



Tip Sheet: Caring for Shelter Client Belongings

Disaster Cycle Services Job Tools
Response/Sheltering

Clients often arrive at evacuation/general population shelters with their belongings during a disaster. Clients may carry or arrive in a vehicle loaded with possessions, depending on how much warning was provided. Shelter managers and staff are responsible for supporting clients in caring for their belongings during their stay at the shelter.

Storing client belongings within the dormitory itself causes challenges with space, security, safety, and access. To avoid these issues, clients may bring only what they can fit under their cot into the dormitory. Ask Logistics to obtain under-cot storage boxes (one per cot for whomever needs) using the *Disaster Requisition Form 6409*. It may be necessary to provide limited storage space elsewhere at the shelter for additional belongings. Clients requiring significant storage should be referred to nearby storage facilities.

Outdoor Storage

1. Encourage clients to store their possessions in vehicles they brought to the shelter.
2. Clients may keep their belongings in personal utility trailers in the shelter parking lot when there is enough space.
3. Personal belongings should NOT be stored in tents or under tarps outside the shelter as they are unsecure and may become wet, moldy or smoky and unusable or a health hazard.
4. In situations where no indoor storage is available, the Shelter Manager should consider obtaining a lockable shipping container or box truck to provide storage space outside the shelter. Discuss with the Sheltering Manager/Coordinator and Logistics. If such storage is provided, follow the directions for indoor storage.

Indoor Storage

1. During the opening inspection, the Shelter Manager should identify any secured indoor area suitable for storage of client belongings. This should be a locked room or storage area. Establish an agreement and procedure for storage with the facility manager.
2. If such an area exists, the Shelter Manager should:
 - Determine the maximum storage space allocation per client by dividing the square footage of the storage area by the projected number of clients;
 - Determine what types of items will be allowed for storage (i.e. suitcases, foot lockers, boxes, baby strollers, and bicycles etc.) and posting this where all clients can view;
 - Prohibit storage of items such as open food containers, drugs, weapons, and flammable or other dangerous material and make clients aware of this rule;
 - Only permit Red Cross workers along with one client at a time to access the storage area. Event-Based Volunteers should not be allowed access unless accompanied by a Red Cross worker;
 - A Red Cross worker must always accompany clients when accessing the storage area. The Red Cross worker confirms that the client accesses only their belongings by asking for ID. (Provide the client a modicum of privacy while maintaining security.)

Sheltering Tip Sheets provide pointers for handling issues within the guidance outlined in Sheltering Standards and Procedures and other Red Cross doctrine. Please send feedback to sheltering@redcross.org.

3. If the storage area is large, the Shelter Manager creates a floor plan to organize stored goods for easier recovery.
 - Use painter's tape to mark space allocation and walk-ways;
 - Use an alphabetic system, marking areas with letters (for storage by last name) or a numbering system with areas marked by numbers or if large enough, use alpha-numeric system (like A1, B2);
 - Write the location of a client's belongings on their storage agreement (see #6 below) and keep the agreement form at Registration with the confidential records.
4. If possible, the Shelter Manager should request 20- to 50-gallon plastic totes from Logistics using a [Disaster Requisition \(F6409\)](#) and determine how many to allocate to each household with belongings to store (like 4 per household or 2 per client).
5. Store belongings indoors only if clients sign the [Storage Agreement Form](#).
6. Label each stored item (container, box, bag, bicycle, etc.) with the client's full name and contact information including cell phone number.
7. If you suspect a storage container has prohibited items, the Shelter Manager contacts Life Safety & Asset Protection (LSAP). With a Shift Supervisor or Shelter Manager, Life Safety & Asset Protection conducts and documents the inspection while client is in attendance unless client has left the shelter.
8. If clients abandon stored items:
 - Call the client at their contact number to place a time limit on pick up or confirm items have been abandoned;
 - If the client is unreachable, a Shift Supervisor and a second Red Cross worker opens, inspects, and inventories the contents to prepare it for disposal;
 - Use disposable gloves during the inspection. Safety gloves or double gloves are recommended to protect against needles or other sharp objects;
 - Take photos of the stored items with the name visible before opening the container;
 - Provide the inventory with photos to the Shelter Manager for inclusion in the [Shelter Log](#);
 - Relocate the container to a designed holding area for final disposition.

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Shelter Client Storage Agreement

Date:		DR#:		Cot #:	
Shelter name:		Storage room location:			
Client name:					
Name of one additional person who may access belongings (optional):					
Mobile phone number:		Alternate phone number:			

Accepted by: _____ (Red Cross Rep)

Number / Types of Items Stored:

	Boxes	Plastic Tubs	Bags	Other: (describe)
Number:				
Describe contents:				

Terms

- The American Red Cross has arranged for storage space to meet the needs of shelter clients who do not have other storage options. The Red Cross cannot guarantee that stored items will be protected from theft, loss, or damage. By placing items in storage, you agree that the American Red Cross is not responsible for theft, loss, or damage to items in storage, regardless of the cause.
- Storage is available for shelter clients only. If not staying at the shelter, you may not use storage space.
- You agree not to store any of the following:
 - Wet items, weapons, drugs, alcohol, flammable items, illegal items, or items that may create a threat to health or safety of shelter workers or occupants;
 - Valuable items such as jewelry, money, heirlooms, electronic devices, or legal documents;
 - Perishable food; open food items
 - Pets or other animals.
- You agree that the Red Cross may inspect your stored items to ensure compliance with these terms or to address issues regarding health, safety, or the law.
- You agree to remove your belongings from storage when you check out of the shelter. If the shelter closes, you will need to remove your items
- Items left in storage when checking out of the shelter / shelter closes are disposed of without recourse.

Client Signature

Sheltering: Please see the Caring for Client Belongings Tip Sheet for information on using this form when storing client belongings. Place this form in the Registration Book with the client's record.