



# NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

September 16, 2015

## How to Help Lake County Fire Victims

*Donations of items proving difficult to manage for disaster-struck area*

**San Rafael, CA** – Marin County residents who want to help victims of the [Valley Fire](#) in nearby Lake County may make donations securely through the [Lake County Local Assistance Center](#) (LAC) and are asked to refrain from gathering goods to send to needy neighbors to the north.

Hundreds of homes and thousands of structures have been destroyed by the fast-moving fire that started on Saturday, September 12, and had grown to 70,000 acres by 8 a.m. Wednesday, September 16. More than 26,000 people had been evacuated, many of them with only a few minutes to organize their families and pets, and escape ahead of the flames.

The [Marin County Office of Emergency Services](#) (OES), a division of the Marin County Sheriff's Office, urges Marin residents to think twice before gathering donated goods and making a trip north to drop off the items personally. Lake County and the American Red Cross are not equipped to handle a large influx of household items, food or clothing because of the personnel and time it takes to store, sort and distribute the items.

On their main website, Lake County officials wrote, "We are in awe at the response we have received from members of our community and beyond. The generosity many of you have shown is heartwarming. It is getting to a point now where the amount of donations we have received has become overwhelming and difficult to manage."

Lake County asked that monetary donations be directed to the [North Coast Opportunities /Mendo Lake Credit Union Lake County Wildfire Relief Fund](#) with a memo for "Valley Fire." The Red Cross suggests visiting [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) to contribute financial aid or texting the word "REDCROSS" to 90999 to make a \$10 donation.

"Everyone appreciates the good intentions of people who want to donate items, but financial donations are the quickest and best way to get help to

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the people who need it most," said Woody Baker-Cohn, a Marin OES coordinator and a longtime Red Cross emergency worker.

The Lake County LAC was activated by the Lake County Board of Supervisors to provide a centralized location for services and resource referrals during the response and recovery from the devastating fire. Fire and emergency services resources from all over California and several neighboring states have been rushed to the area.

Ursula Hanks, a coordinator with Marin EOS, was called up this week to help with donation management in Lake County. "After experiencing first-hand the chaos of donations, the burden has become overwhelming because of logistical challenges," she said. "Donations other than monetary are not encouraged until further notice."

The North Coast Opportunities Volunteer Program is working to coordinate registered volunteers who can help with donated items. To help on that end, check [www.ncoinc.org](http://www.ncoinc.org).

Marin County Fire Chief Jason Weber provided an update from the fire standpoint to the Marin County Board of Supervisors during its regular meeting Tuesday morning.

"That community did not need to suffer another loss like this," Weber said in reference to the Rocky and Jerusalem fires that devastated Lake County in July and August. "Our hearts go out to all involved up there. ... Let's hope for a little rain."

Marin County fire agencies have contributed the help of more than 50 personnel to the Valley Fire effort.

Weber urged local residents to check [www.readymarin.org](http://www.readymarin.org) and [www.readysetgomarin.org](http://www.readysetgomarin.org) to take preemptive actions in and around homes and prepare plans for quick evacuations in case a devastating wildfire strikes in Marin. He said the creation of the 14-member Tamalpais Fire Crew 10 years ago has been "a great investment" by the Supervisors, and prevention efforts to clear vegetation away from dwellings are helping with preparedness.

"Can the same thing happen here in Marin? Absolutely, it can," Weber said. "We live in a susceptible area, but there are a lot of things people can do right now to make our neighborhoods safer."

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