



## Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disaster



Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE** 



**HandsOn**  
NETWORK

GENERATED BY  
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INSTITUTE 

**Participant Materials**  
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The following forms and instructions are from Volunteer Florida, the Governor's Commission on Volunteering and Service, and originally appeared in the publication *Unaffiliated Volunteers in Response and Recovery*.

- Volunteer Reception Center Floor Plan
- Signage for VRC
- VRC Staff Tasks
- Disaster Volunteer Registration Form
- Volunteer Instructions
- Request for Volunteers Form
- Disaster Volunteer Referral Form
- Safety Training Handout
- Work Site Sign-in/Sign-out Form
- VRC Volunteer Sign-in Record
- VRC Coordinating Agency Sign-in
- Expenses Incurred by VRC Form

The "How to Implement a Virtual Volunteer Center" was developed by Janet Pace, Louisiana Serve Commission, and Kellie Bentz, HandsOn Network.

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## Training Objectives

- Understand spontaneous volunteers and the benefits and burden they can bring
- Identify the fundamentals of volunteer management in disaster response setting
- Identify stakeholders in spontaneous volunteer management
- Learn and use the vocabulary and concepts of disaster and disaster management
- Understand the role of VOADs/COADs
- Recognize the importance of public messaging
- Understand the principles for managing donated goods
- Understand the various roles involved in staffing a Volunteer Reception Center
- Understand the role of technology and social media in managing spontaneous volunteers in times of disaster

# Principles of Disaster Volunteers

The management of unaffiliated, often spontaneous, volunteers in times of emergency is guided by the following principles and values:

## **Volunteering in community life**

Volunteering is a valuable part of every healthy community. Volunteers come from all segments of society; everyone has the potential to contribute strength and resources in times of emergency.

## **The value of affiliation**

Ideally, all volunteers should be affiliated with established organizations and trained for specific disaster response activities. However, spontaneous volunteers are inevitable; therefore they must be anticipated, planned for and managed.

## **Volunteer involvement in the four phases of disasters**

There are valuable and appropriate roles for spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers in mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery – as well as in other areas of community need.

## **Management systems**

Volunteers are a valuable resource when they are trained, assigned and supervised within established emergency management systems. An essential element of every emergency management plan is the clear designation of responsibility for the on-site coordination of unaffiliated volunteers.

## **Shared responsibility**

The mobilization, management, and support of volunteers is primarily a responsibility of local government and nonprofit sector agencies, with support from the state level. Specialized planning, information sharing, and a management structure are necessary to coordinate efforts and maximize the benefits of volunteer involvement.

## **Volunteer expectations**

Volunteers are successful participants in emergency management systems when they are flexible, self-sufficient, aware of risks, and willing to be coordinated by local emergency management experts. Volunteers must accept the obligation to “do no harm.”

## **The impact on volunteers**

The priority of volunteer activity is assistance to others. When this spontaneous activity is well managed, it also positively affects the volunteers themselves and thus contributes to the healing process of both individuals and the larger community.

## **Build on existing capacity**

All communities include individuals and organizations that know how to mobilize and involve volunteers effectively. Emergency management experts and VOAD partners

are encouraged to identify and utilize all existing capacity for integrating unaffiliated volunteers.

### **Information management**

Clear, consistent and timely communication is essential to successful management of unaffiliated volunteers. A variety of opportunities and messages should be utilized in order to educate the public, minimize confusion, and clarify expectations.

### **Consistent terminology**

When referring to volunteers in emergency management, it is helpful to use consistent terminology. The following terms and definitions are recommended:

*Affiliated volunteers* are attached to a recognized voluntary or nonprofit organization and are trained for specific disaster response activities. Their relationship with the organization precedes the immediate disaster, and they are invited by that organization to become involved in a particular aspect of emergency management.

*Unaffiliated volunteers* are no part of a recognized voluntary agency and often have no formal training in emergency response. They are not officially invited to become involved but are motivated by a sudden desire to help others in times of trouble. They come with a variety of skills and may come from within the affected area or from outside.

*From Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disaster: The Synergy of Structure and Good Intentions, published by the Points of Light Foundation*

# Disaster Bingo

Connect a line of four in any direction by having group members who have done these things sign the box. A person cannot sign more than one box on your form.

Has experienced property damage in a disaster	Has at least a 3-day supply of water for each family member at home	Has an emergency plan for his/her pets	Has designated an emergency meeting place for staff
Is a disaster volunteer	Has designated an emergency meeting place for family	Has experienced a fire	Has received Red Cross disaster training
Has a flashlight by his/her bed or desk	Has experienced a flood	Has participated in a Citizen Corps program (CERT, MRC, Fire Corps, etc.)	Has experienced a hurricane
Has emergency supplies in his/her car	Has an evacuation kit prepared at home including food, medicine, and documents	Has experienced an earthquake	Has at least a 3-day supply of food for each family member at home

# Disaster Basics

## Disaster Terminology

**Hazard:** A hazard is defined as a source of potential harm to a community, which includes the population, the environment, private and public property, infrastructure, and businesses. Hazards have traditionally been categorized into several subgroups for ease of description, including natural hazards, technological hazards, and terrorism hazards.

**Emergency:** This is an event resulting from the onset of one or more hazards that requires the dedication of police, fire, or medical response officials. Emergencies occur daily in every community and are managed in the vast majority of these cases without any problems. An emergency is not inherently a disaster.

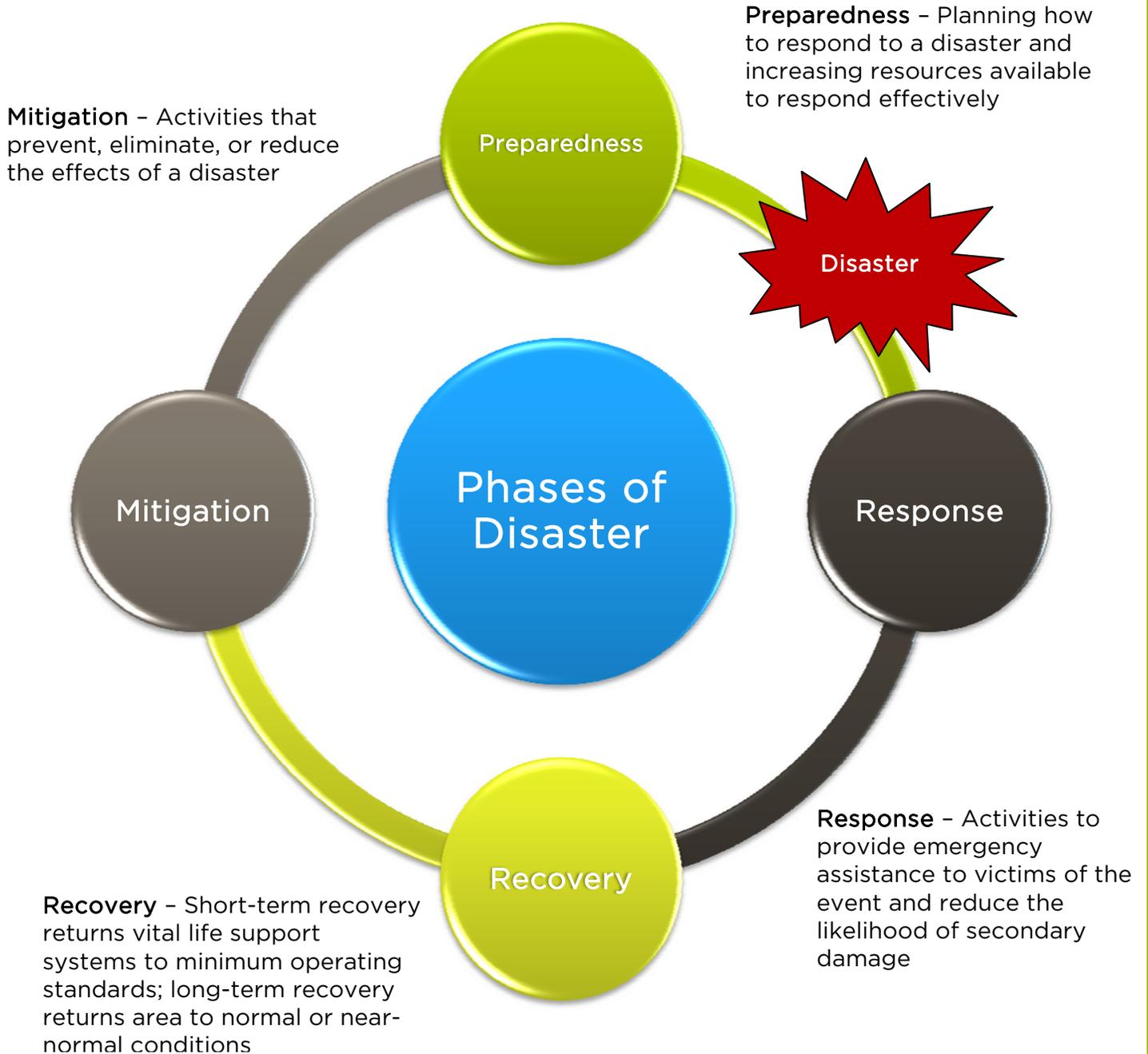
**Disaster:** When an emergency event is of such great magnitude that it overwhelms a local community's capacity to respond, the event becomes a disaster. In most cases, the assistance of neighboring jurisdictions or state resources is all that is needed to handle the consequences of the event. However, there is an average of 50 to 60 events each year where even the states' resources are unable to bring the situation under control, and the assistance of the federal government is required. These events are called Presidentially-Declared Disasters.

**Risk:** In emergency management, risk refers to the combination of two separate factors: 1) the likelihood that a hazard will strike, and 2) the consequences that would result from that occurrence. Hazards can have multiple intensities, each with its own corresponding risk. For instance, the risk of a category-1 hurricane (high likelihood, low consequence) would be much different than that of a category-5 hurricane (low likelihood, high consequence).

**Vulnerability:** This term refers to the propensity of an individual or community to incur damage from the effects of a disaster. Vulnerability does not necessarily indicate whether exposure to a given hazard is likely, but rather how the individual or community would fare should a particular hazard or disaster strike. Communities can reduce their vulnerability (and increase their resilience - the opposite of vulnerability) by taking measures such as disaster preparedness and mitigation activities.

## Four Phases of Disaster Preparedness, Response, Recovery, Mitigation

Volunteers are needed for all four phases of the disaster, throughout the year. Ideally, volunteers become affiliated with disaster volunteer agencies during the mitigation and preparedness stage and are available to assist in response and recovery.



## Activity 1

Identify which phase of a disaster each of the following activities fits in: preparedness, response, recovery, or mitigation.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Making a family communication plan
- \_\_\_\_\_ Building levees
- \_\_\_\_\_ Setting up a shelter for evacuees
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mucking out a flooded home
- \_\_\_\_\_ Receiving Red Cross disaster training
- \_\_\_\_\_ Securing bookshelves to the wall
- \_\_\_\_\_ Building a disaster kit for your home
- \_\_\_\_\_ Clearing debris off a road
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sandbagging a rising river
- \_\_\_\_\_ Rebuilding a flood-damaged school outside of the flood plain

## Activity 2

Put the following steps in order:

- \_\_\_\_\_ FEMA activates the National Response Plan
- \_\_\_\_\_ FEMA reviews a request for a presidential declaration of major disaster
- \_\_\_\_\_ The President grants a presidential major disaster declaration.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mayor or county executive requests help from governor
- \_\_\_\_\_ The governor activates the state emergency response system at the request of the city mayor or county executive.
- \_\_\_\_\_ FEMA recommends a declaration of major disaster to the Office of the President,
- \_\_\_\_\_ First Responders address immediate needs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The governor requests a presidential declaration of major disaster.

