

New York State Division of the Budget
Town Hall Hearings
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American Red Cross
Utica Chapter
Andria De Lisle-Heath
Executive Director

Greetings and thank you for this opportunity to speak with you this evening. To our esteemed visitors, welcome to the Utica area!

I am Andria De Lisle-Heath, the Executive Director of the Utica Chapter of the American Red Cross and this is my 17th day on this job. I began my career in 1997 with the American Red Cross as Executive Director of the Mohawk Valley Chapter located in the next county. Therefore, my testimony this evening is a reflection of Red Cross life expanding over 10 years and representing urban and rural, a combined population of nearly 200,000 people, over 650 dedicated volunteers, and last year, over 20,000 people served.

Located throughout the state, our network of 36 American Red Cross chapters help New Yorkers prepare for disasters and recover when emergencies strike. Not only do we provide shelter, food, clothing, and other types of emergency assistance; we offer the hope and peace of knowing there is a designated organization to respond 24 hours per day, each of the 365 days of the year. We train thousands in the life-saving techniques of CPR, First Aid, AED, and water safety. We strive to insure the supply and safety of blood products used by hospitals throughout the state. We are chartered by Congress to conduct emergency messaging to our men and women serving our country when an emergency strikes their family!

One such day when the American Red Cross was deployed was just this past Thanksgiving day. In the morning, just as much of American was tuning into the Macy's day parade, a high-rise in the heart of Utica was the site of an apartment fire. The family who call the apartment home was in crisis, as were the 100 other individuals who call the building home. The American Red Cross, Utica Chapter was on the scene instantly, providing blankets, comfort, and working closely with the emergency services crews. Through an integral system of collaboration within the American Red Cross as well as with nearby organizations, all of the residents of the apartment building were cared for throughout the day. For the residents who couldn't return to their building by the end of Thanksgiving Day, the American Red Cross responders were on hand to provide emergency sheltering and meals. Thanks to the wise decisions on the part of the Utica Fire Department Leadership and other responders, what could have been a MAJOR Thanksgiving Day tragedy involving dozens of apartments and 100 residents was confined to one apartment and several hours of displacement.

The American Red Cross knows first hand what might have been needed that day if the fire had not been contained....over 100 displaced people, family members concerned about their loved ones and seeking answers, dozens of trained volunteers, sheltering needs placed throughout the city, hundreds of meals prepared for what could have been several days, cots, clothing, children entertained, new homes needing to be found.....the list goes on.

Fires, flooding, ice storms....these are all common scenarios throughout NYS and all must be ***PREPARED FOR and RESPONDED TO.***

The American Red Cross is the only not for profit organization chartered by Congress to provide disaster relief, yet our chapters do not receive federal funding. At the State level, we are the only not-for-profit agency that is a member of the State Disaster Preparedness Commission. On the county level, we are often an integral member of the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) It is in our mission to serve in this capacity and its what we do....gladly!

At our chapter, we answer our phone, "This is your American Red Cross". As a local corporate leader said to me at lunch today, the American Red Cross is one of the only agencies that can be a thread of hope to any one of our NYS citizens at any time; regardless of any demographic definition, on any given moment, each one of us or our family member could need a disaster preparedness lesson, a unit of blood, a military emergency message sent to bring loved ones together, CPR, first aid and the list goes on!

Thank you for allowing me this time to share with you the IMPACT that could be made on all New Yorkers with the budgetary line item of \$20 million to support the hundreds of thousands throughout NYS who will need the services of the American Red Cross next year.