

E-BOOK

How to plan your disaster relief strategy

A guide to creating a best-in-class response plan

Catastrophe strikes. Are you ready to respond?

The last decade was the worst on record for global disasters, exceeding \$3 trillion in costs. The year 2022 tied 2017 and 2011 for the third highest number of billion-dollar disasters in the U.S. and was also the third highest in total costs, with a price tag of at least \$165.0 billion.

On top of many natural disasters, we also faced humanitarian crises across the globe, and rallied together to fight for social justice. Because companies have the resources, as well as established relationships with employees and consumers, they're uniquely positioned to rally support during a disaster to make a timely, large-scale impact. And as natural and humanitarian crises become more frequent and severe, companies are looking for even more ways to make a difference.

When major traumatic incidents happen, corporate social responsibility (CSR) leaders often quickly find themselves fielding questions from employees and senior leadership: "How are we responding? What organizations are we supporting? And how soon can we start helping?"

The good news is that everyone's eager to make a difference. The question is, will your company be ready to respond when it's needed most? (Teaser: your answer can be a resounding "yes"!) The key to being prepared is having a proactive disaster response strategy in place so your company will be poised to act when time is of the essence.



When the Ukraine crisis hit

Benevity's client community donated over

\$78M

in under

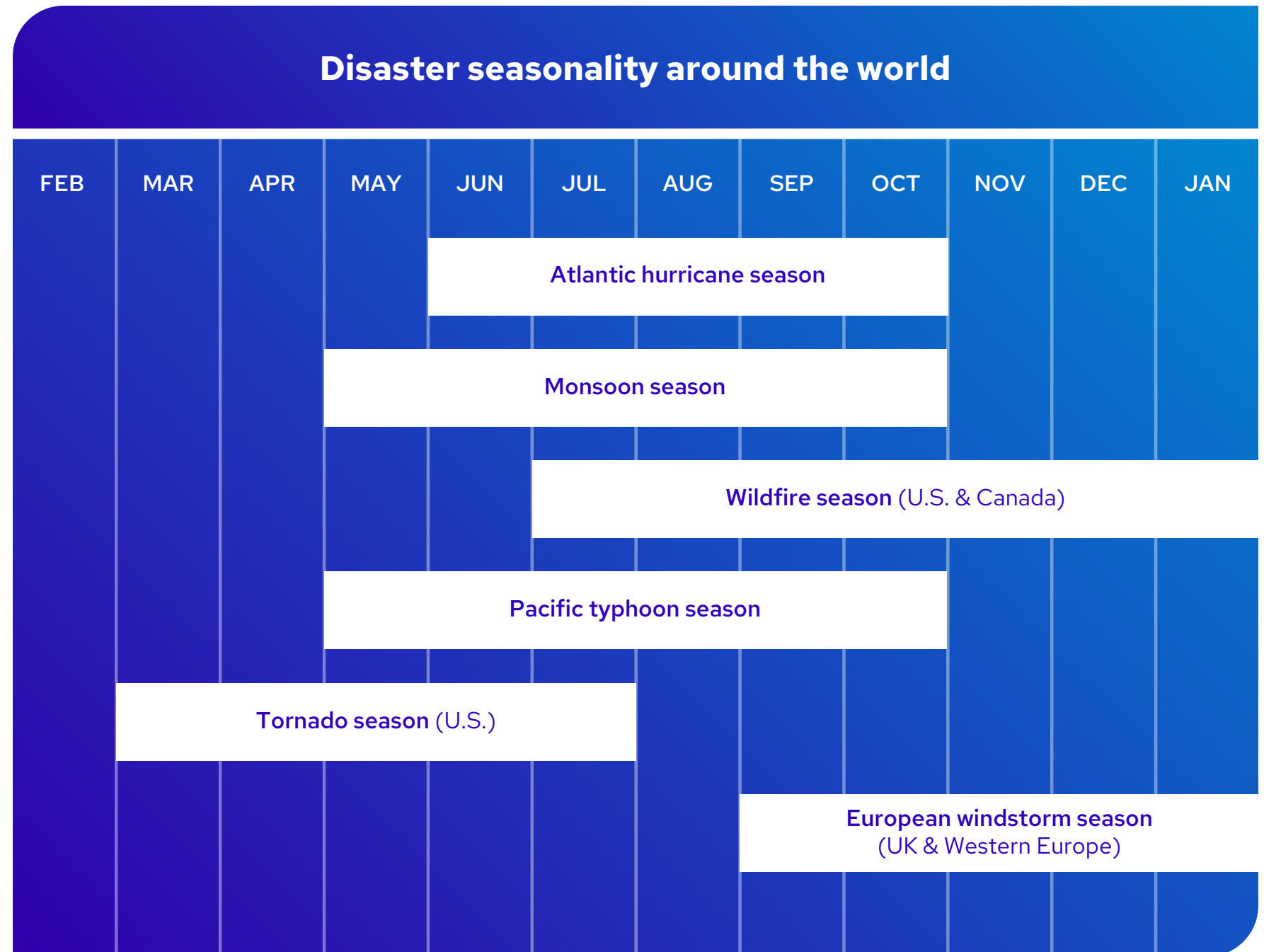
2 weeks

Can you actually plan for disasters and crises?

We've all been there: we're scrolling through our news feeds when we see the shocking images of a disaster or crisis, and we feel the pull to do something to help ... and fast. Your employees and customers no doubt feel this way too, so you'll need to have the groundwork in place so you (and they!) can spring into action with opportunities to give when they're compelled to respond.

While disasters like earthquakes and volcanic eruptions can strike unexpectedly, many kinds of disasters – tropical storms, tornados, wildfires, floods – roughly follow similar seasonal patterns in different regions, which means they can be planned for to an extent. (See "Disaster Seasonality Around the World" illustration)

And for the disasters and social crises that aren't seasonal or predictable, there are a number of building blocks you can put in place as part of your overall preparation strategy. To develop an effective plan that ensures you're ready to respond in the face of disaster, consider the following questions.





Five questions to answer when creating a disaster response plan

Question 1

Where will we focus our efforts?

