

What Girl Scout Leadership Looks Like in Times of Disaster

The Girl Scout Leadership Experience is all about helping girls be leaders in their daily lives while preparing them for future leadership roles in every walk of life.

These tips are for Girl Scout staff and volunteers. Use them, in conjunction with the girl-friendly publication *What Can a Girl Scout Do When Disaster Strikes?* to guide girls who want to know how they can help after a disaster.

Talk About the Framework

Help girls understand the three basic actions they can take to assist locally or globally:

1. Offer a thoughtful, immediate response
2. Prepare for disasters and help others prepare, too
3. Change the world

Offer a Thoughtful, Immediate Response

When hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, fires, and other disasters strike, Girl Scouts naturally wonder what they can do to help. People often have the urge to send clothing or canned food to disaster areas, but goods and products may not be what most people need. In fact, relief workers have said the time it takes to accept, sort through, and distribute all that stuff often gets in the way of or slows down the most important relief efforts.

GSUSA recommends raising and giving money to councils to meet the needs of sister Girl Scouts directly affected in the disaster. Restrictions on troop fundraising have temporarily been adjusted, allowing your troop to donate money to the affected councils.



Are You Nearby?

If you live within 100 miles of the disaster area and are fortunate enough to be safe and relatively unaffected, there may be additional ways your troop or group can give back. Check in with community leaders and local organizations to see how you can offer more hands-on help. For example:

- ◆ A school may request donations of backpacks and other school supplies.
- ◆ Shelters may need volunteers to help serve hot meals or entertain younger children.
- ◆ Relief organizations may be able to use donations of warm blankets or first-aid supplies.
- ◆ Animal rescue centers may be looking for people to foster pets displaced in the disaster.



3 Steps to Start Fundraising Off Right

When girls are interested in raising money for Girl Scout councils in impacted areas, let them know their efforts will be appreciated by the entire Girl Scout community. Help your girls learn how to lead an effective fundraiser by talking them through these girl-oriented tips:

1. Use Your Imagination

Before you start raising money, you should know exactly why it's needed so you can explain that to other people. If you're not close to the area of the disaster, think about what it might be like to live there right now. Maybe your family home was destroyed, the place where your Girl Scout troop normally meets is being used as a shelter for other families that lost their homes, or the camp you love has been seriously damaged. What would that feel like? When you put yourself in another girl's shoes, the urgency of the situation becomes clearer, and it will be easier for you to express that need to potential donors.

2. Know Your Stuff

Reading news articles about the impacted areas can keep you up-to-date on which areas were hardest hit and help you have all the facts in case donors have questions about why you're raising money. What are the names of the councils you're focusing on? Where are they located? Being knowledgeable about the who, what, when, and where of the issue will reassure donors that their money will be in good hands.

3. Think About What Girl Scouts Means to You

After a disaster, people raise money for all kinds of different causes related to the event. Take the time to think about why helping Girl Scouts in the affected area is an important way for people to give back. This is what you'll tell potential donors when you're asking for their help. Your reasons might include:

- ◆ Girl Scouts make their schools and communities better places for everyone. Any donation received will help Girl Scouts in the affected areas get back on their feet and back to creating positive change in the world.
- ◆ Girl Scouts gives girls a judgment-free place to try new things, test their limits, and build the confidence needed to practice leadership in today's complicated world. In times of disaster, we need strong leadership—and Girl Scouts creates the leaders of tomorrow today.
- ◆ Girl Scouts gives girls a space where they can relax and just be themselves—something that's so necessary in this always-on, stressful world. Girls who've lived through this disaster will need Girl Scouts more than ever, and donations will help make sure they can get back to their regular troop activities as soon as possible.

Finally, brainstorm meaningful ways to thank the people who made your fundraiser a success. Crunched for time? Even a quick handwritten note will mean a lot to your donors.

Prepare for Disasters and Help Others Prepare

No matter where your council is located, you can help girls from Daisy through Ambassador realize how they can develop thoughtful, regionally specific preparedness efforts and share them with others.

This is what it means when we talk about girls achieving Girl Scouts Leadership Experience Outcomes like, *Community Problem Solving*.

Practicing these skills and educating others can even offer girls a sense of security and power in the face of what might feel like an uncertain future.

Change the World

Hearing about local or national disasters can spur girls' concerns and interests in making a difference. This is an opportunity for you to give her meaningful, hands-on leadership experience.