*Answers on page 65*

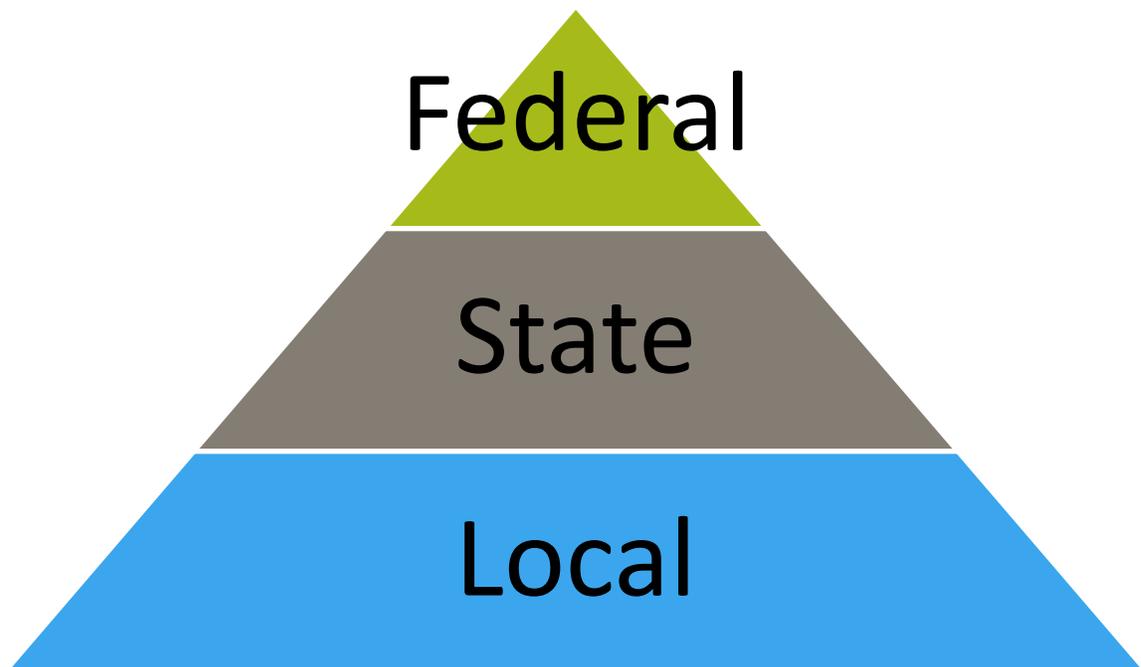
## Disasters Are Local

All disasters begin and end as local events. The vast majority of emergencies are only handled at the local level. When a disaster first occurs, local governments, first responders and voluntary agencies respond. If these groups are overwhelmed by the event, they will ask neighboring counties and organizations for assistance. If these resources are still insufficient, the state government can be requested by the local government to assist by supplying resources and personnel.

If the state government is also overwhelmed and unable to supply sufficient resources to manage the disaster, the governor can ask the President for federal assistance. FEMA provides the president with an analysis of the request with a recommendation if the request should be accepted. If the President declares the event a national disaster, the National Response Plan is activated by FEMA. With the NRP, federal resources from all federal agencies are freed to address the disaster. This includes assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as well as many other branches of government from the Department of Housing and Human Services, to the Department of Energy and the Army Corps of Engineers.

As the disaster transitions from the immediate efforts to safeguard life and property, to long-term efforts to return communities back to pre-disaster conditions, the reverse process starts with authority devolving back to the local level.

The local community, city, town or county government is ultimately response for disaster preparedness and response efforts, while the state and federal government augment these efforts when needed.



## Alphabet Soup of Disaster Management

Test your knowledge of disaster terminology and organization. Spell out the disaster-related acronym and then place the number of the definition in the last column.

NIMS	_____	_____
ICS	_____	_____
NRP	_____	_____
CISM	_____	_____
SUV	_____	_____
EMA	_____	_____
EOP	_____	_____
EOC	_____	_____
VOAD	_____	_____
LEPC	_____	_____
CCC	_____	_____
CERT	_____	_____
MRC	_____	_____

1. The all hazards plan for domestic incidents that gives a blueprint on how agencies work together to respond
2. Coalition of non-profit groups involved in disaster work
3. The local government plan on how to respond to a disaster
4. A team of trained volunteers who can support first responders if they are delayed or unable to respond by suppressing small fires, conducting light search and rescue and triaging and treating disaster victims
5. Supplemental medical staff prepared to respond to an emergency or public health crisis
6. The office where emergency management agencies convene with their partners in the event of a disaster
7. The management system used to identify objectives for a specific incident and oversee the resources needed to achieve those objectives
8. This community group brings together emergency responders, community and volunteer service organizations, government, and the private sector to develop programs and training for the community around disasters
9. The typical name for local and state government offices response for disaster management
10. Volunteers who are not affiliated with or trained by voluntary organizations prior to disaster
11. A comprehensive, national approach to incident management
12. A community group that is the focal point in communities for information about hazardous substances, emergency planning measures, and health and environmental risks due to hazardous substances
13. Managing and monitoring the compassion fatigue that first responders and disaster workers often experience while working in stressful situation

*Answers on page 64*

The **National Response Plan (NRP)** is the all-hazards plan to domestic incidents including manmade and natural disasters. The NRP is a blueprint on how multiple agencies can work together to respond to an incident. The NRP mandates that NIMS be used in all national incidents to help ensure the consistency and continuity of disaster assistance programs. You can learn more about the NRP by taking the FEMA Independent Study Course IS-800, which is available at <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is800.asp>.

**National Incident Management System (NIMS)** was created to provide a comprehensive, national approach to incident management. It establishes standard incident management processes, procedures, and protocols so all responders can work together with maximum effectiveness. NIMS is based on ICS. You can learn more about NIMS by taking the FEMA Independent Study Course IS-700, which is available at <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is700.asp>.

**Incident Command System (ICS)** is the management system that is used to identify the objectives for a specific incident and oversee the resources needed to achieve those objectives. The ICS structure can be applied to all incidents. It can be expanded or contracted to meet the demands of a particular incident. You can learn more about ICS by taking the FEMA Independent Study Course IS-100, which is available at <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is100.asp>.

The Incident Command System (ICS) is the standardized hierarchical structure that allows for an organized, cooperative response. The ICS allows multiple agencies, both within and outside of the various levels of government, to align their resources and efforts without compromising the authority of command. ICS ensures that all of the involved resources not only address the most pressing needs, but also are used in a manner that prevents unnecessary duplication or waste. Without a central coordinating system like ICS, it is much more likely that confusion will persist.

The main function of ICS is to establish a set of planning and management systems that help the agencies responding to a disaster to work together in a coordinated and systematic approach. The step-by-step process enables the numerous responding agencies to effectively use resources and personnel to respond to those in need.

There are multiple functions in the ICS system; they include common use of terminology, integrated communications, a unified command structure, resource management, and action planning. A planned set of directives includes assigning one coordinator – known as the incident commander – to manage the infrastructure of the response, assigning personnel, deploying equipment, obtaining resources, and working with the numerous agencies that respond to the disaster scene. In most instances the incident commander is the local fire chief or fire commissioner. There are five major management systems within the ICS:

1. Command
2. Operations
3. Planning
4. Logistics
5. Finance

## Stakeholders

Spontaneous volunteer management is a complex process that is most successful when many stakeholder groups are involved. These stakeholder groups include volunteer management groups, disaster management groups and community organizations.

Why should you care who else is involved in disaster work? Without engaging the other stakeholders at the 'table' of disaster work, you cannot be effective in your role. Disasters are far too big and require far too many resources for any one group to have a monopoly. Only by working cooperatively and supplementing the strengths of existing organizations and agencies can National Service have a useful and constructive role in helping communities meet their disaster needs.

The following list is the type of stakeholder groups that may be involved in spontaneous volunteer management in your community. What do you think each stakeholder group brings to disaster volunteer management? Discuss your assigned list of stakeholders, the role they play in disaster volunteer management and give example of each from your community.

### Group 1

- Community based organizations and coalitions
- Chambers of commerce
- Communication providers
- Corporations
- Cultural and ethnic community representatives

### Group 2

- Disability community representatives
- Schools and school systems
- Emergency Management (all levels)
- Faith-based organizations
- First responders

### Group 3

- Health care providers
- Media organizations
- National service programs and participants
- Non-traditional sources of volunteers
- Nursing homes

### Group 4

- Parks and recreation departments
- Public information officers
- Public officials
- Senior citizen groups
- State Commission on Volunteering

## Public Messaging

Consistent messaging from all sources is a vital tool in managing spontaneous volunteers. This is another reason that having all stakeholders work together is vital; without that cooperation, the public message will not be consistent.

Public messages should address if and when spontaneous volunteers are needed and where they should go. Multiple messaging, appropriate for different situations, should be written ahead of time so that the appropriate message can be distributed quickly. The different stakeholder groups should work together before disasters strike to work out the appropriate message for different situations as well as means of dissemination.

A strong public message for helping in times of disaster is C.A.R.E. The exact message will depend on the disaster and the situation on the ground as it evolves. However, the type of information that should be provided to the public is the same. Any public information message about spontaneous volunteers should address the following points:

- If volunteers are needed
- When and where they should come to volunteer
- What type of work the volunteers are most needed for
- What volunteers need to bring with them
- What volunteer conditions are like

Cash - financial gifts get help to people fast  
Ask before donating any supplies  
Respond by volunteering with local relief agencies  
Everyone can help

Given these general guidelines, please draft a public message for spontaneous volunteer for the different scenarios.

**Scenario 1:**

A hurricane has just struck your state this morning. Electricity, water and gas are all cut off and cell phone service is very limited because cell phone towers have been knocked over. Due to damage to roads and the communication systems, the extent of the damage is not yet known, but expected to be substantial.

**Scenario 2:**

A tornado struck the neighboring town four days ago. You have worked with the local community to organize a one-day work day to clear debris from the homes of senior citizens and individuals with disabilities who were affected by the tornado. A work day is set up for this coming Saturday and bus will be provided from the local volunteer center to the neighboring community at 8am.

**Scenario 3:**

A major flood struck your area three months ago. Though the flood is no longer national news, long-term recovery efforts are still ongoing and volunteers are needed to muck out homes, repair roofs, tutor children because the school is still closed and to conduct case management work. A volunteer work camp has been built to house up to 300 volunteers a week in camp-style accommodations.

**Scenario 4:**

An earthquake struck your area one week ago. An initial disaster assessment has been completed and the damage is extensive. All of the local first-responders and service providers are overwhelmed. Power and water are off and housing is difficult to find. The local volunteer center has set up a Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) in the high school cafeteria starting today from 8am to 8pm to process spontaneous volunteers. Volunteers are encouraged to register online or to come to the VRC to be processed.

# Spontaneous Volunteers and Volunteer Management

## Spontaneous Disaster Volunteers

In the event of a disaster, volunteers are often needed to aid disaster victims, rebuild communities, educate the public and prepare for future disasters. Ideally, volunteers would affiliate with organizations prior to a disaster and be able to fill needed roles as necessary. Affiliation brings many advantages to volunteers, including training and the ability to fill vital roles quickly and effectively when needed. However, not all volunteers affiliate prior to a disaster.

Tens of thousands of volunteers with no disaster training or experience have been referred by volunteer centers, Volunteer Reception Centers, State Commissions on Volunteering, and other organizations to volunteer in the aftermath of disasters. Coordination between volunteer centers, State Commissions, and community organizations before a disaster occurs will enable agencies to effectively utilize spontaneous volunteers in the disaster response and recovery efforts.

Who spontaneously converges on disasters? Researchers have identified six different groups of people that tend to converge. The groups differ most notably in the motivating factor behind their convergence:

<b>Helpers</b> - people who have come to help victims or responders in some way
<b>Returnees</b> - people who lived in the disaster-impacted area but were evacuated
<b>The Anxious</b> - people from outside the impacted area who are attempting to obtain information about family and friends
<b>The Curious</b> - people who are motivated primarily to view the destruction left in the wake of the disaster
<b>Fans or Supporters</b> - people who gather to display flags and banners encouraging and expressing gratitude to emergency workers
<b>Exploiters</b> - people who try to use the disaster for personal gain or profit

Of these groups, the helpers must be identified from among the larger population of convergent individuals, because they are the only group likely to offer any tangible support to the response and recovery effort.

