



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Why do we collect goods and supplies?

We see the need and opportunity to make a difference in people's lives. We gather surplus goods from our well-to-do society and distribute them to registered charitable organizations who put them to good use by helping people in need.

We are "second responders." If a natural disaster strikes, we do not send rescue teams. Rather, we find out what people need most, put together containers that will help fulfill those needs and ship them after some basic services—roads, quays and harbours, for example - have been restored.

Who donates to CRW?

Our goods are donated by individuals, businesses and other organizations. Hotels and cruise ships upgrade their rooms and cabins, hospitals replace beds, doctors' equipment is superseded, manufacturers donate overstocks, consignment stores make room for new goods, householders move or declutter, merchants send clearance items. When CRW receives a special request from a charity abroad, we often ask specific companies or organizations for help.

Several other organizations use CRW's expertise and know-how on shipping goods abroad to help others. For example, Canada Comforts encourages people around Canada to knit and sew children's toys, blankets, clothing and other handmade items. You and your organization can also be part of that response by partnering with CRW.

How do we ship goods?

All our goods, supplies and equipment are packed tightly into 40-foot containers. Any empty spaces are crammed with "stuffies," small bags with a few items of clothing. As CRW is located on Vancouver Island, the container is trucked by ferry to the Port of Vancouver, where it's loaded onto a container ship. When our



container arrives in the destination country, a truck delivers it to the designated recipients.

How do we ensure the goods arrive at the intended recipients?

We have been fortunate that all the containers we've shipped have arrived at their destinations—eventually. None have fallen off ships. Normally, containers travel at a rate consistent with international marine shipping standards. Once the container arrives at a port, delivering it may take some time. Roads may be difficult to navigate, or after natural disasters, may need to be rebuilt. Only one container has gone astray but was located eight months later. It finally arrived at the organization it was destined for.

We try our best to ensure that all the goods end up with the designated charity and want to prevent materiel from entering the black market. We usually receive electronic notification of the container's arrival from our recipient. Our volunteers often visit sites when containers arrive. Photos of the unloading and installation of equipment are sent to us. We also receive many letters of thanks that confirm that the goods we sent are well used.

How does CRW deal with Canadian and other countries' regulations and cultures?

When we pack a container, we create a list of all the items as they are stowed. This manifest is submitted to the Canada Border Services Agency and the customs offices in the recipient country. We always work to meet Canada's export rules and the recipient country's import regulations and fees. Some countries prohibit certain goods from being imported, as they may compete with local industrial production.

To make sure we do not violate local customs, we never pack goods in liquor or cigarette boxes. T-shirts that carry printed violent words, drug or alcohol messages, or profane language, are discarded. Our volunteers are trained to recognize goods that might infringe on cultural or religious mores.



Why does an all-volunteer organization collecting donated goods still need cash?

We have operating costs. Rent for buildings, utilities, communications, container rental, transportation of goods locally and of containers, customs fees, and delivery costs in the destination country are all part of costs not covered by donations of goods and labour.