American Airlines Newsroom

NEWS RELEASE

Team LAX mobilizes to help Thomas Fire victims

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While working from American Airlines headquarters last month, Los Angeles-based Flight Service Duty Manager Renato Santos received an urgent call from his pregnant wife: Their home in Frasier Park was at risk due to the Thomas wildfire and his family may need to evacuate.

Although Renato and his family were able to stay in their home, the thought of so many friends and neighbors experiencing such hardship remained in his mind. So when he saw that American had recently changed suppliers for some onboard products (specifically, the switch to Casper sleep products in premium cabins), he had an idea to help the thousands in need — donate the airline's overstock supply to help those who were losing everything.

Later that day, Renato called Cynthia Valdivia, American's Vendor Contracts Manager at Los Angeles International Airport, to see what could be donated.

"When Renato reached out to me, I thought it was a wonderful idea and a great opportunity for us to help those that were affected by these terrible fires," Cynthia said. "He even offered to help deliver these items personally on his days off."

On the morning of Dec. 17, Renato's idea became a reality. He and his family, together with Cynthia, their colleagues at LAX and volunteers from Frazier Park Moose Lodge 2364, loaded supplies into a 26-foot U-Haul truck at American's Shipping and Receiving and Cargo facilities. The items donated included thousands of blankets, pillows, mattress pads, waterless soaps, pajamas and slippers, as well as boxes of chips, popcorn and cookies.

"I'm so grateful to American for providing these supplies and to be able to help the victims of the wildfires," Renato said. "This should be a reminder to all of those not being affected by the fires to appreciate all the little things in life. We can go from having what we worked so hard for to losing it all. It is a humbling experience to help those in need,

knowing that we can be in their same situation."

The supplies were delivered to Gold Coast Acura in Ventura, where more helpful hands greeted Renato and the team and unloaded the truck. With help from even more local volunteers, they were distributed to victims later that afternoon.

Firefighters continue to battle to contain the Ventura and Los Angeles County wildfires, which have leveled forests and towns and left hundreds of residents homeless — some with nothing but the clothes on their backs. The Thomas Fire in Ventura, now the largest recorded in California's modern history, has alone destroyed more than 900 structures. As of Jan. 2, 2018, the fire is 92 percent contained.

Our #AATeam at LAX partnered with community organizations to deliver supplies for fire victims in the Los Angeles area. Photo: Terry Bert/Frazier Park Moose Lodge