## Benefits of SUVs

Volunteers are a great benefit when they supplement existing government and organizational efforts to help communities prepare, mitigate, respond to and recovery from disasters. Volunteers can provide a tangible economic benefit to a community through the work they perform, which may count as the local community's match for FEMA benefits if accurate records are maintained. Volunteers can also provide great logistical support by taking on administrative tasks, thereby freeing the first-responders and traditional disaster response organizations to focus on their primary mission.

## Burdens of SUVs

However, volunteers can be a burden when they distract local resources from disaster response and recovery efforts by overwhelming the limited resources of a disaster-stricken community and if they undermine or duplicate existing efforts by not coordinating with other stakeholders.

There are disaster situations where volunteers are not appropriate. In terrorist attacks, the disaster area is also considered a crime scene so spontaneous volunteers will not be allowed in the area. In addition, volunteers should not work in areas that present a significant risk to their health and welfare since first responders may have to abandon their response and recovery efforts for disaster victims to assist volunteers who have become injured, trapped or overwhelmed. Volunteering is a valuable activity that all walks of life can participate in; however, volunteers unable to protect and sustain themselves in a disaster area should stay out of disaster areas and find different ways to volunteer.

Remember: Disaster volunteers are priceless  
but disaster survivors are our purpose!

## Volunteer Management

Volunteers are a vital part of American society. Effective volunteer management is a requirement for engaged volunteers in meaningful service. Even in times of disaster, volunteers should be effectively managed. The elements of volunteer management are:

- Create a Plan for the Volunteer Program
- Recruit/Receive and Place Volunteers
- Orient and Train Volunteers
- Supervise and Recognize Volunteers
- Evaluate the Volunteer Plan

## Group Activity

Think of a time you volunteered or managed volunteers. Answer one of the following groups of questions based on your experiences. Select one group member to report the group's conclusions to the larger group.

### Planning a volunteer program:

- Did the volunteer position you filled meet a clearly defined need? How can you tell?
- Were you provided a clear position description? What were the advantages or disadvantages of that?
- Did you know who to turn to if you had questions about your position? Was there staff guiding the volunteer program?
- If you were managing that program, what would you do the same? What would you change?

### Placing volunteers:

- How did you find out about the volunteer position? What messaging/communication strategies were used?
- How were you screened? How did you feel being screened?
- Was your volunteer position a good match for you? Why or why not?
- If you were managing that program, what would you do the same? What would you change?

### Orienting and training volunteers:

- Did you receive a formal orientation or training for your position?
- Did the training prepare you for the requirements of the position?
- Was there on-going training after you started?
- If you were managing that program, what would you do the same? What would you change?

### Supervising and recognizing volunteers:

- Did you have supervision? Was it too much or too little?
- Were you motivated to continue volunteering? What kept you motivated?
- Were you recognized for your volunteer work? How?
- If you were managing that program, what would you do the same? What would you change?

## Applying Volunteer Management to Disasters

During disasters, it is just as important to effectively manage volunteers as it is in a regular volunteer program. All the elements of volunteer management should occur during disaster response and recovery, but may be altered to fit the situation.

### Planning

Though spontaneous volunteers are of course spontaneous, a great deal of planning is necessary to effectively manage them. The identification of suitable disaster roles for volunteers and discussion of the risk associated with volunteer participation MUST be planned in advance. There are many aspect of spontaneous volunteer management that can and should be planned:

- Job description for possible disaster volunteer needs
- Procedures for interviewing and screening volunteers
- Selection of VRC location with several alternate options
- MOUs with other volunteer agencies about accepting spontaneous volunteer processed by the VRC
- MOUs with utility companies to provide additional phone lines and other needed support.
- Agreements with local corporations and stores to provide needed supplies for the VRC
- Pre-drafted public messages for a large variety of situations that can be distributed quickly after a disaster
- Agreement with local EMA and government on liability coverage for volunteers

### Job Descriptions

Preparation of job descriptions in advance for a variety of volunteer roles will ensure the safest and most productive experience possible for disaster volunteers. Most jobs will be focused on response and recovery roles, since it is during that phase that most spontaneous volunteers are engaged. These jobs can include:

- Process volunteers at a Volunteer Reception Center
- Answer phones at hotline call centers and Emergency Operations Centers
- Coordinate outreach (public information) projects for local emergency management
- Serve at Red Cross and special needs shelters
- Care for animals in pet-friendly shelters
- Check the homes of citizens in special needs shelters to determine whether they have power and access ramps so clients can be transported home
- Distribute water, nonperishable food and ice at distribution sites
- Assist with a community blood drive
- Sort and organize donations at local drop-off sites
- Enter data on damage assessments and volunteer hours served
- Secure Right of Entry forms for the Corps of Engineers Blue Roof program
- Remove debris
- Coordinate other volunteers, matching the needs of elderly and disabled residents with faith, corporate, school and community-based volunteer groups

- Coordinate pick-up and distribution of supplies
- Cook or serve meals in church kitchens to survivors and responders
- Provide counseling in community organizations
- Provide amateur radio communication at shelters, VRCs and EOCs
- Photocopy licenses for volunteer doctors and nurses
- Provide childcare at FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers

## Receiving and Placing Volunteers

Spontaneous volunteers, by definition, do not need to be recruited; however it is vital that the process be managed effectively so that volunteers can be effectively placed in needed roles.

The first step is public messaging as discussed earlier. Public messaging on if the community is able to support volunteers should be planned in advance with pre-written message available to the pre-designed lead agency so that they can be released quickly in the event of a disaster. Ideally such public messaging will regulate the flow of spontaneous volunteers into the area. In addition, public messaging about where to go if you want to volunteer will ensure that volunteers can be registered, the first step to being placed. Several possible VRC locations should be selected before any disaster occurs. VRCs should allow for efficient movement of volunteers from place to place as they go through the registration and placement process, to minimize confusion. The VRC should be able to handle a large number of people with ample parking. Ideally the facility should have a power supply, even in a disaster, comply with American with Disabilities Act and have separate areas for a waiting area, interviewing rooms, staff and supply areas.

## Applications

During a disaster, volunteers must still fill out an application form and be interviewed. The process should be as quick as possible to avoid long delays that might frustrate potential volunteers. A basic application should include the following information:

- Full name
- Age (is the volunteer under or over 18?)
- Permanent and temporary contact addresses
- Permanent and temporary phone/fax/e-mail
- Emergency contact information
- Availability (start and end dates, days of the week, times of each day)
- Occupation
- Skills (languages, communications, computer, counseling, teaching, heavy equipment operation, cooking, medical, etc.)
- Previous emergency training/certification/licenses (they should be able to provide proof of licensure)
- Task preferences (willing to provide animal care, animal rescue, child care, clean-up, damage assessment, data entry, driving, etc.)
- Work condition preferences (indoors, outdoors, day, night)
- Geographic preferences (especially for disasters affecting large geographic areas)

- Resources the volunteer can offer (car, truck, machinery, boat, tools, etc.)
- Physical/health limitations
- Association with a disaster relief or volunteer group
- Criminal background

## Interviews

Interviews should be conducted to help best match volunteers with appropriate volunteer organizations or opportunities. The interview will explore the volunteer's motivation for volunteering, skills, interests, hobbies, training, availability, work preferences, limitations, background (e.g., criminal history), and other information.

Possible questions interviewers might ask include:

- Why have you decided to volunteer?
- What skills do you have which may be useful as a disaster volunteer?
- Are you prepared to work in a possibly stressful, unfamiliar situation?
- Do you speak any language other than English?
- What type of volunteer work would you like to do? What are you willing to do?
- Have you ever volunteered in a disaster situation before?
- Do you prefer to work alone, with a partner, or in a group?
- Do you have your own transportation?
- Do you have any questions about volunteering?
- Are you under 18?
- Have you even been convicted of a crime?
- Do you have any limitations, physical or other that limit the type of volunteer work that you can safely perform?
- May I see identification?

Ideally, position descriptions of possible disaster volunteer roles were developed prior to the disaster. As recipient organizations call in to report if they do in fact need those positions filled, appropriate volunteers can be placed. The best possible match should be made, remembering that the purpose is serving the disaster victims. Some form of ID should be provided to the volunteer so that the receiving organization knows that they have been processed. Plans for screening volunteers for certain positions should be made in advance so that each organization knows its responsibility.

## Orienting and Training Volunteers

As most volunteers have never worked in a disaster situation before, they will need to be trained in basic safety skills. As needed for specific task, volunteers may be provided with training that provides them with more specific skills related to their assignment. This training may take place at the VRC or at the organization with whom the volunteer is placed.

The amount and type of training provided should be based on:

- The volunteer's level of experience
- The risk of the activity

- The complexity of the task
- The physical or health demands of the work
- Equipment required for the task
- Policies, regulations and laws related to the work or situation.

Safety training should be provided for all volunteers before they leave the Volunteer Reception Center, even if they will receive job-specific safety training at their volunteer location. Safety training is an important risk management strategy and can also help volunteers recognize the signs of critical incident stress (which is also called compassion fatigue). Ensure that records for safety training attendance are maintained.

**Recommended general safety training content:**

- Follow carefully any instructions given to you at your job site.
- If you will be working outside, dress for the weather. Boots may be helpful, as debris on the ground can be sharp and dangerous.
- Bring work gloves, sunscreen, hat and any appropriate tools you have. You will be responsible for your tools.
- Water may be available at your work site, but you are encouraged to bring a personal water container. It is important to drink lots of water while you work.
- While working, you will have a higher than normal exposure to bacteria. When you take a break, wash thoroughly.
- The work you will be doing may cause you stress, anxiety, fear or other strong emotions. You are providing a valuable service by volunteering today. Please understand that, by helping, we will not be able to undo the effects of this event. We are each just one person. All we can do is help in our own small ways to assist victims in the recovery process. If you care for one lost animal, find one child's lost favorite toy, or hold the hand of one senior in a shelter, you will have eased a little of the pain. Do not feel guilty because you are not able to fix everything. Just work your shift, then go home to rest and eat well. Both will help to relieve the stress. Be sure to attend any debriefing that may be conducted at the end of your shift.
- Older children can help with the disaster recovery work in some areas, but parents must sign a release of liability form for each child under the age of 18. It is recommended that children remain in school, if it is open. Older children can participate with parents on weekends.
- Check with the local government about volunteer liability coverage. You may (or may not) be covered by insurance provided by the county in which you will be working. If you are covered by local volunteer liability coverage and you sustain an injury, you must pay for any treatment required and then submit a claim form and be reimbursed by the insurance company.
- Please attend any debriefing activity provided at your worksite after your shift.

**Volunteers will be spontaneous, but the management of them should not be.**

## Supervise and Recognize Volunteers

Supervision of spontaneous volunteers should be addressed prior to the disaster. In some cases, the receiving organization will provide volunteer supervision; in other cases teams of volunteers with a supervisor from the VRC may be placed with organizations.

### Critical Incident Stress

A vital part of volunteer supervision in times of disaster is recognition of signs of critical incident stress in volunteers. Disasters are stressful situations and volunteers can easily become overwhelmed, especially if they do not take good care of themselves. Supervisors who see compassion fatigue in their volunteers need to insist that volunteers take the time to take care of themselves and provide resources for them to process all that they are seeing, feeling and experiencing.

