



# *Position Statement*

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## Climate Change – May 2009

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Helping communities and individuals prevent, prepare for and respond to disasters is at the heart of the mission of the American Red Cross.

Research indicates the climate is changing globally, with an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events – heavier rainfall, more intense tropical storms and hurricanes, more heat waves and prolonged droughts. These new weather patterns and temperatures are challenging the ability of communities to anticipate and recover from disasters.

For example, data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) shows a fourfold increase since 2000 in the number of U.S. weather events that caused damage in excess of \$1 billion. The record was in 2008, when the U.S. had nine events that caused at least \$1 billion in damage, and the NOAA data shows that the five years with the most \$1 billion U.S. weather disasters have all occurred since 1998 – 1998, 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008.

Moreover, internationally, the American Red Cross has responded to well over 200 disasters over the past decade, with the number of responses each year rising over time.

This has prompted us to invest more resources in both our disaster preparedness and disaster response activities to meet the increasing demand for our services. We work closely with communities to help governments, businesses and residents understand their disaster risk and what they can do to prepare, prevent and be more resilient to withstand a natural hazard. Our preparedness work includes the *Be Red Cross Ready* program and the *Masters of Disaster*® curriculum to educate the public about important disaster safety and preparedness information.

We are also expanding our support for international disaster risk reduction programs through more international partnerships, both within the Red Cross and Red Crescent family and beyond. An illustrative example is our support for research on climate change trends via the Red Cross/Red Crescent Centre on Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness (Climate Centre), located in The Hague, Netherlands. Among its many projects, the Climate Centre has supported the Indonesian Red Cross Society in preparing communities to better understand and adapt to more-intensified wet and dry seasons that result in more floods and droughts.

The American Red Cross supports improved understanding of the effects of climate change and increased preparedness to deal with the growing number of disasters. Protecting our environment is important, and, as an organization, the Red Cross is making responsible and constructive efforts to care for our environment and promote greater energy efficiency and sustainable business practices.

Scientists, government leaders and policy experts have the responsibility for determining the best public policy actions to address and mitigate against the impact of climate change. The job of the American Red Cross is to make sure communities are prepared to deal with the impact of disasters, including new risks that may be related to climate change, and to ensure communities are well-equipped to effectively respond to any calamity.