Focusing your program's disaster relief efforts where your company and people can make the most meaningful impact begins by identifying locations you will respond, and the social causes you and your people care about. For instance, companies that have offices, warehouses or distribution centers spread across a variety of locations can choose to focus their disaster relief efforts in the areas where their employees, customers, strategic partners, suppliers or vendors are located. This makes your company's relief efforts "local," even if the event happens across the world from your headquarters.

When catastrophic floods struck Mumbai, employees at Accenture Canada were anxious to help their colleagues in India. The company quickly created a campaign to support flood victims and even promoted it with images an employee captured through the window of their Mumbai office. Not only were they able to build comradery among their global offices, they reacted quickly to a disaster that directly impacted the lives of their own people.

"Whether it is a call to action for blood drives, disaster relief, or volunteering in the community, so many of our Accenture people do an extraordinary job at not only meeting the immediate needs of a community, but also committing to long-term support. Benevity provides a reliable, quick and intuitive platform to provide to them for this exact purpose," said Deborah Swartz, Accenture Canada Corporate Social Responsibility Lead.

When providing grants or empowering employees or customers to give to relief efforts in locations that matter to them, ensuring your program can support nonprofits across borders (in addition to local organizations) is key.

No matter where your program provides support in times of disaster, it's important to know that relief funds will go to reputable nonprofits who are heading up the efforts in those locations – making nonprofit vetting a crucial step. Whether your program's focus is immediate relief, such as temporary shelter and medical assistance, or long-term support, such as crisis counseling, community rebuilding or other future-focused recovery efforts, you want to be able to give with confidence knowing that the funds will make a tangible difference where it's needed most.



Pro tip

In times of crisis, global and local organizations start mobilizing their resources to provide help where it's needed most. With the industry's most complete global giving solution, Benevity can help you support both global and local nonprofits that are working on the ground (e.g. local chapters of the Red Cross or Doctors Without Borders). Whether it's a corporate grant, employee giving or customer donations, everyone can respond in a truly global fashion while meeting local needs. Plus, Benevity handles the legwork of carefully vetting recipient nonprofits across the globe, so you can confidently give to disaster relief efforts anywhere.



