

# AMERICAN RED CROSS DISASTER RESPONDER IS ALSO A DISASTER RECIPIENT



American Red Cross volunteer Bob Wallace looks over the shoulder of Kitchen Site Manager Dan Cenis to view images of the remains of Cenis' remote cabin that was destroyed by wildfire. Photo Credit: Lloyd Ziel/American Red Cross

By Robert W. Wallace/  
American Red Cross

Long time disaster responder Dan Cenis from Spokane, Washington, has answered the call from the American Red Cross numerous times to assist with major relief operations, but this one, the 2015 Washington State wildfires, had a new twist. This time, Cenis was the target of disaster, as well as a disaster responder.

Cenis is an ace Kitchen Site Manager for the Northwest Region of the American Red Cross. In this role he oversees the preparation of meals, usually thousands and sometimes tens of thousands of meals for people whose homes and lives have been disrupted and for disas-

ter responders. This time, however, he learned, while on the job, that a cherished family cabin, one that a young Cenis helped his dad build 62 years ago, had been completely consumed in the wildfires that swept through the Fruitland area of Washington State.

Cenis has not had a chance to visit the 120-acre site where the cabin was located, as he has been consumed by his role as a Kitchen Manager. However, his wife and siblings have made the sad journey and have provided him with pictures.

"The fire must have been incredibly intense," said Cenis. "The cast iron stove that was in the house is now just a mass of met-

al amidst the ashes of the cabin, and our aluminum boat is a molten mass of metal spread out over the ground... All that's left of a trailer we use for storage is the metal frame."

"I'm not ready to go back up there," Cenis shared. "Maybe if I don't go, maybe it won't be true."

After his wife, brother-in-law, and sisters visited the site, Cenis did have a short respite from Red Cross duties to meet with them. "We looked through old family albums, remembered the good times there, and cried," said Cenis. He went on to recall that as a young adult he had helped his dad plant many fir trees that are now 50-60 feet high. For some reason, they were not consumed by the fire like the surrounding pine trees.

"There were a lot of people who lived full time in the area of our cabin, and

I don't know if they made it or not," noted Cenis. "But a cabin is just a cabin," he said as he expressed concern and sympathy for all the people affected by the wildfires who lost everything. "I just can't imagine that situation," he concluded.

Cenis is an eleven-year volunteer for the Red Cross and this is his fifth year as a Kitchen Site Man-

ager. Often his work, as it does on this deployment, involves collaboration with the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief. Many times the two organizations work together with the Red Cross providing food supplies, the Southern Baptist cooking the food in their mobile kitchens, and the Red Cross using their fleet of Emergency Response Vehicles to distribute the meals to those in need.

"It took two years for me to gain the training needed to do this job," Cenis recalled. A lot of Red Cross resources went into my training, and for that reason, and the dearth of others trained for his role, it's important for me to keep responding when called, despite my age of 70 years. "You gotta stay active," he concluded.



The remains of the Cenis family cabin after it was destroyed by the wildfires that swept through the Fruitland area of Washington State.



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 TOPICS COVERED:  
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**WHEN:** Monday, October 12<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m. to 2:00p.m.  
**WHO:** Tiffany Heiss, Agency Director of Addus HomeCare & Senior Medicare Patrol Volunteer  
**WHERE:** Fairwood Village Dining Room  
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