



Inside This Issue

Floods and Fires **1**

Letter from the Director **2**

Background Checks **3**

Across North America,
Volunteers Respond **4-5**

Groups Serving Sandy
Survivors **6**

A "Forever Home" Restored in
Florida **7**

Floods and Fires **8**

Floods and Fires

Wildfires devastated the Fort McMurray, Alberta, area in May. More than 88,000 people were forced to evacuate, and entire neighborhoods were destroyed by fire, smoke, and water.

In the U.S., flooding has been prevalent this year, affecting thousands of families in Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, and elsewhere.

One Texas family, a grandmother and four grandchildren, were lost in a flood. A gentleman in Missouri had to tear down his home completely after it was filled to the roof with water. Tens of thousands people were evacuated in the fire in Alberta. We ache to extend compassion to people like these who have lost so much.

What can we do to help those affected by a disaster? We will



© PREMIER OF ALBERTA/Flickr

continue to do what God has pressed on our hearts and lives: led by the Holy Spirit and strengthened with the knowledge and determination He provides, World Renew DRS friends, volunteers, donors, and staff respond by living justice, loving mercy, and serving Christ in the lives of people in need.

continued on page 3 ➤



**Carol Bremer-Bennett,
World Renew Director U.S.**

Letter from the Director

Greetings!

I am writing this letter to give you some updates regarding the leadership of World Renew's Disaster Response Services (DRS) program. Ron Willett, director of DRS, resigned from his position in March 2016. We thank those of you who heard this news and shared your notes of encouragement and offered to cover all of us in prayer throughout this transition.

Although a change in leadership is challenging, I believe that you know that our DRS team members are quite capable in their roles and undeterred in the work. We have an experienced team that is ready to respond to any situation at a moment's notice, including this one. I stand assured on the stable foundation of DRS and the bright future it has as a part of World Renew's mission.

We have begun the process for hiring for a new DRS director. The position was posted in May, and we will conduct interviews as applications are received and reviewed. Most likely, this process will take a few months, and we hope to make a selection by the end of the summer. We certainly covet your prayers in this process. We pray that God will prepare the heart and mind of the person He calls to this important work for His kingdom.

In the meantime, as the World Renew co-directors, Ida Kaastra Mutoigo and I have appointed Andrew Ryskamp, U.S. director for World Renew emeritus, as interim DRS director. We are thrilled to have such a qualified and trusted person to step in to lead DRS during this time of transition. Andy has agreed to work two days a week at DRS for up to six months. Andy started on Tuesday, May 10, and reports to me.

Again, please join us in prayer as we search for a new DRS director for World Renew.

Your Partner in Kingdom Work,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol Bremer-Bennett". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Carol Bremer-Bennett
World Renew Director U.S.

World Renew Disaster Response Services' Mission is:

To show God's love and bring hope to disaster-impacted communities in North America by restoring the homes and lives of those who are most vulnerable,

To help communities build their capacity to prepare for and recover from disasters, and,

To provide opportunities for Christians to honor the Lord by using their time, talents, and financial resources in service to others.

◀ continued from page 1

Alberta Fires

Residents displaced from Fort McMurray, Alberta, have been sheltered with friends and family or in temporary housing. Evergreen CRC in Fort McMurray and Trinity CRC in Edmonton are helping displaced church members, opening their doors to those who need a place to go.

“A week or so after the fires, we met with northern Alberta churches and heard from Evergreen CRC members what their journey has been,” said interim DRS Director Andrew Ryskamp. “Out of the four families represented, only one lost their home to the fire. Their immediate needs are taken care of, but they are eager to see what comes next for them.”

Right now, World Renew is networking with government officials and church and organizational representatives to plan out a response. Opportunities include respite and day care for families, legal and financial counseling, spiritual support and chaplaincy services, and transportation assistance. DRS regional managers and area representatives who live in Alberta will be involved in the response as long as needed.

World Renew is ready to send in volunteer teams to assist with clean-up as residents and workers return to the fire area. World Renew’s strength is in long-term response, including housing reconstruction, and it’s clear that the people of Fort McMurray have a long recovery ahead. World Renew will continue to support the Fort McMurray community, churches, and families as they rebuild and reclaim their homes and lives.

U.S. Floods

World Renew DRS will undertake a needs assessment in Jefferson County, Missouri, to help the local recovery group there find community members who need help recovering from January floods. In June, DRS regional managers will visit Texas and Mississippi to continue offering DRS services, help recovery groups organize, and build the next phase of flood response which includes needs assessments, construction estimating, and reconstruction.



© PREMIER OF ALBERTA/Flickr



Andrew Ryskamp (center, green shirt) meets with Fort McMurray residents who were displaced by wildfire.

Background Checks

As an agency of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, World Renew is participating in implementing a denomination-wide policy for mandatory background checks for volunteers starting in March 2016.

