

# Disaster Best Practices — Stewardship

A guide to report back to donors and the public

Steps to consider as soon as possible after a disaster

1. **Post a website update and issue a news release telling donors how their gifts will be used.** This should be as specific as possible, yet allow for the possibility that you don't know the full nature of the disaster. For example, it's better to say "rebuild the credit union system" than "rebuild the six credit unions damaged." You may find out later it is better to merge two of the credit unions, and then you will be rebuilding only five institutions.
2. Always end by **linking back to how people can donate.** Give your donation website, mailing address for a check/draft or whom to contact.
3. **Thank donors.** If your resources are overwhelmed, prioritize the largest gifts first or send online thank-you notes. Be sure to meet any local tax laws. Another option is to send a generic thank-you email and then a formal letter at a later date when you have staff/time to catch up.
4. **Utilize what you have.** If you already have a newsletter, Twitter account, Facebook account, phone tree, intranet or other network (even a staff bulletin board), post a thank-you and short update every 48 hours (depending on disaster severity).

Steps to consider at 100 days following the disaster

1. It's customary to **send a donor report 100 days after** the disaster with specifics. Include the number of people affected, who you are helping and how your efforts will improve their lives. There are samples included in this packet. If you don't have a lot of information yet, it may make donors feel good to hear about a specific disaster victim you have helped.
2. **Photos are vital.** If you don't have the computer capabilities to insert color photos in your document, develop and enclose at least two with your report. You can identify/explain them in your report.

Steps to consider six months following the disaster

1. Send a **more lengthy report** of how their gift helped. If resources allow, this might be more than a written or e-mailed report, such as a DVD or a folder with press clippings. You might prioritize and only send to donors of a certain dollar amount or higher.
2. This is also a good time to review if you put some or all of these people on a new or existing **donor list for future solicitation.** Conventional wisdom says people give through your organization for disaster (rather than to your organization) so they may

not be top prospects, but review the list and consider if they are worth following up for another regular credit union solicitation.

3. **Include information** on how donors, through your organization, made a difference in the lives of disaster victims. Update donors **at no cost by using existing communications** such as annual reports, annual meetings and newsletters. Also consider asking trade or local media to feature a specific victim's recovery story, thereby highlighting your work.