



HELPNJNOW.ORG is a dynamic, interactive web-based resource providing education, direction, information, and tools for people to help themselves and others in a disaster. This site was developed by NJVOAD (New Jersey Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster), the New Jersey Governor’s Office of Volunteerism, and the NJOEM (New Jersey Office of Emergency Management) to meet several needs identified after Hurricane Sandy devastated so many NJ communities. When Sandy struck, the structure and systems were not in place to manage the outpouring of people who wanted to help. There was also no mechanism to accurately and consistently communicate the needs of affected communities. As a result, volunteers with time and talent got lost in the shuffle and valuable resources were wasted trying to store and manage donated items that were not requested or needed.

HELPNJNOW.ORG was designed to address these gaps in two modes:

When New Jersey is not responding to a declared disaster (the “blue sky” mode), the focus is on personal preparedness—information and links for people to prepare themselves and their families for potential threats. The site also provides education about the best ways to help when a disaster strikes. One primary focus is to encourage people to register and train as a disaster volunteer before a disaster strikes; trained volunteers are critical to successful disaster relief efforts. Education about donated goods is also a critical focus, as many people don’t realize the burden of shipping, sorting, storing and distributing items; many items, such as used clothing, cannot be distributed in shelters and other settings due to hygienic issues. The site also provides a conduit to make donations to vetted organizations that assist in local disaster relief efforts; cash donations are the best way to help in a disaster, as cash allows organizations to purchase what is needed locally and helps rebuild the local economy.

When a disaster is declared in one or more New Jersey counties, the site will operate in “gray sky” mode with links to 4 key resources:

- Monetary Donations: Financial donations are the best way to help in any disaster.
- Material Goods: Information about items needed will be listed, as well as a portal for people to offer donated goods – Please only donate what is requested!
- Volunteers: Trained volunteers who are working with an organization are given priority when disaster strikes, but people without prior training who want to help can complete an online application and skills inventory to sign up for volunteer opportunities.
- Information/Assistance: For those in need of help, links and numbers to NJ 2-1-1 are provided.

HELPNJNOW.ORG turns good intentions into meaningful contributions of the time, talents, and resources needed to help New Jersey weather whatever storms lie ahead.

*This website has been made possible through the generous support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the PSEG Foundation.*