Careful screening of volunteers is an important part of maintaining a safe environment for the people we serve. We thank you, our volunteers, for supporting this new process as we work to protect those we serve and prevent further harm.

Across North America, DRS Volunteers Respond

DRS-Managed Reconstruction Sites

The **Ocean County, New Jersey**, reconstruction site reopened in March 2016. Work has been steady after a second unmet needs assessment, and more clients were added to the project list. However, Project Managers Rich and Phyl Grevenstuk with our partner, A Future with Hope, have decided that the workload is winding down, and the site will close on September 1, 2016.

The **Pensacola, Florida**, site closed in April when the work scheduled by the long-term recovery group (LTRG) was completed. The last team did a great job of closing down with assistance from a Grand Rapids team that moved our supplies, equipment, and vehicles to a new site in Texas. Project Managers Don and Gert Vos said that the work was well done. We thank all of the volunteers who helped in Pensacola.

In April, a new site opened in **San Marcos, Texas**, where two floods damaged many homes in 2015. Project Managers Doug and Mary van der Meulen, with On-Site Managers Pete and Ila Diepersloot completed the opening. Doug and Mary met with the LTRG, arranged work for the first team, and set up housing. The site is now closed for the summer and will reopen in the fall. DRS has conducted two unmet needs assessments in San Marcos.

Please pray for DRS managers who set up and attend meetings, correspond, and stay in contact in their regions, seeking to help those who have been devastated by a disaster.



Volunteer cooks plan meals for a DRS work team in New Jersey.

The LTRG in **Saipan** requested DRS reconstruction assistance after a typhoon hit the island last year. In November 2015, six volunteers provided building estimates, and in May 2016 Rich Grevenstuk and Don Vos began to assess the need for DRS reconstruction volunteers.

West Virginia was devastated by floods several times in 2015, and DRS managers developed a plan for multi-week facilitators to coordinate volunteer groups and teams. Thanks to Harv and Verla Klaver, Rob and Sharon Schelling, and Bruce and Marcia Fallis for their leadership on this site. They managed 99 volunteers who gave 8,000 hours to help 21 affected families.

The potential for a site in the **Rio Grande Valley, Texas**, has Project Managers Joel and Angie Ploegstra meeting with the LTRG, scoping out the work, and looking for volunteer housing.

Unmet Needs Assessment

In April, an unmet needs assessment team led by Jerry and Nancy Brouwer served in **Austin, Texas**. The area flooded twice in 2015, and our surveys revealed significant needs there.

Building Estimators

While working on the third reconstruction team in **San Marcos, Texas**, Lee and Sue Mys completed building estimates for the LTRG that will define DRS's work on that site in the future.

A request for a building estimator for the **Houston, Texas**, area was temporarily put on hold due to continued flooding this spring, but a team will be sent once the water begins to recede.

Florence County, South Carolina, has requested a building estimator in Lake City and Johnsonville. The towns were affected by flooding in October 2015.



DRS volunteers assessed flood-related needs in Austin, Texas.

Regional Project Managers

Regional Project Managers (RPMs) Carrie and Len Blauwkamp are in contact with LTRGs in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi where there have been multiple floods. Eric and Nancy Johnson are attending LTRG meetings and conference calls in South Carolina. Don and Gert Vos are monitoring activity in Calaveras and Lake counties, California, where DRS sent unmet needs assessment teams earlier this year. Henry and Linda Visscher are responding to the Alberta wildfires, setting the stage and networking with other organizations.

All of our RPMs remain in touch with the communities, LTRGs, and emergency managers in their areas, especially in locations where storms,

flooding, and other disasters have occurred. We want to thank them for their ongoing efforts.

Group Mission Trips

So far in 2016, the DRS groups program sent out 43 groups. These groups served in ten states, bringing help and hope to families and communities in need while also experiencing growth and transformation in their own lives. Church youth groups, college groups, and mixed adult groups spent their spring break in selfless service with disaster survivors in North America. One student wrote, "It is exciting to see God at work! I saw it in the servant hearts of the people we worked alongside, in homeowner's lives, and in the impact of World Renew's work." Another volunteer said, "People wanted to share their story and be heard. As they shared, I experienced their cultural perspective."

Watch for our monthly *DRS Opportunity Link* emails for volunteer updates about sites opening this fall!



In April, World Renew volunteers stripped the inside of a flooded home in Louisiana.

Rapid Response

Joe and Sharon Kelley, community leaders in **Franklinton, Louisiana**, have been fans of World Renew since Hurricane Katrina. When flooding hit there in March 2016, it was no surprise that the Kelleys called DRS. A rapid response team was sent to do a 2-week initial clean-up, and reconstruction groups will soon be deployed. Sharon Kelly said, "Your volunteers are God-sent!"

Groups Serving Sandy Survivors



A volunteer repairs a home in Highland Park, New Jersey.

