



## News Release NEWS RELEASE

**Contact:** Ken Garcia  
Phone: (405) 202-0010  
(918) 831-1159  
[Ken.garcia@redcross.org](mailto:Ken.garcia@redcross.org)  
[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

### **Red Cross and Absentee Shawnee Tribe Sign First Memorandum of Understanding in Oklahoma**

**Shawnee, Thursday, December 18, 2014** — The American Red Cross and the Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding this week, making it the first such agreement between the organization and Tribal Nation in Oklahoma.

“This is very exciting for the Absentee Shawnee Tribe,” said Governor Edwina Butler-Wolfe, Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma. “I am excited and I am excited for our emergency management. It’s a step forward and I’m glad we’re the first tribe in Oklahoma to do this. It brings a peace of mind when it comes to disasters like tornadoes and house fires.”

The Red Cross and the Absentee Shawnee Tribe have worked for nearly a year on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) which is an agreement used to improve and clarify relationships between two organizations, a sort of “handshake” of understanding. Basically, the push to establish these agreements is rooted in the desire for the Red Cross to be both an essential component in effective disaster preparation and as quick a responder as possible to any disasters Tribal Nations might face.

“We are honored to officially solidify an already great partnership with the Absentee Shawnee Tribe,” said Red Cross Oklahoma regional CEO Janienne Bella. “This is the first in what I hope will be other agreements with the Tribal Nations in Oklahoma.”

While MOUs are not always a necessity in a good relationship, they can potentially solve challenges in the way of effective disaster prevention and preparation. For example, Tribal Nation Emergency Managers play a crucial role in communicating with the Red Cross for both preparation purposes and disaster help in the case of an emergency; however, with this profession facing high turnover and shortage rates everywhere, the importance of establishing long term managers is vital. With MOUs established with the Red Cross, tribal nations lacking more long-term solutions to disaster prevention will have the fix they need.

This recent push to establish these memorandums is proving to be successful, and potential for future growth is very promising. To date, the Red Cross has established three existing MOUs in the southwestern United States with the following tribes: the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe beginning on March 28, 2013; the Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada beginning on Jan. 1, 2014; and the Pueblo of Pojoaque in New Mexico beginning on Jan. 4, 2014.

#### **Photo Captions:**

**Signing 1:** Red Cross Oklahoma regional CEO Janienne Bella (left) and Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma Governor Edwina Butler-Wolfe (right) officially sign the Memorandum of Understanding solidifying the relationship between the non-profit and the tribe.

**Signing 2:** Regional CEO Janienne Bella (left) and Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma Governor Edwina Butler-Wolfe (right) shake hands after signing a Memorandum of Understanding solidifying the relationship between the non-profit and the tribe.

**Signing 3:** Back row: Chele Rider and Rene Beezely with the American Red Cross, Absentee Shawnee Emergency Manager Linda Day and Susan Morris and Lynn Edward with the Red Cross. Front Row: Regional CEO Janienne Bella, American Red Cross Oklahoma and Governor Edwina Butler-Wolfe, Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma.

**About the American Red Cross:**

*The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies about 40 percent of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a not-for-profit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please visit [redcross.org](http://redcross.org) or visit us on Twitter at [@RedCross](https://twitter.com/RedCross).*

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**Ken Garcia**  
Regional Communications

**American Red Cross**  
(405) 228-9581 | Cell:(405) 406-4271 | Media: (405) 202-0010  
[ken.garcia@redcross.org](mailto:ken.garcia@redcross.org)