Stress during a disaster can manifest itself in many psychological and psychological ways. Stressed disaster workers may experience irritability, mood swings, aggression, inability to concentrate, isolation and withdrawal, feelings of guilt, loss of appetite, inability to sleep, headaches, chest pains, increased use of drugs or alcohol, nightmares and fatigue. Supervisors should be aware of these signs and intervene with volunteers to ensure that they are getting sufficient rest, healthy food and sleep. Properly briefing volunteers as to the nature of their assignment and what they can expect to experience in the disaster area is also a successful strategy and should include descriptions of normal stress reactions that the volunteers can expect to encounter. At the conclusion of each shift a brief discussion session should be conducted as well as a full debriefing a few days after service has ended. Debriefing includes stating the facts of the disaster, the actions taken by the volunteers as well as opportunities for the volunteers to express their initial feelings at the beginning of the assignment as well as the reactions and responses throughout their service. Mental health professionals trained in Critical Incident Stress Management can be brought in to manage the debriefing. An article on managing stress in disasters is available from FEMA at <http://www.fema.gov/rebuild/recover/cope.shtm> and from the Red Cross at [http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf\\_pubs.pl?health/stress.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_pubs.pl?health/stress.pdf).

Stress is a reality for  
everyone in a disaster area.

Recognition of volunteers is often forgotten in the chaos of disaster response and recovery. However, a conscious effort should be made to recognize the great work that volunteers are performing. Recognition can include events during the volunteer's time of service, such as a thank you dinners or cards made by staff or disaster victims served by the volunteer. Recognition can also continue after the volunteer returns home with letters of appreciation or other forms of recognition.

## Evaluating the Volunteer Program

In the midst of a disaster, it often seems impossible to find the time to evaluate the volunteer program. However this is vital to continued success. Staff and volunteers from the Volunteer Reception Center and from voluntary organizations from the community should meet to share experiences and use those experiences to update the plan for future disasters.

# Risk Management

Volunteer risk and liability are important issues that every voluntary organization must consider. There are two primary forms of risk that must be addressed. The first is the risk of injury to the volunteer. Worker's Compensation insurance can mitigate this risk, however if the task is higher risk from the primary task, then individuals may not be covered. The second form of risk is the risk posed by injury volunteers or employees can cause to property and life through intentional acts and accidents.

The legal protection for volunteers varies widely from state to state. Each organization must assess the liability they face in the event a volunteer is injured as well as any liability if a volunteer injures someone through intent or neglect.

Risk management is even more important in times of disaster because exposure to risk is higher in a disaster area. One of the main concerns first responders have about working with spontaneous volunteers is that volunteers are at increased risk of injury due to their unfamiliarity with the conditions in a disaster zone. For this reason, significant effort has gone into managing the liability of disaster volunteer organizations.

Laws on risk management and liability for volunteers vary widely by state. Information on state liabilities laws for non-profit organizations is available at the Nonprofit Risk Management Center at <http://www.nonprofitrisk.org>.

Here are a few basics for risk management for disaster volunteers:

- Create a position description. When taking volunteer requests from requesting agencies, be clear what skills and abilities are necessary to ensure that appropriate volunteers are sent.
- Use an application. Even in disasters, basic information should be gathered about spontaneous volunteers to ensure they are who they say they are and they have the skills necessary to safely do the job they are assigned.
- Provide a safety briefing and keep records. Make sure all volunteers understand basic safety procedures and have them acknowledge they have received this training. This protects the organization in the event that something happens.
- Interview all volunteers. This is a good way to verify information from the applications and get a sense of the person. Some organizations will not make referrals to volunteer organizations over the phone or Internet without first having a face-to-face interview. Sadly, not all volunteers have good intentions.
- Make sure that agencies know that the VRC is NOT performing background or criminal checks on the volunteers. That is the responsibility of the accepting agency.
- Use common sense. Some volunteer roles are more risky than others. Be particularly careful when you are placing volunteers to work with vulnerable populations such as children or the elderly. Also, volunteer's physical health

and abilities should be appropriate to the location and requirements of their volunteer assignment.

- Include a Release of Liability in the application. Make sure volunteers understand the risks they may encounter in a disaster area by including the Release of Liability directly on the volunteer application form.

**Risk management must be a top priority during a disaster.**

### Group Discussion Questions

Think of a time you have volunteered or managed volunteers. Answer the following questions based on your experience. Select one group member to report the conclusions of your group to all participants.

#### Group 1: Planning

1. Did the volunteer position you filled a clearly defined need? How can you tell?
2. Were you provided a clear position description? What were the advantages or disadvantages of that?
3. Did you know who to turn to if you had questions about your position? Was there staff guiding the volunteer program?
4. If you were managing that program, what would you do the same? What would you change?
5. How would this apply to spontaneous volunteers? Is it still necessary? Does the focus change? How?

#### Group 2: Receiving and Placing Volunteers

1. How did you find out about the volunteer position? What recruitment strategies were used?
2. How were you screened? How did you feel being screened?
3. Was your volunteer position a good match for you? Why or why not?
4. If you were managing that program, what would you do the same? What would you change?
5. How would this apply to spontaneous volunteers? Is it still necessary? Does the focus change? How?

#### Group 3: Orient and Train Volunteers

1. Did you receive a formal orientation or training for your position?
2. Did the training prepare you for the requirements of the position?
3. Was there on-going training after you started?
4. If you were managing that program, what would you do the same? What would you change?
5. How would this apply to spontaneous volunteers? Is it still necessary? Does the focus change? How?

#### **Group 4: Supervise and Recognize volunteers**

1. Did you have supervision? Was it too much or too little?
2. Were you motivated to continue volunteering? What kept you motivated?
3. Were you recognized for your volunteer work? How?
4. If you were managing that program, what would you do the same? What would you change?
5. How would this apply to spontaneous volunteers? Is it still necessary? Does the focus change? How?

# National Service and Disasters

Disasters strike throughout the United States each year, bringing massive property destruction and disrupting millions of lives. While Corporation for National and Community Service programs have always supported disaster preparedness and response efforts, they have played a much broader and more extensive role in recent years. This experience demonstrated that national service participants can fulfill a wide range of preparedness and response roles – management and coordination of volunteers and resources, training and development of coordinated response plans, and providing direct service to affected communities.

To help meet these responsibilities and better position the Corporation to provide leadership to volunteer management and preparedness efforts, in June 2007, the Corporation's Board of Directors designated disaster preparedness and response as an agency strategic initiative. The intent is to build national, state, and local response capacity to use volunteers and plan effectively to provide volunteer support when, where, and how it is needed.

## National Service Roles in Times of Disaster

National Service programs – AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve – play a vital role in their communities, and this continues during disasters. When the needs of a community change due to a disaster, the role of National Service members may have to change to meet the new disaster-related needs.

Disaster roles vary by program, but several features unite them all. National Service members aim to meet the needs of their community, working closely with other organizations in the community. National Service programs have played a role in all four phases of disasters but are not first responders and do not work on the 'front-line' of disasters. Members never self-deploy, but wait to be called when and where they can most effectively be used and supported. National Service members support and augment the efforts of other organizations and existing community groups to ensure the most effective results possible.

National Service participants can play important roles in disasters near and far. Many disaster roles do not take place in the disaster area, but in other regions, such as areas that have taking in disaster evacuees. Many National Service disaster assignments are included within a broader primary assignment such as a VISTA member helping their host organization develop a Continuity of Operations Plan so the organization will continue to be able to serve their clients even in times of disaster. Other National Service participants fill temporary disaster-related assignments, such as staffing a Red Cross in the disaster area or staffing an information call center for disaster victims far from the actual disaster.

What role do you play in a disaster? What role would you like to play? What resources and strengths does your program have and how do they match up with the needs of your community?

## National Service and Disaster

Since its inception in 1993, the Corporation for National and Community Service has been actively involved in disaster-related activities. CNCS has been represented on such federal response committees as the Emergency Support Function Leadership Group (ESFLG) and the Catastrophic Disaster Response Group (CDRG). An existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with FEMA outlining our role in preparedness and response has been revised and new MOUs have been developed with the American Red Cross and the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD).

### National Response Plan

Another major development in the Corporation's disaster response activities is the inclusion of the Corporation in the National Response Plan (NRP). As a result of nearly three years of promotion and negotiation, the Corporation is listed in the NRP as a Support Agency in two annexes: the Mass Care and Housing Emergency Support Function, which holds responsibility for the feeding, sheltering, and housing needs of those impacted by disaster; and the Donations and Volunteer Management Support Annex, which deals with the issues of spontaneous donations of goods and services by individuals. The Corporation's inclusion in the NRP at this time is particularly significant because it represents the first time in the history of national disaster response that volunteers have received any acknowledgement for their critical role in response.

### FEMA

Over the past several years, the relationships with FEMA's Voluntary Agency Liaisons (VALs), who are responsible for the deployment of volunteer resources in national response, have been nurtured. This nurturing was brought to fruition in the response efforts to the Florida Hurricanes of 2004, when the VAL overseeing the volunteer response to the FEMA operation requested extended Corporation involvement. This request eventually led to a response of over 850 national service participants, supported by FEMA in Mission Assignments totaling over \$1.2 million – by far the greatest involvement by national service in any FEMA response. Concurrently, Corporation programs were also supporting the American Red Cross at unprecedented levels and local programs were supporting response efforts in their own communities. All told, over 3,000 national service participants were involved in the response activities throughout the state. The enormity of this response led to the development of an internal deployment and accounting process for Corporation programs, which did not previously exist.

This response, however, was eclipsed by the magnitude of the national service response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. Not only did national service participants respond to the Gulf States from programs around the country, but Corporation programs also became involved in the response efforts in their own communities as evacuees from the impacted areas fled to other states seeking shelter.

# Donations Management

Unsolicited donations are a reality in every major disaster. Like spontaneous volunteers, well-intentioned people believe that their used clothes, books, medicines and other items can be used in the disaster area. Unfortunately, most people are unaware of the challenges caused by storage, transportation, sorting, cleaning and distributing donated goods. Like spontaneous volunteers, plans for unsolicited donations must be made far in advance of any disaster with warehouses and staff pre-selected.

## Ten Point National Strategy for Donations Management

1. Donations activity may begin BEFORE a disaster declaration.
2. State donations management should address undesignated goods and spontaneous volunteers.
3. Shipment of designated goods may be affected by State policies.
4. State and local governments are in charge of donations operations.
5. Federal government and National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) have support roles.
6. Make full use of existing voluntary agency capabilities.
7. Use a flexible strategy.
8. Use a team approach.
9. Cash donations are preferred.
10. Information management is essential.

## Donations Management Essential Functions

There are many steps required for effective donations management. Here are the major activities:

1. Identify donations that are needed and NOT needed.
  - a. Conduct donations 'intelligence' by contacting local organizations and groups to see what is needed immediately and in the long-term.
  - b. Connect organization together if they have complementary needs and resources.
2. Coordinate media releases.
  - a. Public messaging about what is needed and how it should be donated should be made as soon as possible after the disaster and regularly afterward.
3. Coordinate field logistics.
  - a. Open and close-down warehouses
  - b. Organize transportation for donated goods into the disaster area and from warehouses to the receiving organizations
4. Negotiate with donors.
  - a. It is better to say no to a donation that is not needed than have to find ways to dispose of it later.
5. Dispose of remaining goods when the warehouse closes.
  - a. Contact local organization to find long-term need of remaining supplies.

- b. Certain items must be disposed of in a safe manner, in coordination with local hazardous materials or waste management offices. This includes expired medication, and toxic materials including paint and household cleaners.
6. Conduct a critique (“hot wash”).
  - a. The stakeholders in donations management to meet to discuss lessons learned and to incorporate those lessons into the donations management plans.

Knowing what is NOT needed is as important as knowing what donations are needed.

### Donations Management Public Messaging

Public messaging is based on the same principles of public messaging in spontaneous volunteer management. Public messaging should be consistent and clear, starting before the disaster.

