www.aopa.org>
- [2] <http://www.eaa.org/>
- [3] <http://www.AVweb.com>
- [4] <http://tinyurl.com/ycpookc>
- [5] <http://www.pilotsharetheride.com>
- [6] <http://www.evac.org>
- [7] <http://www.aircareall.org/listings.htm>
- [8] <mailto:relief@aircareall.org>
- [9] <http://www.nvoad.org/>