

## Disaster Assistance Response Team - An Overview

Last Updated Thursday, 09 August 2007

D.A.R.T. Inc. (Disaster Assistance Response Team) is a registered not-for-profit corporation comprised of members of the F.D.N.Y. (Fire Department of New York). Its primary mission is to assist individuals, families, and communities during disasters. This program exists due to a partnership among the American Red Cross in Greater New York (ARC/GNY), the F.D.N.Y., active and retired firefighters and officers of the F.D.N.Y., and D.A.R.T. Inc., via the D.A.R.T. Committee. The D.A.R.T. Committee serves as the liaison for all the partners in the program. The Red Cross and the F.D.N.Y. have over 100 years each of disaster response experience. The American Red Cross trains and deploys D.A.R.T. volunteers for disaster response and the F.D.N.Y. provides D.A.R.T. volunteers with the compensatory/vacation leave flexibility needed for rapid disaster response and facilitates flexible leave payback procedures. The final partner in this program is the individual firefighter. The firefighters bring the trademarks of dedication, spirit, morale and teamwork to the program. Although D.A.R.T. members sometimes respond as a group to disasters, they also function as individual volunteers under the American Red Cross national volunteer system. To join, a firefighter must complete the required orientation and training in the following primary Red Cross functions: family services, mass care, damage assessment, and logistics. When a disaster strikes locally or nationally, and a D.A.R.T. response is requested, team members are notified. If able to respond, they are placed on special disaster leave; the standard national response requires a three-week commitment. Upon their return, members can pay back their tours or have the time deducted from their annual vacation. Team members are not sent to disasters as first responders and do not volunteer to serve as rescue personnel.

D.A.R.T. activities may include running shelters where victims are fed and/or housed, surveying damaged homes, and helping families procure food, clothing, and bedding so they may resume a "normal" life as soon as possible. Another role of the Red Cross is that of organizing and administering fire and burn safety education programs for children. Several D.A.R.T. members have been trained in this area and have used their teaching skills, together with Red Cross curriculum, to help educate young children. They have done so in their own communities and occasionally upon special request by certain groups.