Examples of the donations management public message:

- Distribute a consistent and clear message
  - Confirm there is a need
  - Educate the public about how to donate goods
  - Address transportation for donated goods
  - Packaging and labeling goods
    - Sorted
    - Shrink-wrapped
    - Palletized
  - Unwanted and unsorted clothing
- Identify donations that are needed and NOT needed
- Coordinate media releases
- Coordinate field logistics
  - Open and close warehouses
  - Transportation
- Conduct donations intelligence
  - Gather information about factors that could have a potential negative or positive impact on donated goods
  - Tracking rumor control
- Negotiate with donors
- Dispose of remaining goods when the warehouses closes
- Conduct a critique (“hot wash”)

## Donations Management Volunteer Roles

These are possible donations management roles that volunteers may be asked to perform. These should be done under the auspices of an agency or organization involved in donations management.

### Multi-agency warehouse

- Receive and distribute donated goods
- Sort incoming donated goods
- Drive forklift (if licensed)
- Data entry or data management
- Phone operator
- Liaison with VOAD member agencies

### State Emergency Management Agency (EMA)

- Phone bank operator
- Communicating with donors
  - Accepting and declining donation

### Local donations management

- Conduct a donated goods “drive”
  - Media – get the message out
  - Make sure the donations are needed
  - Sort goods prior to shipping
  - Arrange for transportation
  - Contact warehouse to arrange for arrival
- Organize a community yard sale
  - Donate proceeds to a VOAD organization
- Local distribution centers or PODS
  - Managing distribution of goods
  - Liaison with multi-agency warehouse or state/local EMA

# Group Discussions

## Group 1

**Turn spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers into affiliated ones before a disaster occurs.** People who make a pre-disaster decision to become disaster volunteers and take training to prepare themselves will NOT become spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers after a disaster. They will be able to begin serving immediately where they are needed most. Making this happen requires pre-disaster volunteer recruitment, orientation, and training.

Identify the stakeholder groups that are potential new sources of local volunteers. (5 minutes)

Determine what messages you as a community want to impart to potential individual volunteers or leaders of volunteer groups. Craft those ideas into a powerful and compelling recruitment message that could be aired on local radio or television. (10 minutes)

Using partnerships and collaboration, develop a multi-step public information and volunteer recruitment strategy for engaging volunteers (both individuals and groups) in pre-disaster training that will prepare them to serve. (10 minutes)

## Group 2

**You will need a plan to prevent an influx of volunteers for outside your area, if you don't have the capacity to house, feed, and manage them.** After Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne, critical resources such as food, water, ice, and lodging were scarce or non-existent. Preventing an influx of hundreds or thousands of extra people needing food, water, and shelter ensured that impacted residents received the available resources.

In the wake of a disaster, what community/regional stakeholders should help assess the need for unaffiliated volunteers and the community's capacity to manage them? (5 minutes)

What stakeholders should be part of the team that develops and disseminates a clear and consistent message to inform the public about what volunteer assistance is and is not needed? What will be the role of each stakeholder? (10 minutes)

How can your community work together to keep your community members from self-deploying and/or collecting donations for other communities affected by disasters? (10 minutes)

### Group 3

**Know your local and regional relief agencies and how to find them after a disaster.** To effectively utilize the unaffiliated volunteers who show up to help after a disaster, volunteer organizers must have an understanding of:

- What relief services each local agency plans to provide
- The potential roles unaffiliated volunteers could fill in each organization
- Ways to communicate with those organizations after the disaster

Identify the stakeholder groups that might be able to utilize unaffiliated volunteers to expand their services after a disaster. Be specific. (5 minutes)

Develop a plan by which volunteer organizers will obtain information (pre- and post-disaster) from community agencies about the roles and corresponding job descriptions for which they anticipate utilized unaffiliated volunteers. Think *partnership* and *collaboration*. (10 minutes)

Even when volunteer organizers knew the types of volunteers that local agencies would need after past hurricanes, it was often impossible to communicate with them to refer volunteers. Disasters of all kinds disrupt regular means of communication. Identify stakeholder groups with resources and skills to facilitate emergency communications while land lines, cell phones, and the Internet are down. Develop a plan for engaging them in providing communication between the emergency management agency, the volunteer reception center, and community agencies during disasters. (10 minutes)

### Group 4

**Volunteer identification and transportation of volunteers to restricted areas**

Assuming your community does have a need for unaffiliated volunteers and that you have the capacity to manage them, consider:

- How you will provide identification/authorization for volunteers to enter areas that are restricted to the public
- How volunteers could be transported from the VRC to their worksites

With what government or community stakeholders should volunteer organizers collaborate on this important planning piece? (5 minutes)

When volunteers leave the VRC and report to their worksites, how will worksite supervisors know that they have registered with the VRC and received a safety briefing? Conversely, how can people who have not registered and may have less than honorable reasons for coming to the worksite be prevented from doing so? Write a detailed plan. (20 minutes)

## Group 5

### Volunteer Reception Center logistics

To ensure smooth start-up and operation of a VRC, it's critical to identify several alternative **VRC sites** throughout the region, secure commitments for **priority restoration** of critical services (phones, water, power) at the VRC, and plan for **furniture, equipment/technology, office supplies, food, and health/safety** of VRC staff. You will need to ensure there is a landline phone in the VRC site before a disaster strikes. Ideally, you should also have someone with professional stress management skills on the volunteer management team.

Develop an action plan for securing each of these components of your VRC. (3-4 minutes each)

## Group 6

**Helping volunteers to stay safe while serving is critical to the overall success of the disaster response and recovery effort.** Job and safety training, security at the VRC, and adherence to state laws regarding volunteers are critical components to successfully managing disaster volunteers.

Identify stakeholder groups that could provide security at your VRC. Explain how you will engage them in pre-disaster planning and how they might be deployed to the VRC in the event of disaster activation. Keep in mind first responders' chain of command. (5 minutes)

Use your knowledge of volunteer management and the sheet on Volunteer Law in your materials to suggest policies that could be implemented locally to: (10 minutes)

- Protect volunteers from harm
- Protect disaster survivors from further harm by ill-intended "volunteers"
- Minimize your agencies' and county governments' exposure to risk

Develop a safety orientation and job training plan that will ensure that all volunteers have been trained and that documentation of that training is maintained. (10 minutes)

# Virtual Management of Spontaneous Volunteers

## How to Implement a Virtual Volunteer Reception Center

Prior to deciding if your organization, VOAD, or State Commission should “stand up” a VRC, your first step is to activate a virtual volunteer reception center. In other words, establish a web-based platform that allows volunteers to register, communicates a consistent message to those interested in volunteering, posts current opportunities to volunteer related to the disaster and has a mechanism to communicate back with the volunteers who register.

In today’s technology world, virtual volunteer reception centers have become critical to manage and communicate with spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers.

**\* Even if a VRC is “stood up,” the virtual VRC stays active and sends consistent message.**

### Steps to Creating a Virtual Volunteer Reception Center:

- 1) **Plan and post a banner on the website.** Populate a banner prior to a disaster and customize it when a disaster strikes. Establish a policy for when to enact/enable the banner. For the LA SERVE, the decision is based on calls received in the office. Once the decision is made that the banner is needed, go into the technology platform to “enable.”

As the message changes, the information on the banner changes on the website

Example: If a hurricane is entering the Gulf and you are a Gulf Coast Action Center planning to manage spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers, “enable” this banner once the hurricane is in the Gulf, explaining volunteers are not yet needed but they “can go ahead and sign up now.”

- 2) **Write the first message.** The most important thing for a Virtual VRC is a consistent message.
  - Post the message on the website.
  - Email out to constituency with link + message. Email or Twitter should be enough to let the prospective volunteer know what is going on and the detail should be on the website. Some may get enough info from the email/Twitter to know they are interested in the posting; others will go because of it.
- 3) **Create a call center** at the voluntary agency that is managing the Virtual VRC. Make sure staff is trained on how to take calls. They should be able to clearly and concisely explain to callers how to register on the website. if the volunteer

who calls is unable to go online, the person answering the call will go online and register for the volunteer.

- 4) **Identify and post opportunities.** Once the event occurs, begin identifying opportunities. If possible, get position descriptions from the organizations before the event. Pre-populate them in the technology platform and then turn them on with the banner or as appropriate.
- At the state level, pull from affiliates/volunteer centers and then send to the people who have registered.
  - At the local level, pull from partners for opportunities.

5) **Utilize social media.** Create links to and post on social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, blogs, etc.), directing persons interested in volunteering to the Virtual VRC site to register. Have all agencies with local and state VOADs posting the same message related to volunteering.

# Volunteer Reception Centers

A Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) is a process to register, screen, and place spontaneous volunteers in available opportunities in times of disaster. This model was developed by Volunteer Florida, which has set up numerous VRCs for disasters ranging from hurricanes to floods, tornadoes and wildfires.

The aim of Volunteer Reception Centers is to affiliate spontaneous volunteers with requesting agencies. This is done by registering and interviewing potential volunteers, assigning them to a volunteer opportunity that best meets their needs and skills; providing safety training, and job training as necessary; issuing them a volunteer ID.

Volunteer Reception Centers are typically established by local volunteer centers or other voluntary agencies. Extensive planning is required to identify possible locations and staff, likely volunteer roles at requesting agencies and developing Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) between the many stakeholders.

The decision to set up a Volunteer Reception Center should be made by the local or state government and carried out by the organization previously identified as responsible for VRCs. Individuals and organizations should NOT self-deploy and make an independent decision to establish VRCs.

This training is intended to help you staff, but not establish, a Volunteer Reception Center if requested by the responsible organization.

## VRC Kit Checklist

### Supplies

- Set of Walkie-talkies
- Permanent markers
- Dry erase markers and eraser
- Sharpie markers
- Colored chalk
- Stapler
- Extra pens
- Push pins
- Masking tape
- Clear (shipping) tape
- Stick-on name badges
- Scissors
- String

### Signs Folder

- 2 VRC signs
- Enter sign
- Exit sign
- Staff Only sign

### VRC Director Folder

- Staff task sheet
- VRC Director badge

### Station #1 Registration Folder

- Station sign
- Staff task sheet
- 2 Greeter badges
- Flag or bandana
- Volunteer Instructions handouts
- Disaster Volunteer Registration forms
- Pens

### Station #2 Interviewer Folder

- Station sign
- Staff task sheet
- 3 Interviewer badges
- Flag or bandana
- Volunteer Referral forms
- Pens
- Folder for completed forms

### Station #3 Data/Agency Coordination Folder

- Station sign
- Staff task sheet
- Flag or bandana
- 2 Data/Agency Coordination badges
- Folder for open requests
- Folder for filled requests

### Station #4 Safety Briefing Folder

- Station sign
- Staff task sheet
- 2 Safety Trainer badges
- Stapler
- Flag or bandana
- Clipboard
- Pen
- Safety Training Attendance Sheets
- Safety Training for Volunteers handouts

#### Station #5 Volunteer ID Folder

- Station sign
- Staff task sheet
- Flag or bandana
- Scissors
- 2 Volunteer ID badges
- Paper wristbands
- Sharpie marker

#### Station #6 Mapping Folder

- Station sign
- Staff task sheet
- Flag or bandana
- County or city map
- Street maps
- Sharpie marker

#### Phone Bank Folder

- Station sign
- Staff task sheet
- Flag or bandana
- Phone Bank badge
- Blank Request for Volunteer Forms