An Accenture India employee captures eyewitness images of flooding outside their Mumbai office in 2017.

Question ②

How will we communicate relief appeals to our employees?

When a disaster happens, your employees will be on the lookout for ways to give quickly, so there's a small window in which to let them know how they can help. A common challenge for most corporate purpose leaders during times of disaster is the ability to quickly create communications and content, so it's important to have a plan for how you'll communicate relief appeals to your people.

Disaster and crisis-related giving opportunities have proven to be a major driver of donations because they tap into people's innate desire to help. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Benevity's client community gave over \$640 million in donations and grants in under eight weeks. For you to respond quickly, it's helpful if both you and your employees have the ability to create giving opportunities that can be set up as easy-to-publish campaigns and appeals that provide people with a simple, one-click method to respond and make a difference. Empowering employees to publish their own opportunities lets you tap into "the power of the crowd" and is one of the fastest ways to create content that is often more personal, more localized and can be crafted more quickly than a corporate appeal. With this feature, companies can get disaster relief campaigns running within minutes. Plus, you'll

find that your people may lead appeals for disasters that might not otherwise receive broader attention, but still matter to a segment of your population.

A prominent global travel fare aggregation company is a great example of how powerful it can be to jump into action quickly in the context of disaster relief. In just eight days, the company raised over \$1.2 million (including company matching funds) and supported 89 unique nonprofits during the Ukraine crisis. The right technology and the ability to move fast also encouraged more employees to give – they saw their program participation grow from 2.3% before the campaign to 8.2% after.

By quickly communicating opportunities for people to help – with clear appeals in support of vetted nonprofits that are working on the ground – your company can use its reach, scale and resources to coordinate the response of your employees to multiply their impact when it's needed most.



Benevity has you covered!

To help you communicate compelling disaster and crisis relief appeals in record time, Benevity provides comprehensive campaign kits (at no extra cost!). They're full of ready-to-publish content and include everything you need to promote an emergency relief appeal, including breaking news content, evocative images and a carefully curated list of nonprofits responding to the situation.

Activation kits



Question ③

How do we help our customers and extended network get involved?

When you respond with a holistic approach, through community investment, employee engagement and customer engagement, that's a whole lot of collective impact. It allows you to make the most of the generosity and passions of your employees, consumers and other stakeholders, and you'll likely earn more of their trust and loyalty in the process.

With a branded public-facing giving site, like [Benevity's Community Impact Portal](#), you can engage your customers, suppliers, vendors, partners and communities to contribute to the relief appeal with optional matching.

When Hurricane Harvey hit Texas and Florida, QVC used their television shopping channel to promote a matching offer to the American Red Cross through Benevity's Community Impact Portal (CI Portal), inviting their customers to take advantage of the company's match to support the disaster relief efforts. As a result, they reached their \$300,000 match cap in 48 hours and hit almost \$500,000 in relief funds for the duration of their campaign! Even after their match ran out, customers continued to give through their portal.

Allowing all of your stakeholders to participate in your disaster relief efforts is a strategic (and powerful!) way to multiply your program's disaster response beyond your workplace while demonstrating your company's commitment to purpose.



Did you know?

When Hurricane Harvey hit Texas, QVC, a leader in the shop-at-home industry with exposure to a large consumer base, knew they wanted to rally as many people as possible to help. So, QVC turned to Benevity's CI Portal to mobilize support. In just 48 hours, the company raised \$300,000 with the help of QVC employees, customers and company matching.



Question ④

How can we leverage our budget for the most impact?

You want your program to facilitate a meaningful response to needs as they arise, but if you're one of the many corporate purpose leaders who are addressing disaster giving on the fly, you may not have the budget flexibility to make as much impact as you'd like. With a little bit of planning, it doesn't have to be as hard as you think! By setting aside budget for increased matching to disaster relief efforts, you can easily activate special matching rates to specific giving opportunities or strategically important causes, or consider raising individual match caps on employee donations to relief efforts.