Three-and-a-half years after Super-Storm Sandy raked across the East Coast, many Jersey shore residents are still trying to rebuild their homes. World Renew DRS is working with Churches Accomplishing Long-Term Recovery (CALTR), a local organization in New Jersey that has worked on more than 170 homes that were damaged or destroyed by Sandy.

“Our partnership with World Renew DRS has been instrumental in our work in Sandy recovery,” said Deb Convery, a CALTR associate. “World Renew’s volunteer groups are amazing. They are hard working and live out their Christian values in serving our residents. The groups from World Renew help put the ‘Accomplishing’ in the CALTR name. The work we completed could not be done without the tireless efforts of World Renew DRS’s dedicated groups.”

The work being accomplished on the Jersey shore is varied. Some homeowners still need their home gutted or demolished, others need insulation and drywall, and still others have needs that can’t be met until the whole structure is elevated. In addition to labor from World Renew DRS and other disaster organizations, CALTR coordinates local volunteers who are out of work and often inexperienced so that they can learn new skills and improve their employment opportunities.

“CALTR shares a spiritual bond with the homeowners we serve,” said Convery. “We maintain a strong presence on the Jersey shore because of our deep commitment to recovery and the strong connections we develop. It goes way beyond the day a homeowner breathes a sigh of relief as they hear us say, ‘All is well, you can move back home.’”

If your church, school, or family would like to organize a mission trip to New Jersey or elsewhere, please contact World Renew DRS.

World Renew Around the World

Do You Have a Heart for Peace and Justice?

World Renew was founded on peace and justice, and over the years the actions we have taken have grown in scope and boldness. We’ve learned that poverty is almost impossible to overcome in communities where the hurt and trauma caused by injustice prevails. You are invited to learn about and act with World Renew to **fight human trafficking**, to **address inequality**, to **heal scars caused by conflict**. Visit worldrenew.net/peaceandjustice to learn more and to get involved.



DRS regional and project managers participate in an organizational capacity-building exercise in April 2016.

A “Forever Home” Restored in Florida



Three generations of Janice’s family have lived in her Pensacola, Florida, home. Her parents raised Janice and her siblings in the house and then Janice and her husband raised their children there. In April 2014, Janice, age 74, was still living in the home with her pets when stealth-like storms brought heavy rain and flooding through the Florida Panhandle.

The roof of Janice’s house was damaged in the disaster, and it started to leak. This eventually caused additional damage to the ceiling, walls, and floor. “Janice continued to live in her house because it was her ‘forever home,’” said Ann Evans, a World Renew DRS volunteer. “She had to move out eventually because it was unlivable; it was really hard for her to see it as unsafe.”

When World Renew DRS was asked to open a reconstruction site in partnership with the local recovery group, BRACE (Be Ready Alliance Coordinating for Emergencies), skilled volunteer teams went to

Volunteers work on flooded homes in Pensacola, Florida.

Pensacola to repair and rebuild homes like Janice’s.

The volunteers worked on Janice’s house for three weeks. They replaced the ceilings and walls, installed kitchen cabinets, laid floors, and painted walls. “It’s wonderful how the Lord puts just the right pieces into place at just the right time,” Evans said. “When we had a plumber and electrician on the team, Janice’s home was ready for wiring and plumbing. That is God at work in people’s lives.

“Janice’s home is safe now. There is no mold, and there are no broken windows or sinking floors. She told us that it is the first time she has felt safe since the storm,” Evans said. In the 16 months that DRS worked in Pensacola, 239 volunteers completed major repairs on 23 homes that were affected by the 2014 flood.

Leave a Legacy

You have demonstrated your support for World Renew DRS’s ministry through your faithful prayers, volunteer service, and monetary gifts during your lifetime. A legacy gift to World Renew DRS in your will or estate plan demonstrates your passion for this ministry even after your death. Those who give to World Renew in their estate can join World Renew’s Joseph Stewards group.

Visit worldrenew.net/josephstewards or contact Bob Laarman (U.S.) at 800-552-7972 or Judy Eising (Canada) at 800-730-3490 to find out more.

“When we wrote our will, we decided immediately that a good percentage of our inheritance would go to the Lord’s work. World Renew was an easy choice since we have felt a part of the ministry for so long. . . We trust World Renew to use our money wisely.”

—Sid Draayer

Floods and Fires

World Renew DRS is responding to many floods and storms that have occurred in the US and the fires in Alberta. Look inside to find out how you can help.



© TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT



© PREMIER OF ALBERTA/Flickr

If you would like to change how you receive this newsletter (email or postal mail), please let us know using the contact information below.



Floods and Fires

World Renew DRS is responding to many floods and storms that have occurred in the US and the fires in Alberta. Look inside to find out how you can help.



If you would like to change how you receive this newsletter (email or postal mail), please let us know using the contact information below.