#### Data Entry Folder

- Station sign
- Staff task sheet
- Flag or bandana
- Data Entry badge
- Pens

#### Public Information Officer Folder

- Station sign
- Staff task sheet
- Public Information Officer badge

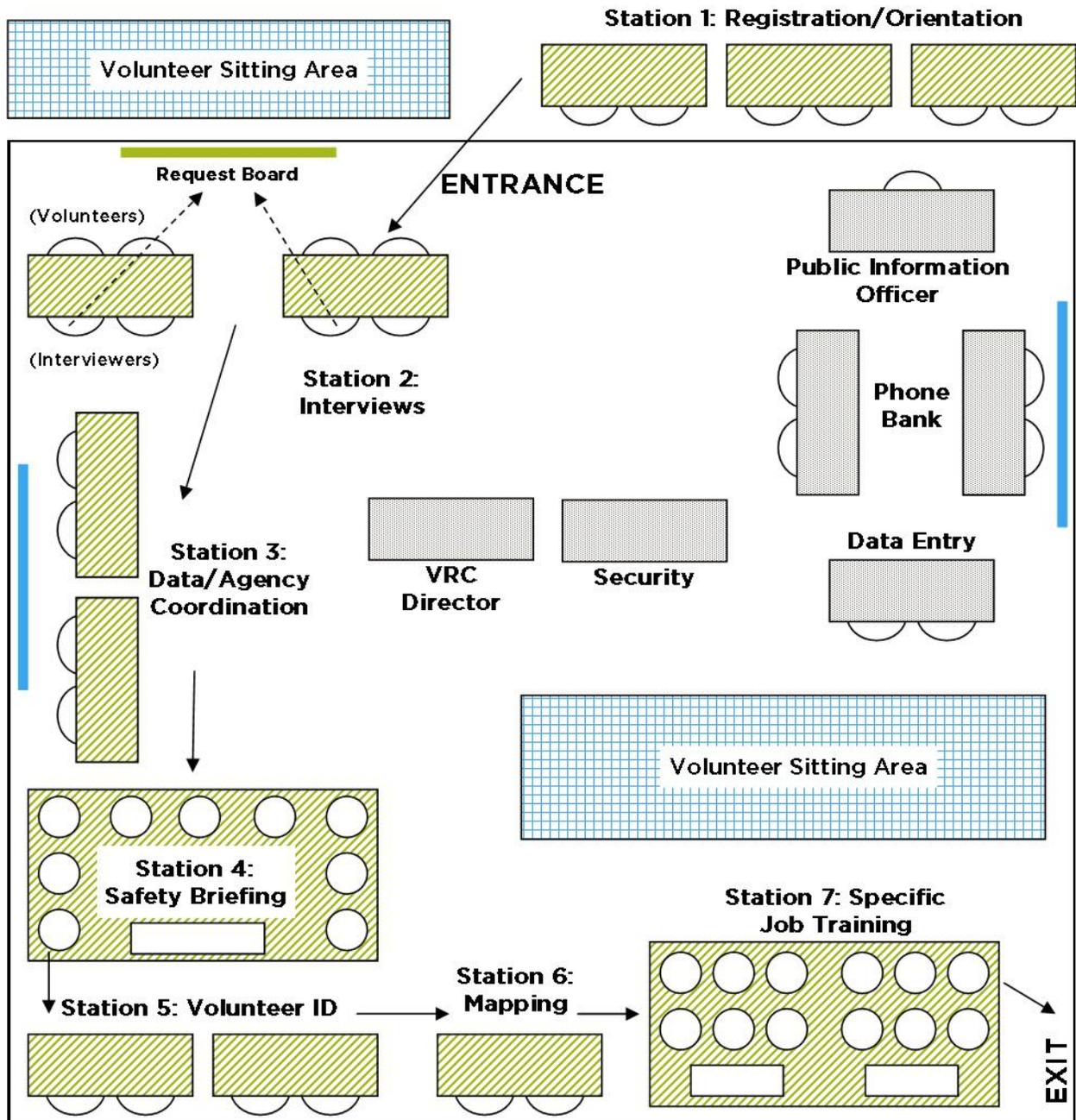
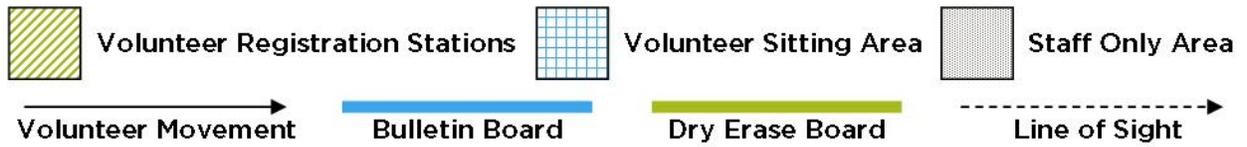
#### Runner Folder

- Staff task sheet
- Runner badge
- Dry erase marker and eraser

#### Security Folder

- Security badge

# Volunteer Reception Center Floor Plan



## Signage for Volunteer Reception Center

You will need one enlargement, unless otherwise specified, for each of the 17 station or directional signs shown in the left column. All signs should be laminated and large enough to be read from across a large room.

### Signs Needed

Disaster Volunteer Reception Center (2)

Station #1  
Registration

Enter

Station #2  
Interviews

Station #3  
Data/Agency Coordination

Station #4  
Safety Briefing

Station #5  
Volunteer ID

Station #6  
Mapping

Exit

Data Entry

Phone Bank

Public Information Officer

Staff Only (2+ as needed)

### Where to Post

On street visible from either direction

Registration/orientation area

Volunteer Entrance to VRC

Interview area  
*visible from Volunteer Entry*

Data Coordination area  
*visible from Station #2*

Safety Training area  
*visible from Station #3*

Volunteer ID area  
*visible from Station #4*

Mapping area  
*visible from Station #5*

Exit  
*visible from Stations #5 and #6*

Data Entry area

Phone Bank area

Public Information Officer's table

Staff rest area, supply area, etc

## Name Badges for Volunteer Reception Center

You will need the following name badges for the people staffing the VRC:

- VRC Director
- Registration
- Interviewer
- Data/Agency Coordinator
- Safety Trainer
- Volunteer ID Staff
- Mapper
- Phone Bank Staff
- Data Entry
- Runner
- Public Information Officer
- Security

## VRC Staff Tasks: VRC Director

Your job is to oversee the operation of the Volunteer Reception Center. You will:

- Clearly designate one entrance and one exit
- Set up the room for efficient flow of volunteers and information
- Brief and assign tasks to staff and volunteers of the center
- Monitor the operation and make staffing changes when necessary
- Maintain all records of safety and job training provided to volunteers, and hours worked in the VRC by employees and volunteers

You should meet and thank all volunteers who help in the VRC and instruct them to sign in and out on the Volunteer Sign-in/Sign-out Record daily. Instruct paid staff to sign in on the Employee Sign-in/Sign-out Record daily. In a fast-paced disaster response, both paid and volunteer staff will need regular reminders to sign in and out.

Items needed:

- ID badge
- Tables and chairs (see sample room layout for details)
- VRC Kit containing office supplies and forms to stock your VRC for the first 2-3 days
- Items on the Supplies and Equipment list
- Clipboard

## VRC Staff Tasks: Greeters

### Station #1 Registration

*Please do NOT leave your station for any reason. If you require assistance, wave your flag to get attention from a Runner or the VRC Director.*

Ideally, you will be working with a partner, orienting volunteers inside and outside the volunteer entrance. Your job is to greet people with a friendly and firm demeanor, determine the purpose of their visit and direct them accordingly.

- If they are there to volunteer, thank them, give them a “Volunteer Instructions” sheet and ask them to fill out a registration form. When the form is completed, direct them to the next available interviewer at Station #2.
- If they are media personnel, direct them to the Public Information Officer.
- If they are disaster survivors, refer them to the appropriate relief organization.
- If they are bringing cleaning supplies, nonperishable food, etc., to donate, refer them to an agency that is accepting donated goods.

If there is a long wait, some volunteers may not understand the reason and may become impatient. Please thank everyone for volunteering, briefly explain the process and ask everyone to be patient or, if they prefer, to come back later.

Review volunteers’ applications (front and back) to make certain information is complete and they sign the waiver! Ask for identification. Indicate the type of identification produced, if any, at the bottom of their form.

Items needed:

- ID badge
- Sign (Station #1 Registration)
- Table or clipboards and chairs for volunteers to use to fill out their forms
- Supply of “Volunteer Instructions” handouts
- Supply of Disaster Volunteer Registration Forms
- Pens
- Flag to summon runners

## VRC Staff Tasks: Interviewers

### Station #2 Interviews

***Please do NOT leave your station for any reason. If you require assistance, wave your flag to get attention from a Runner or the VRC Director.***

Your job is to do a quick interview of the prospective volunteer and refer him/her to a job at an agency appropriate to his abilities and interests. Requests for volunteers will be posted on a board in front of you (behind the volunteers being interviewed) and will be erased as the needs are filled. If the VRC has a computer system, you might also receive a printed list of the current needs.

When a new volunteer approaches, ask for his/her registration form. With the volunteer, verify its completeness and accuracy, and use it as a guide from which to inquire more about the volunteer's skills. At the conclusion of the interview, keep his registration form. When the volunteer accepts an assignment, complete a Referral form, filling in all information requested, initial the form, and give it to the volunteer and instruct him to report to Data Coordination (Station #3).

Before you signal the Greeter that you are ready for another interview, take a minute to jot down in the "Notes" section anything about the volunteer you feel is important and that the volunteer did not include on his registration form (a special skill, an obvious physical limitation, etc.) If your center decides to use the blind field labeled "Office Use Only,\* check the appropriate box. Place his registration form in the file.

Key points to remember are:

- **Disaster registration differs from a "normal" volunteer intake.** There is less time to try to fit each volunteer into an ideal assignment.
- **Refer the volunteer on the spot if possible. It may be impossible to contact him later.** If the volunteer has special training or unusual skills that you think might be needed soon, ask him to wait in the sitting area and to check the volunteer request board for new requests for their specialized skills.
- **Be sure to watch for volunteers who would work well in the Volunteer Reception Center.** It may seem self-serving, but if the VRC has sufficient staff and works effectively, the community will benefit!
- **It is likely that some volunteers will exhibit the stress of the disaster.** They may be victims themselves. An extra measure of patience and understanding is needed.
- **You may be called upon to train new volunteers to assist with the interviewing.**

*\*The VRC Director should determine appropriate use of the "Office Use Only" field. It is intended to provide a customizable "blind" field in which special information can be noted about volunteers. If, for future referral of that volunteer, it would be helpful to know his general level of ability to work independently, boxes 1-5 could be coded:*

1. *Learns quickly, able to supervise the activities of others*
2. *Would work well independently, good decision making skills*

3. *Needs some supervision and assistance with decision making*
4. *Needs close or constant supervision*
5. *Has a mental, physical or emotional limitation to consider in making a referral*

Items needed:

- ID badge for each interviewer
- 2-3 tables and 8-12 chairs (see floor plan)
- Sign (Station #2 Interviews)
- Supply of Referral forms
- Flag to summon runners
- Pens
- File for maintaining Volunteer Registration Forms in alphabetical order

## VRC Staff Tasks: Data/Agency Coordinator

### Station #3 Data/Agency Coordination

*Please do NOT leave your station for any reason. If you require assistance, wave your flag to get attention from a Runner or the VRC Director.*

When a volunteer brings you his Referral form, pull the corresponding Request for Volunteers form from the file. Enter his name and the date of the referral on the bottom of the Request form. Place your initials in the appropriate box on his Referral form. Direct the volunteer to Station #4 for a Safety Briefing.

As you have time, call the agency contact to let him know who or how many volunteers have been referred. Confirm with the agency contact whether you should continue referring volunteers or close out the Request.

When a Request has been filled, raise your flag to call a runner and ask him to confirm that the request has been removed from the board.

Enter the date and reason the request was closed (completed, no longer needed, etc.) at the bottom of the Request form. If your Requests for Volunteers have been entered into a computer database, be sure to enter the date and reason the Request was closed as soon as possible. Place open Requests in one file and closed Requests in the other, alphabetically by agency.

You may have to call an agency contact to clarify the agency's Request. When you speak with an agency contact, record the information on the Request form in the section called "Follow-up Contacts with Requesting Agency."

Items needed:

- ID badge for each staff member
- Sign (Station #3 Agency/Data Coordination)
- Two tables and four chairs
- Phone
- Two sets of files - one for open Requests for Volunteers and one for closed out Requests
- Pens
- Computer (if available) networked to the computers at the Phone Bank station
- Flag to summon runners

## VRC Staff Tasks: Safety Trainers

### Station #4 Safety Briefing

*Please do NOT leave your station for any reason. If you require assistance, wave your flag to get attention from a Runner or the VRC Director.*

Your job is to brief all new volunteers on what to expect at their job sites, how to be safe while volunteering and how to take good care of themselves after their experience. When a small group has gathered, **thank the volunteers** for offering to help. Pass around a clipboard with an attendance sheet and check to be sure that **all** participants have signed it.