With U.S. hurricane season overlapping with many companies' annual fall giving campaigns, a lot of companies feel torn between giving towards hurricane relief efforts or sticking to their annual campaign budget. But by incorporating disaster relief into your program's

overall giving budget, you won't have to choose – and you can quickly activate appeals and matching that will inspire your employees and customers to give. For instance, by planning disaster relief efforts as part of their overall program budget, one large telecommunications company was able to quickly support those most impacted by the global pandemic, and more recently, provided almost \$4M in support through monetary and in-kind donations for Ukraine.

You can even leverage your corporate grants budget to boost employee or public donations, since companies often donate large sums of money to help rebuild after a disaster. With an integrated technology solution, you can easily re-deploy part of your corporate grants budget to offer special matching opportunities for giving initiatives. For example, by allocating \$50,000 from a grants budget toward a matching campaign, companies that already match donations at 100% can increase their matching rate and turn that money into \$150,000. This is a great way to engage more people and generate greater impact.



"I would like to give Benevity a HUGE thank you for your help over the past few months, given the dramatic increase in giving. Your platform is by far the simplest for the nonprofit to use. That has directly translated into some huge cost and time savings for us during the recent disasters and increased level of giving. You have helped us further our mission by minimizing backend office expenses.

Thank you!"

– **Relief organization representative**

Question 5

How can we be the most helpful to nonprofits when it matters most?

In the midst of a disaster, the last thing nonprofits need is additional administrative burden, like a sudden deluge of paper checks to process. So, when your company responds to disasters by sending funds to organizations, you'll want to ensure they're receiving donations as accurately and efficiently as possible. The best way to do that is by choosing a technology partner that streamlines the process for recipient nonprofits – it means less administrative burden for the nonprofit side and the business side of giving.

If you're running an employee giving initiative, a public fundraising appeal and perhaps also initiating grants to global or local organizations, bundling all of these donations into a single electronic payment will enable your recipient nonprofits to focus their efforts on responding to the disaster instead of being slowed down by manual administrative tasks. It's a key way businesses can help nonprofits amplify their impact in the wake of a crisis!

Following an intense month of tropical storms, a well-known relief organization was a major recipient of corporate and employee donations. From Benevity's client community alone, they received \$9 million in funds – comprised of 90,000 individual transactions – all combined into a simple, single electronic payment. Imagine how much time was saved by not having to deal with thousands of separate checks.

And, when corporate programs focus on making it easy for nonprofits to receive funds, it not only cuts back on administrative work for the organization, it also helps them channel their limited time, staff and resources toward making tangible impact for the communities they serve.

Nonprofit impact corporate disaster response plans in action

With the support of thousands of individual and corporate donors in Mexico and around the world, one international relief organization was able to:



Install
472
temporary learning experiences

Deliver
744
school-in-a-box kits

Train almost
5,506
directors and teachers on psychosocial tools

Deliver more than
3,212
hygiene kits

...benefiting 60,000 children and adolescents affected by devastating earthquakes

Your proactive program: places + planning + platform

Imagine: a disaster strikes, and rather than feeling that familiar panic rise when the questions start coming at you about how your company is responding, you're feeling confident and empowered to take immediate action ...

That's because you now have a comprehensive plan in place, along with the right technology, to support you in your efforts – quickly and easily. With your newfound strategy, you'll help bring tangible, life-changing support to those who need it in times of disaster.

When your company can use its reach, scale and resources to coordinate the response of your employees, customers and communities for greater impact, you're building a purpose-driven brand that creates positive impact in the lives of people all over the planet when they need it most.

Ready to learn more about how Benevity's holistic disaster relief solution can maximize your company's impact?

[See a demo](#)

ABOUT BENEVITY

Benevity is the global social impact software with an all-in-one platform for corporate grantmaking, volunteering, giving, micro-actions and employee resource groups. A certified B Corporation and recognized in Fortune's Impact 20, we empower iconic brands to attract, retain, and engage diverse workforces, embed social action in customer experiences, support communities and understand their impact in the world. Since our inception, Benevity has helped businesses around the world donate over \$12 billion, track 58 million volunteer hours and support communities with over \$18 billion in grants.

Certified



Corporation