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How to help the Illinois Tornado Victims

Our thoughts go out to the victims of Sunday's tornado outbreak in the Midwest. Wisconsin was fortunate to have little damage, but many communities in Illinois were devastated by the multiple tornadoes and severe storms. While many people in Wisconsin want to help our neighbors, there are some recommended guidelines to follow.

First, do not go to the scene of a disaster. Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) is reporting there are far more volunteer offers than there are volunteer needs. In addition, the arrival of unexpected volunteers will interfere with the response efforts. Despite best intentions, you may end up being one more person for relief organizations to take care of, diverting money that could be spent rebuilding.

Cash Donations Only. IEMA says financial gifts are the best way to help the victims of Sunday's tornadoes. Cash donations to reputable disaster agencies such as the American Red Cross and Salvation Army will allow those organizations to purchase exactly what is needed such as food and water.

Do not send donations of food, clothing and other items. Donating boxes or truck loads of items often contributes to what relief workers call the disaster after the disaster. Unsolicited donated goods such as used clothing, household items, and mixed or perishable foodstuffs requires disaster relief agencies to redirect valuable resources away from helping tornado victims to sort, package, transport, warehouse, and distribute items that may not meet the needs of disaster survivors.

After seeing images from the destruction caused by the tornadoes, we all want to help those in need. To learn more about how you can make a difference, go to www.illinois.gov/ready