



Check out the  
2017 winter  
warmth drive  
for the  
reservations!

## Winter Storms, Emergency Relief and Needs in the Northern Plains

Life on the reservation has its hardships every day, but when disaster strikes, it can bring extended hardship to geographically isolated and economically stressed communities. Fortunately, many tribal programs know Partnership With Native Americans (PWNA) as a [first responder](#) for the reservations and PWNA is often the first organization they call for disaster relief.

A national member of [VOAD](#) – Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster – PWNA provides emergency relief to reservations within its 12-state service area. As a state member of VOAD in Arizona, South Dakota and Montana, PWNA concentrates its emergency relief in these areas but evaluates disasters in other areas on a case by case basis, if requested by the tribe.

Through our [Northern Plains Reservation Aid](#) (NPRA) and [Southwest Reservation Aid](#) (SWRA) programs, we respond to natural disasters and environmental emergencies such as hurricanes, floods, tornados, blizzards, fires and contaminated water.

We provide basic supplies requested by partners for immediate relief in their tribal communities, for instance, blankets, personal hygiene items, cleaning supplies and over-the-counter medical supplies. PWNA keeps distribution centers stocked so that, year-round, we can quickly mobilize to deliver emergency supplies to communities in need.

Our [reservation partners](#) know PWNA and our [Emergency Relief](#) service as a dependable resource and know that, in addition to “disaster” events, we respond to smaller emergencies that are disruptive to local communities. In fact, over the past decade, we responded to more than 55 disasters impacting Native American

communities, with our aid benefiting more than 620,000 people.

Mainstream coverage of Native news is often low, and slow. Sometimes environmental emergencies on the reservations do not make the mainstream news for weeks on end.

### Emergency Relief: Realities on the Reservations We Serve

Being prepared for anything, at any time, is more of a challenge in impoverished communities and rural and remote communities that are geographically isolated from basic resources. So, when disaster strikes, the impact is magnified. These communities, often without emergency preparedness plans, tend to rally in unity to respond to the crisis and harness the critical resources – and this is often when a call is made to PWNA.



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for weeks on end.” When the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in Eagle Butte, S.D., was without power for weeks in the winter of 2010, with 15,000 residents affected, it was about a month before a primary news outlet (CNN) picked up the story. And, there are times when the mainstream news omits inclusion of an affected tribe. For instance, when the Grand Canyon was evacuated in 2008 due to flooding, the news stories focused on hikers who were evacuated and failed to mention that members of the Havasupai Tribe, which occupies the base of the Grand Canyon year-round, were also evacuated to shelters supported by the American Red Cross, PWNA and other groups.

What’s more, people forget the emergency isn’t over as soon as the storm subsides. Economic recovery from the losses and damage take months to settle – months after the issue is out of sight and out of mind for the rest of the U.S.

In extreme conditions such as low temperatures and wind chill – conditions common to the Northern Plains – the elderly and homebound, and those who live in poorly heated homes, are most at risk of frostbite and hypothermia.

## Winter Storms in the Northern Plains

Already in 2017, PWNA has responded to two requests for emergency relief in the Northern Plains. Due to winter storms, partners from Cheyenne River and Lake Traverse (Sisseton) reservations called our South Dakota office requesting winter items for impacted Elders and families. Although coordination was made difficult by outages in both areas, we delivered emergency relief provisions on Jan. 5, 2017.

Power was knocked out for several days for the Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe on the Lake Traverse Reservation, causing pipes to freeze. The entire reservation was in the dark. Food pantries, Elder Nutrition Centers and gymnasiums opened



their doors to those who could make it, to provide a warm place to stay and sleep. PWNA distributed more than \$30,000 worth of emergency relief supplies to the two reservations, including emergency meals and water, nonperishable dry foods, and winter emergency boxes containing disaster blankets, batteries, a candle, hand sanitizer, bathroom tissue and more.

Winter warmth is also a very real concern akin to the harsh Northern Plains winters. With power outages and electric lines down on the Cheyenne River Reservation, our partner as well as [Native News Online](#) reported that two members lost their lives due to exposure. In extreme conditions such as low temperatures and wind chill – conditions common to the Northern Plains – the elderly and homebound, and those who live in poorly heated homes, are most at risk of [frostbite and hypothermia](#).

## How You Can Get Involved

To help address winter risk, PWNA is inviting you to participate in its winter warmth drive, which gives a helping hand to Elders affected by extreme winter weather conditions and emergencies in the Northern Plains. Even the smallest monetary gift from you – or a bulk in-kind donation of new blankets, coats, hats, gloves or socks from your business – can help bring winter warmth to those in need. Learn more about winter warmth here: [www.npraprogram.org/PWNA4hope](http://www.npraprogram.org/PWNA4hope)