



News Release

NEWS RELEASE

“We’re Here Because of You, Together We Can Save a Life”

Greater Somerset County Chapter
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Local Red Cross Volunteers, Neighbors Helping Neighbors

SOMERVILLE, NJ, February 28, 2008— While first responders are handling a disaster situation, the Red Cross is taking care of the people in a disaster, helping to speed their recovery process. “On February 13th, the Greater Somerset County Chapter activated our volunteer disaster teams to prepare to shelter potential flood victims resulting from a storm. Within a week of that event, chapter volunteers responded to four single family fires in Bound Brook, Bridgewater and Manville and we were called by the county to provide additional assistance for a high rise apartment complex fire in Franklin Township” stated Mal Plager, Director of Emergency Services.

Local Red Cross Chapters around the country respond to disasters in the US every 8 minutes. The most common disaster is home fires, which kill more Americans each year than all natural disasters combined. According to Amy Sutton, Executive Director of the local Greater Somerset County Chapter of the American Red Cross, “Most people can’t imagine having to leave home with nothing but the clothes on your back. They don’t believe this can happen to them, or that lives are at risk. Last year we responded to a fatal house fire. Words can not express the devastation and sorrow felt by the family and the community. Our mission is to provide education on the risks and the things people can do to prevent and prepare for disaster.”

For over 90 years the Greater Somerset County chapter has provided 24/7 disaster preparedness and response services for everything from house fires to national level flooding disasters. Local donations ensure these services are available for all residents. Disaster response services include mental health, financial and material assistance and sheltering and are free. The chapter is 99% volunteer. Red Cross Volunteers provide these services, they are neighbors helping neighbors.

“There are many things that the Red Cross can help people replace as a result of a fire. Ensuring that our community is prepared is an investment that will save money, speed recovery but most importantly, saves lives”, stated Ms. Sutton. Residents can contact the chapter at 908-725-2217 should they experience a house fire. If you would like to make a donation, learn more about volunteering or how you can prevent and prepare for emergencies, call or visit greatersomerset.redcross.org.

Simple Tips to Prevent and Prepare Home Heating Fires

- Keep all potential fuel sources (newspapers, matches, bedding, clothing, carpets and rugs) at least three feet away from heat sources, such as space heaters, fireplaces and stoves.
- Provide constant adult supervision in rooms with lit candles or fires.
- Keep fire in the fireplace by using glass or metal fire screens.

- Never leave a fire in the fireplace unattended. Extinguish the fire before going to bed or leaving the house.
- Never use a cooking range or oven to heat your home.
- Turn off portable space heaters every time you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Have wood and coal stoves, fireplaces, and chimneys inspected annually by a professional, and cleaned if necessary.
- If you must use space heaters, place them on a level, hard and nonflammable surface (such as ceramic tile floor), not on rugs or carpets or near bedding or drapes. Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- Test your smoke alarms.
- Develop and practice a home fire escape plan so that every family member, including young children and the elderly, can escape quickly and safely. Fire escape plans should include at least two exit routes for every room in the home, and a convenient meeting place at a safe distance from the fire. Escape ladders should be used and stored near windows in floors above ground level, and all family members should know how to locate and use the ladders safely. Families should practice their escape plan at least twice a year.
- Ensure your preparedness plan includes lifesaving Red Cross training such as CPR and Basic First Aid.

The American Red Cross Greater Somerset County chapter is a non-profit organization that helps people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. The chapter serves the residents of Somerset County, offering disaster relief and preparedness education, armed forces services, health and safety training, medical transportation, and blood services. The American Red Cross of Greater Somerset County depends on donations of time, money, and blood from others to make our humanitarian work possible. For more information, call 908-725-2217 or visit american-redcross.org