Think about it: we are creating the next generation of leaders who will be stewards of our fragile planet and can use their skills to change our world for the better. Get girls thinking big; that's the first step to changing the world. But a big idea is not enough. Girls need to develop thoughtful plans, network with others, and take action to make their big ideas a reality. When girls think big, they learn to identify real needs and work toward addressing problems in smart and sustainable ways.

Unsure how to start with your troop? Use the table on the next page to see how girls' experiences in Girl Scouting can be channeled toward disaster relief and preparedness efforts in times of disaster and otherwise.



Select Examples from the National Leadership Program Portfolio (NPP)*

NPP Resource	Preparedness and Education	Changing the World
<p>Leadership Journeys</p> <p>Girls earn leadership awards while identifying community needs, connecting with others, and developing a thoughtful plan to address one aspect of an issue of concern to them.</p> <p>While each of the leadership Journey series will help girls learn to take action, the It's Your Planet—Love It! series is particularly geared toward helping girls protect the planet and its precious resources.</p>	<p>Start a Brownie Brainstorm and get girls thinking about places in their community that might need the Brownie Action Team's preparedness efforts (<i>Brownie Quest</i> Girl Book, page 66). Use the "Flying into Action" Checklist (<i>Brownie Quest</i> Adult Guide, page 71) to identify situations in which their help is most needed for creating a plan to educate others. Brownies could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Put on a play for their schools about staying safe during a storm. ◆ Make a list for a local animal shelter of food supplies that are needed for pets during a natural disaster. 	<p>Cadettes on the <i>Breathe!</i> leadership Journey could earn their Alert Award by educating and inspiring their community on the impacts of changes in air quality that occur following a local or global natural disaster. Use the tips in the <i>Breathe!</i> Adult Guide (page 64) to help girls identify who they need to mobilize to become more aware of air-quality issues and an action step they can give to others that will have a significant effect on their community.</p>
<p>Highest Awards</p> <p>Think of Journeys as girls' "training wheels" for taking action. Once girls have taken a Journey, they can go for their Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award and learn the process of developing a highest award plan. This process allows girls to select a topic they care deeply about and lead their community forward in a sustainable way.</p>	<p><i>A Bronze Award project plan could focus on:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Helping a local nursery school make student identification cards for use in an evacuation plan. <p><i>A Silver Award project plan could focus on:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Delivering family education workshops to help families in the community develop their emergency-response plans. 	<p><i>A Gold Award project plan could focus on:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Developing a sustainable plan for repairing a coastline in their community or region that is eroding because of weather-related disaster or climate change.

*These are just some examples. Encourage girls to come up with their own.

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NPP Resource	Preparedness and Education	Changing the World
<p>Safety Awards</p> <p>These awards help girls stay safe in their daily lives and anywhere along their adventures in Girl Scouting.</p>	<p><i>Brownies could:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Develop plans with their families to make sure they have enough food, water, and medical supplies on hand to last at least three days in case of a natural disaster. <p><i>Cadettes could:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Identify the natural disasters most common in their area and develop plans to prepare their community. 	<p>Encourage girls to use the skills gained through their Safety Award activities when they are developing Take Action projects.</p>

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Keep Top of Mind...

No matter how you and your troop or group decide to engage in the aftermath of a disaster, remember these three things.

- 1.** Know the difference between community service and Take Action projects. Some people think of it this way: community service projects help others in a way that comes from our hearts, while Take Action projects involve a deeper understanding and the work necessary to address the roots of a problem—so these projects come from our hearts and our heads. The world needs both!
- 2.** Remember to keep girls' experiences girl-led. When girls lead a project, they develop confidence, satisfaction, pride, and skills they can apply to other leadership projects and endeavors in the future.
- 3.** Educate, don't decorate. We know girls love getting badges and patches, but that's not the end goal of Girl Scouting. In fact, emphasizing badges or awards girls might earn in the aftermath of a natural disaster can take the focus off of helping girls understand how to be a true leader in times of crisis. Developing empathetic, thoughtful, and effective responses should be the focal point right now. Girl Scouts already has a whole ladder of leadership awards. There's no need to create new activities tied to new awards in the face of disaster.

Program departments across the United States can help girls and their volunteers understand how their leadership efforts and community projects tie into the national leadership experience—girls acting together to change the world.