



Consider for a moment the blue tarp: 25 square feet of bright blue polyvinyl, four metal grommets, waterproof and widely available.

You've seen them at any hardware store. And, if you've been anywhere after a disaster hits, you've seen them flying like a national flag. They cling protectively to mangled roofs after a storm. They dot the landscape, covering and protecting precious belongings for those put out of their homes by earthquakes, floods, and riots. Volunteers, relief workers and aid organizers huddle under them for protection from the sun, the rain, the endless wind. Around the globe, they billow like sails in encampments where they serve as the most basic shelter for war-weary and weather-stricken refugees and displaced persons.

It is in these moments that a simple blue tarp is not just a tarp, or shade, or cover . . . but a bright blue symbol that rebuilding will begin.

—originally printed in the 2004 PDA Annual Report

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