



Tip Sheet: Using Wrist Bands in Shelters

Disaster Cycle Services Job Tools
Response/Sheltering

Shelter operations often use wrist bands to quickly identify registered shelter clients as part of monitoring and controlling access to the shelter (See [Operating a Shelter Checklist](#)). Shelters typically use these bands when the number of residents is large enough that staff responsible for controlling shelter access can no longer recognize all clients on sight. Bands may be plastic or paper, but plastic bands are more durable. Respectfully inform clients that the bands are being used to give them access into the shelter dormitory area and its services and ensures individuals not registered for the dormitory, do not disturb their privacy and security.

Band Use

- Use bands to identify clients with access to the shelter facility and dormitory and to identify clients for partner agencies that provide assistance and referrals.
- Understand the band's purpose and what each color indicates. Make sure that all Red Cross staff and security personnel understand the color codes.
- Remove and dispose of bands when clients check out of the shelter.

Band Color Tips

- The Shelter Manager monitors the supply of bands and reorders early to ensure the availability of selected band colors.
- Use bright color bands whenever possible.
- Use a single color for all dormitory clients until closing the shelter.
- In cases where a shelter has multiple dormitories or separated dormitory sections, use different color bands to ensure access only to the dormitory section to which clients are assigned.
- Use a separate color for non-dormitory clients who regularly enter the shelter for services such as meals, WiFi, or health services.
- Different shelter sites should ideally use different colored bands.
- The Sheltering Manager/Coordinator assigns band colors and meanings when multiple shelters use bands, ensuring there are no conflicts.

Affixing Bands

- Affix bands during the registration process.
- Explain that bands help identify clients and ensure their safety, security, and privacy by keeping non-residents out of the dormitory and expedite the entry of dormitory clients.
- Explain that all clients are required to wear the bands. If registering individuals resist banding, be courteous but firm. Contact the Shelter Supervisor/Manager if this refusal cannot be overcome.
- DO NOT place the client's name or other personal identification on the band.

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.

- Place bands on the wrist of the less-dominant hand of all adults and children ages eight (8) and up.
- Place bands on the ankles of children below the age of eight (8).
- When placing a band on children, it is helpful to put a small sticker (like a dog, cat, flower, car, or train) on the band or to draw something on the band to make children more comfortable with the band.
- Write cot location on the wrist bands of children. It may be helpful when connecting a lost child with their parents.
- Discuss the best location with parents/guardians of individuals with special needs or infants.
- Accommodate anyone who requests the band be placed on their ankle.
- In extended sheltering situations, it may be necessary to replace bands. Check the client's registration form, remove the old band, or ask clients to turn in the remnants.
- Advise clients they are not allowed to transfer their wrist bands to anyone else.

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.