

Americans Urged To Donate Spare Change Before Disaster Strikes



(NAPSA)—Each year the American Red Cross provides life-saving aid to millions of people affected by hurricanes, wildfires, house fires, winter storms and other disasters. These disasters leave thousands of people injured and cause billions of dollars in property damage. Now the Red Cross is turning to an easy-to-use service at the supermarket to help provide aid to these victims.

In 2000, the Red Cross spent more than \$286 million on disaster relief services, the second most costly year in the organization's history. This year, more than \$40.7 million has been spent providing lifesaving relief to the victims of almost 300 major disasters in 45 states.

To help meet this overwhelming need, the Red Cross has partnered with Coinstar, makers of coin counting machines found in grocery stores across the country. Nearly all of Coinstar's 8,900 machines are now programmed to accept donations to the Red Cross. Statistics show that if only half of the 130 million people who live near a Coinstar machine were to donate a dollar's worth of change, \$65 million could be raised for disaster relief.

Without the public's support, a single major disaster such as a hurricane or a series of disasters could deplete the Red Cross Dis-

TIPS ON HOW TO PREPARE

Based on seasonal trends, disasters will continue to strike U.S. residents without warning this year. Preparation can be as simple as following these steps:

- 1) On the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, hurricanes are a dangerous threat to life and property. Nearly a decade ago, Hurricane Andrew caused more than \$25 billion in damage and left families homeless. Residents can prepare for these unpredictable storms by stocking up on drinking water, canned food and boarding up windows.
- 2) Last year, wildfires ravaged nearly seven million acres in the western U.S. at a cost of \$10 billion. Residents can protect their home and families by removing foliage and tree limbs from around the home, planting fire-resistant shrubs and trees.
- 3) House fires occur daily in most communities, displacing families without warning. Nationwide, house fires take more lives than all natural disasters combined and cause over \$8.6 billion in damages each year. Helpful ways to prevent these fires include installing smoke alarms outside sleeping areas and identifying two plans for escape from every room in the house should smoke or fire block the first exit route.
- 4) Winter storms will take their toll in the Northern U.S., leaving families homeless and impacting entire communities. Residents can be prepared by keeping warm coats, gloves, hats and boots on hand.



ter Relief Fund overnight. To prevent such an occurrence, the organization has a "tremendous need for community support before disasters strike."

For more information or to make a donation, visit the Coinstar at your supermarket or call 1-800 HELP NOW.