

FACT SHEET:

Unsolicited Goods in a Disaster

When a disaster strikes and we see news of devastation it's understandable to want to help. However, it's important to help in the right way so the response can be as effective as possible.

We strongly recommend New Zealanders give cash, not goods.

- Gifts such as clothing and food can actually hamper aid efforts and have a negative impact on disaster-affected communities.
- Unless specific goods are requested, the most effective way to help is to donate money to reputable aid agencies.

Why are cash donations preferable to donated goods?

- Unsolicited goods take far more time, effort and cost. Containers of goods need to be transported, cleared by customs, sorted and distributed. This can cost aid agencies money that could be used much more effectively in helping those in need. If clothing and medical supplies are needed, organisations are geared to provide supplies quickly, without having to divert their team to sort through incoming donated items.
- Local economic activity is crucial to restoring livelihoods post-disaster. Free goods can distort local economies, forcing down the price of locally produced items, reducing income for locals long-term. Instead, cash donations support the local economy through aid organisations buying items locally or through cash transfers to affected households that purchase what they need most in local markets. This helps to stimulate the economy.
- Unsolicited goods are often not appropriate. Sending winter clothing and toys to Pacific Islands (this actually happens) will not benefit those in need. These items can clog up docks and airports and prevent lifesaving supplies from reaching disaster-affected areas.
- Cultural factors. In places with a strong culture of gift-giving, people may not refuse unwanted goods for fear of seeming impolite or ungrateful. (Think of unwanted Christmas gifts).

A cash donation to an appeal helps aid agencies to buy whatever is needed quickly to meet the changing and complex demands of affected communities.

- Experience tells us that the best way to help is to donate to a reputable aid agency and make sure that your cash donation reaches those who need it most.
- Your unused goods around the house can still be useful. Try selling them in New Zealand to raise money to give to a registered charity who has launched an appeal.

Donate to Tearfund's disaster appeal
0800 800 777 tearfund.org.nz