Read the entire Safety Training sheet slowly, emphasizing the importance of following supervisors' instructions at the worksite. Encourage everyone to attend a debriefing, if available, at the end of their shift. Ask if there are any questions. If a question arises to which you do not know the answer, put on the hat (or raise the flag) to summon a runner. Ask the runner to summon the VRC Director or other VRC staff to answer the question. **Please initial their volunteer referral form.** At the conclusion of the briefing, direct volunteers to Station #5 Volunteer ID.

Attach a copy of the safety briefing script/handout to the attendance sheet for each class, file them in the folder and turn them in to the VRC Director daily.

Maintenance of these records is important to help protect the Volunteer Reception Center, voluntary agencies and emergency management officials from liability, should a volunteer be injured on the job.

Items needed:

- ID badge
- Sign (Station #4: Safety Training)
- 10 or more chairs, preferable in a semi-circle
- Clipboard with attendance sheets
- Pen
- Stapler
- Flag or hat to summon runners
- List of additional training required by specific worksites, training locations and instructors
- Supply of Safety Training handouts

***Notes:** If time and space permit, make the training more engaging. Provide volunteers with scenarios they may face and ask them to identify the correct course of action. Or ask volunteers to share their own experiences or ask questions about what they may face in the disaster zone.*

## VRC Staff Tasks – Volunteer ID Staff

### Station #5 Volunteer ID

*Please do NOT leave your station for any reason. If you require assistance, wave your flag to get attention from a Runner or the VRC Director.*

Thank all volunteers for coming out and ask to see their Referral forms. Make certain that the form has been initialed by the Interviewer, Data Coordinator, and Safety Trainer! Clearly write on an ID wristband the name of the volunteer, dates he/she will be working, and the name of the agency to which the volunteer was referred, as shown on their Referral form. Place the ID wristband securely on the volunteer's wrist.

Explain to the volunteers that the ID will be “good” only for the date(s) written on the band. Authorities may not permit them to enter any of the disaster impacted areas on any other day, without a current ID wristband. If volunteers plan to work more than one day, you may write the beginning and ending dates of their service.

Some volunteers will be required to take additional training for their particular work. When your briefing is concluded, please refer volunteers to Station # 6 – Mapping to receive specific directions and a sign for their car, if appropriate.

If you need assistance, please raise your flag to summon a Runner.

Items needed:

- ID badge
- Two tables and four chairs
- Sign (Station #4 Volunteer I.D. Tags)
- Supply of volunteer ID wristbands
- Sharpie markers
- Scissors
- Flag to summon runners

## VRC Staff Tasks: Mapper Station #6 - Mapping

*Please do NOT leave your station for any reason. If you require assistance, wave your flag to get attention from a Runner or the VRC Director.*

Your job is to distribute maps to volunteers, marking easy routes for them to follow in the event that all street signs are down!

Please make certain that volunteers are wearing ID bands!

Use a marker and your imagination to find their destination according to their volunteer referral form.

Please give them a copy of the map and a sign for their car if they are driving to the volunteer site.

Items necessary:

- Table
- Chairs
- Big county or city map on wall near you with the VRC location designated with a big "X"
- Individual street maps to distribute
- Sharpie markers

## VRC Staff Tasks: Phone Bank Staff

You will be handling two types of calls, those from agencies requesting volunteers and those from people wanting to volunteer. The information you record about each call must be complete and in sufficient detail to facilitate matching volunteers to the needs. DO take control of each call immediately. It is much more efficient to ask the questions in the order in which they appear on the form. (If the caller takes control you will find yourself scribbling in the margins and will not get all the required information.)

When an agency calls to requests volunteers, fill out a Request for Volunteers form while you are speaking with the agency caller. If there is a computer available for entering the request into a database, Data Entry staff should enter the need as soon as possible or may enter the data directly while speaking to the caller.

Next, call a runner by raising the flag at your station. Ask the Runner to post the volunteer request on the board in view of the Interviewers (Station #2) and then to give the Request for Volunteers form to the Data Coordinator (Station #3).

When people call to volunteer, thank them and give them the following registration options:

- They may register in person at the VRC, and will be given instructions when they arrive.
- They may register on-line, and will be e-mailed regarding possible assignments and given further instructions. If the caller represents a group that wishes to volunteer together, ask him to be patient while you determine where they can be of most help. It might take one day or several to match a volunteer with a need, especially if he is coming from out of town.

When a match (a mission) is found for that volunteer, e-mail or call him back. Ask him to print the registration form he completed on-line and schedule a time for him to come to the VRC to turn in his signed registration form and complete the registration process.

Items needed:

- ID badge for each staff member
- Sign (Phone Bank)
- Supply of Request for Volunteers forms
- Flag to summon runner
- Two tables and four chairs
- Phones
- Pens

## VRC Staff Tasks: Data Entry

Your job is to enter the information from the Volunteer Registration and Request for Volunteers forms into the database so that an accurate record can be maintained of who participated in the recovery effort, what kinds of work they did and when it was performed.

After the initial influx of volunteers has subsided, you may have time to begin entering the referrals recorded on the Request for Volunteers forms and to close out the completed Requests. As needed by VRC staff, print updated lists of the unfilled Requests and ask a Runner to distribute copies to Phone Bank staff, Data Coordination, Interviewers and, if requested, the VRC Director.

Even if you are familiar with the software being used by the VRC, please ask for a brief orientation before beginning your first shift. Accuracy is more important than speed. The information you enter will be used to document the number of agencies and volunteers participating in the relief effort and the number of hours served.

If you have difficulty using the computer, please ask for help immediately. Do not attempt to fix the problem yourself.

Items needed:

- ID Badge
- One table and two chairs
- Sign (Data Entry)
- Printer
- Pens
- Flag
- One or more computers

Note: Multiple computers should be networked to provide all users access to information on the status of volunteer requests and the availability of volunteers.

## VRC Staff Tasks: Public Information Officer

Your job is to represent the VRC to the media, communicating a common message approved by emergency management and/or designated officials. Stay informed about unmet volunteer needs through the positions posted on the boards behind the interviewers so those needs can be easily communicated with media.

Items needed:

- ID badge
- One table and one chair
- Sign (Public Information Officer)

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## VRC Staff Tasks: Runner

Your job is to carry information from one station to another within the VRC. When a station needs you to pick up forms, restock supplies or escort a volunteer from one place to another, the staff person will signal you by raising a flag.

**Please watch carefully for this signal and respond promptly, in order to keep the information and volunteers moving smoothly through the registration and referral process.**

One Runner should be stationed at the board on which Requests for Volunteers are posted. As a volunteer is referred, place a tally mark or otherwise indicate next to that request the number of volunteers referred. This prevents referring too many volunteers to a request.

Runners posting new Requests for Volunteers on the board, should use only the markers provided and write neatly and large enough so that the interviewers can see the requests clearly. After posting the request on the board, give the Request form to the Data Coordinator (Station #3).

Items needed:

- ID badge
- Dry erase marker or water-soluble marker (Dry erase markers should not be used on a laminated “portable white board.”)
- Dry eraser or damp sponges

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## VRC Staff Tasks: Security

Your job is to “keep the peace” at the VRC. Assist VRC staff and volunteers wherever necessary to help ensure the safety of everyone in and around the facility. Thank you!

Items needed:

- ID badge

# Disaster Volunteer Registration Form

(Please print clearly. Submit at Volunteer Reception Center or fax to \_\_\_\_\_)

Mr. Mrs. Ms. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 email \_\_\_\_\_ Day Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Emergency Contact \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Employer \_\_\_\_\_  
 Business Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 If you have any health limitations, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

I am willing to volunteer in: \_\_\_\_\_ This county \_\_\_\_\_ A neighboring county  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Anywhere in the state \_\_\_\_\_ Anywhere in the US  
 Are you currently affiliated with a disaster relief agency? If yes, name of agency: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Special skills and/or vocational/disaster training: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**SKILLS:** Please check all that apply.

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Medical</b></p> <p>___ 110 Doctor Specialty: _____<br/>         ___ 120 Nurse Specialty: _____<br/>         ___ 130 Emerg. Medical cert.<br/>         ___ 140 Mental health<br/>         counsel.<br/>         ___ 150 Veterinarian<br/>         ___ 160 Vet. technician</p> <p><b>Communications</b></p> <p>___ 210 CB or ham operator<br/>         ___ 220 Hotline operator<br/>         ___ 230 Own a cell phone<br/>         # _____<br/>         ___ 240 Own a skyphone<br/>         # _____<br/>         ___ 250 Public relations<br/>         ___ 260 Web page design<br/>         ___ 270 Public speaker</p> <p><b>Languages</b></p> <p>___ 261 French<br/>         ___ 262 German<br/>         ___ 263 Italian<br/>         ___ 264 Spanish<br/>         ___ 265 Ukrainian<br/>         ___ 266 _____<br/>         ___ 267 _____<br/>         ___ 268 _____<br/>         ___ 269 _____</p> | <p><b>Office Support</b></p> <p>___ 310 Clerical (filing, etc.)<br/>         ___ 320 Data entry-Software:<br/>         _____<br/>         ___ 330 Phone receptionist</p> <p><b>Services</b></p> <p>___ 410 Food<br/>         ___ 415 Elderly/disabled asst.<br/>         ___ 420 Child care<br/>         ___ 425 Spiritual counseling<br/>         ___ 430 Social work<br/>         ___ 435 Search and rescue<br/>         ___ 440 Auto repair/towing<br/>         ___ 445 Traffic control<br/>         ___ 450 Crime watch<br/>         ___ 455 Animal rescue<br/>         ___ 460 Animal care<br/>         ___ 465 Runner<br/>         ___ 470 Disability Service:<br/>         _____</p> <p><b>Structural</b></p> <p>___ 510 Damage assessment<br/>         ___ 520 Metal construction<br/>         ___ 530 Wood construction<br/>         ___ 540 Block construction<br/>         Cert # _____<br/>         ___ 550 Plumbing<br/>         Cert # _____<br/>         ___ 560 Electrical<br/>         Cert # _____<br/>         ___ 570 Roofing<br/>         Cert # _____</p> | <p><b>Transportation</b></p> <p>___ 610 Car<br/>         ___ 615 Wagon/mini-van<br/>         ___ 620 Maxi-van Capacity:<br/>         _____<br/>         ___ 625 ATV<br/>         ___ 630 Off-road veh./4WD<br/>         ___ 635 Truck Description:<br/>         _____<br/>         ___ 640 Boat - Capacity, type:<br/>         _____<br/>         ___ 650 Commercial driver<br/>         Class &amp; license #:<br/>         _____<br/>         ___ 660 Camper/RV capacity<br/>         &amp; type:<br/>         _____<br/>         ___ 670 Wheelchair transport</p> <p><b>Labor</b></p> <p>___ 710 Loading/shipping<br/>         ___ 720 Sorting/packing<br/>         ___ 730 Clean-up<br/>         ___ 740 Operate equipment<br/>         Types: _____<br/>         _____<br/>         ___ 750 Supervising others</p> <p><b>Equipment</b></p> <p>___ 810 Backhoe<br/>         ___ 820 Chainsaw<br/>         ___ 830 Generator<br/>         ___ 840 Other:<br/>         _____</p> |
|---|---|--|

Office Use Only 1 2 3 4 5



## Disaster Volunteer Registration Form *(side two)*

I, for myself and my heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, hereby release, indemnify and hold harmless [Coordinating Agency, local governments, State of \_\_\_\_\_, the organizers, sponsors and supervisors of all disaster preparedness, response and recovery activities ***[check with local Risk Management and Emergency Management Departments about who should be included]***] from all liability for any and all risk of damage or bodily injury or death that may occur to me (including any injury caused by negligence), in connection with any volunteer disaster effort in which I participate. I likewise hold harmless from liability any person transporting me to or from any disaster relief activity. In addition, disaster relief officials have permission to utilize any photographs or videos taken of me for publicity or training purposes. I will abide by all safety instructions and information provided to me during disaster relief efforts.

