

The Elks and Disaster Relief

In 1871, a fire devastated the city of Chicago, and the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks quickly organized and staged a benefit to provide financial assistance to residents most affected by the disaster. Since then, the Order has responded to every major catastrophe (natural or manmade) and played a leading role in providing relief and comfort.

In 1889, the Elks, at the national level, offered financial contributions to assist the families that suffered as a result of flooding in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and fires in Seattle, Washington. In 1892, the BPO Elks began working with the American Red Cross when it and the Order provided monies for those suffering from a famine in Russia. To this day, the Elks have maintained a partnership with the American Red Cross and developed similar partnerships with other relief agencies.

Following the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco, the Order was the first organization to respond to the call for help. Within 12 hours, the Elks' relief efforts were in full swing. In Oakland, California, the Elks equipped hospitals, established temporary shelters for nearly 2,000 displaced persons, and arranged for provisions to be transported to the area. From across the country, financial donations from Elks came in answer to the pleas of the earthquake victims.

Through the years, the Elks have been responsible for aiding the men, women, and children whose lives have been affected by extraordinary circumstances. No matter the cause of the disaster--torrential rains that led to heavy flooding, explosions in mines, earthquakes, fires, tornadoes, hurricanes, epidemics of various illnesses, and tidal waves--the Elks have been among the first organizations to lend a helping hand in troubled times.

Today, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks continues its commitment to participate in disaster relief. Most recently, the Order raised more than \$230,000 to help the families victimized the Oklahoma City bombing and tens of thousands more to provide assistance to the people affected by the Red River flooding, tornadoes in Oklahoma and Kansas, and Hurricanes Dennis and Floyd.

In times of crisis, it has long been a pattern for the Order of Elks to ease the pain of others by providing the necessary relief.