Further, I expressly agree that this release, waiver, and indemnity agreement is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the State of \_\_\_\_\_, and that if any portion thereof is held invalid, it is agreed that the balance shall, notwithstanding, continue in full legal force and effect.

I have no known physical or mental condition that would impair my capability to participate fully, as intended or expected of me.

I have carefully read the foregoing release and indemnification and understand the contents thereof and sign this release as my own free act.

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Guardian, if under 18 \_\_\_\_\_ Date

Volunteer's credentials were recorded as presented. Verification of credentials is the responsibility of the receiving agency or ESF.

### This volunteer was referred to the following agencies:

Date	Need #	ESF or Agency	Contact Name	Contact Phone #

Return this completed form to:  
(Coordinating Agency name, address and fax number)

Notes:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Volunteer Liability Release Form

In consideration of my desire to serve as a volunteer in disaster relief efforts to be conducted by \_\_\_\_\_, I hereby assume all responsibility for any and all risk of property damage or bodily injury that I may sustain while participating in any voluntary relief effort, disaster exercise or other activity of any nature, including the use of equipment and facilities of \_\_\_\_\_.

Further, I, for myself and my heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, hereby release, waive and discharge \_\_\_\_\_ and its officers, directors, employees, agents and volunteers of and from any and all claims which I or my heirs, administrators and assigns ever may have against any of the above for, on account of, by reason of or arising in connection with such volunteer relief efforts or my participation therein, and hereby waive all such claims, demands and causes of action.

Further, I expressly agree that this release, waiver and indemnity agreement is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the laws of the State of \_\_\_\_\_, and that if any portion thereof is held invalid, it is agreed that the balance shall, notwithstanding, continue in full legal force and effect.

I currently have no known physical or mental condition that would impair my capability for full participation as intended or expected of me.

Further, I have carefully read the foregoing release and indemnification and understand the contents thereof and sign this release as my own free act.

---

Signature

---

Date

---

Print Name

## Volunteer Instructions

1. **THANK YOU** for coming to the VRC today! Please fill out a registration form and proceed as directed to an Interviewer at Station #2.
2. **Interview Area:** Interviewer will take your form, talk with you about your skills, initial your form, and refer you to an agency needing your help. Next take your Referral form to Station #3.
3. **Data Coordination Area:** Coordinator will record and initial your Referral Form and, if possible, notify the agency to expect you. Take your Referral form to the Safety Briefing area at Station #4.
4. **Safety Briefing Area:** You will be given special instructions about safety, security & transportation. Proceed to ID area at Station #5. (You may also be directed to an area for specific job training).
5. **Identification Area:** You will receive an ID bracelet that will allow you to enter restricted areas during the day(s) written on ID. Proceed to the Mapping area at Station # 6. to receive specific directions and a car sign, if necessary.
6. **Mapping:** You will receive a map with specific directions from the VRC to the volunteer site. You may also be provided a sign for your car window.

Thank you for volunteering!

## Volunteer Instructions

1. **THANK YOU** for coming to the VRC today! Please fill out a registration form and proceed as directed to an Interviewer at Station #2.
2. **Interview Area:** Interviewer will take your form, talk with you about your skills, initial your form, and refer you to an agency needing your help. Next take your Referral form to Station #3.
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5. **Identification Area:** You will receive an ID bracelet that will allow you to enter restricted areas during the day(s) written on ID. Proceed to the Mapping area at Station # 6. to receive specific directions and a car sign, if necessary.
6. **Mapping:** You will receive a map with specific directions from the VRC to the volunteer site. You may also be provided a sign for your car window.

Thank you for volunteering!

## Request for Volunteers

(Complete one form for each job description.)

Request # \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_ Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ End Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title of Volunteer Position \_\_\_\_\_  
 Agency Name \_\_\_\_\_ Agency Contact \_\_\_\_\_  
 Agency Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Ext. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Duties \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteers must physically be able to: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number Needed \_\_\_\_\_ Dates/Hours Needed \_\_\_\_\_  
 For this position, volunteers must be \_\_\_\_\_ years of age.

### Skills Needed

(If computerized, select from skills listed on Disaster Volunteer Registration Form)

Job Skill #	Description

Job Skill #	Description

### Follow-up Contacts with Requesting Agency/Clarification of Need

Date	Comments

### Volunteers Referred

Date	Name

Date	Name

Request closed on \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Completed  No placements possible  No longer needed

## Disaster Volunteer Referral

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Referred to (agency/ESF) \_\_\_\_\_ Need # \_\_\_\_\_

Agency contact name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Agency/site address \_\_\_\_\_

Directions to site \_\_\_\_\_

Title/description of volunteer assignment \_\_\_\_\_

Dates & hours volunteer will work \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: Verification of volunteer's credentials is the responsibility of the agency receiving the volunteer.*

VRC Staff Initials: \_\_\_\_\_  Interview  Data Coordination  Safety Brief

## Disaster Volunteer Referral

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Referred to (agency/ESF) \_\_\_\_\_ Need # \_\_\_\_\_

Agency contact name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Agency/site address \_\_\_\_\_

Directions to site \_\_\_\_\_

Title/description of volunteer assignment \_\_\_\_\_

Dates & hours volunteer will work \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: Verification of volunteer's credentials is the responsibility of the agency receiving the volunteer.*

VRC Staff Initials: \_\_\_\_\_  Interview  Data Coordination  Safety Brief

## Safety Training for Volunteers

1. If you will be working outside, dress for the weather. Boots may be helpful, as debris on the ground can be sharp and dangerous.
2. Bring work gloves, sunscreen, hat and any appropriate tools you have. You will be responsible for your tools.
3. Water may be available at your work site, but you are encouraged to bring a personal water container. It is important to drink lots of water while you work.
4. While working, you will have a higher than normal exposure to bacteria. When you take a break, wash thoroughly.
5. The work you will be doing may cause you stress, anxiety, fear or other strong emotions. You are providing a valuable service by volunteering today. Please understand that, by helping, we will not be able to undo the effects of this event. We are each just one person. All we can do is help in our own small ways to assist victims into the recovery process. If you care for one lost animal, find one child's lost favorite toy, or hold the hand of one wheelchair bound senior in a shelter, you will have eased a little of the pain.
6. Do not feel guilty because you are not able to fix everything. Just work your shift, then go home to rest and eat well. Both will help to relieve the stress. Be sure to attend any debriefing that may be conducted at the end of your shift.
7. Older children can help with the disaster recovery work in some areas, but parents must sign a release of liability form for each child under the age of 18. It is recommended that children remain in school, if it is open. Older children can participate with parents on weekends.
8. You may be covered by insurance provided by the county in which you will be working. If you should sustain an injury, you must pay for any treatment required and then submit a claim form and be reimbursed by the insurance company.
9. **Follow carefully any instructions given to you at your job site.**
10. **Please attend any debriefing activity provided at your worksite after your shift.**





## Authorization for \_\_\_\_\_ to Provide Free Services

Client's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, ST Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Client Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Request \_\_\_\_\_

I do hereby release and discharge [Organization Name], its agents, representatives, employees and assigns from any and all liability or claims, now or in the future, which I, or any person claiming through me, may have arising out of any repair or renovation work engaged in by such agents, representatives, employees or assigns on the above described premises.

I understand that the renovation or repair work is to be performed at no charge to me, and that this instrument constitutes a release of the above parties from any liability for negligence, affirmative acts or omissions. I understand that any form of donation by me or my agents given to \_\_\_\_\_ or its agents is in no way to be considered payment of any services performed. Donations are accepted only as a means to help other families in need and will be disbursed as approved by the \_\_\_\_\_ board of directors.

I hereby give permission to \_\_\_\_\_ to use my name, picture or story for the purpose of public relations. I hereby freely release \_\_\_\_\_ from any claim or liability involved with information published or printed for public information.

I have read this release, understand the terms used in it and their legal significance, and have executed it voluntarily.

Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Owner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Spouse

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness







# Additional Resources

More information on general disaster management topics can be found by accessing the following online resources:

HandsOn Disasters

<http://www.handsonnetwork.org/nationalprograms/handsondisasters>

National Service Resource Center

<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/service-activities/disaster-preparedness-and-response>

FEMA National Preparedness Directorate (training and education)

<http://training.fema.gov/>

National Response Framework Resource Center

<http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nrf/>

National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

<http://www.nvoad.org/>

Volunteer Center of Disaster Response Plan

[www.preparenow.org/vcdplan.html](http://www.preparenow.org/vcdplan.html)

Volunteer Florida Emergency Management Publications

<http://www.volunteerflorida.org/emergencymanagement/publications.html>

# Activity Answer Keys

## Activity 1 (page 8)

Identify which phase of a disaster each of the following activities fits in: preparedness, response, recovery, or mitigation.

Preparedness	Making a family communication plan
Mitigation	Building levies
Response	Setting up a shelter for evacuees
Recovery	Mucking out a flooded home
Preparedness	Receiving Red Cross disaster training
Mitigation	Securing bookshelves to the wall
Preparedness	Building a disaster kit for your home
Recovery	Clearing debris off a road
Mitigation	Sandbagging a rising river
Recovery and Mitigation	Rebuilding a flood-damaged school outside of the flood plain

## Activity 2 (page 8)

Put the following steps in order:

- 8 FEMA activates the National Response Plan
- 5 FEMA reviews a request for a presidential declaration of major disaster
- 7 The President grants a presidential major disaster declaration.
- 2 Mayor or county executive requests help from governor
- 3 The governor activates the state emergency response system at the request of the city mayor or county executive.
- 6 FEMA recommends a declaration of major disaster to the Office of the President,
- 1 First Responders address immediate needs.
- 4 The governor requests a presidential declaration of major disaster.

## Alphabet Soup of Disaster Management Answer Key (page 10)

Test your knowledge of disaster terminology and organization. Spell out the disaster-related acronym and then place the number of the definition in the last column.

NIMS	National Incident Management System	11
ICS	Incident Command System	7
NRP	National Response Plan	1
CISM	Critical Incident Stress Management	13
SUV	Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteers	10
EMA	Emergency Management Agency	9
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan	3
EOC	Emergency Operations Center	6
VOAD	Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster	2
LEPC	Local Emergency Planning Committee	12
CCC	Citizen Corps Councils	8
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team	4
MRC	Medical Reserve Corps	5

1. The all hazards plan for domestic incidents that gives a blueprint on how agencies work together to respond
2. Coalition of non-profit groups involved in disaster work
3. The local government plan on how to respond to a disaster
4. A team of trained volunteers who can support first responders if they are delayed or unable to respond by suppressing small fires, conducting light search and rescue and triaging and treating disaster victims
5. Supplemental medical staff prepared to respond to an emergency or public health crisis
6. The office where emergency management agencies convene with their partners in the event of a disaster
7. The management system used to identify objectives for a specific incident and oversee the resources needed to achieve those objectives
8. This community group brings together emergency responders, community and volunteer service organizations, government, and the private sector to develop programs and training for the community around disasters
9. The typical name for local and state government offices response for disaster management
10. Volunteers who are not affiliated with or trained by voluntary organizations prior to disaster
11. A comprehensive, national approach to incident management
12. A community group that is the focal point in communities for information about hazardous substances, emergency planning measures, and health and environmental risks due to hazardous substances
13. Managing and monitoring the compassion fatigue that first responders and disaster workers often experience while working in stressful situation



## Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disaster



Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE** 



**HandsOn**  
NETWORK

GENERATED BY  
**POINTS OF LIGHT**  
INSTITUTE 

**Participant Materials**  
Full-day Classroom Training

