FEMA

Management of Spontaneous Volunteers in Disasters

Student Manual

Federal Emergency Management Agency
Emergency Management Institute

Management of Spontaneous Volunteers in Disasters

Student Manual

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

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Final Assessment ..... Assessment. Error! Bookmark not defined.

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

Visual 1

One of the most crucial activities for an emergency manager during a disaster is to ensure that disaster volunteers are used effectively in their impacted communities. The management of spontaneous volunteers is distinctly separate from the coordination of the traditional voluntary relief organizations and from the management of affiliated volunteers.

The purpose of this course is to introduce the skills and planning considerations that are required to manage large numbers of people who are not affiliated with an experienced relief organization, but who want to help in disasters. These "spontaneous volunteers" are generally well motivated and sincerely want to help, but if their efforts and resources are not coordinated effectively their presence may be counterproductive and an added strain on the disaster area.

This course will introduce some keys to success in managing large numbers of spontaneous volunteers. Its underlying assumption is that much of the volunteer help is indeed needed and that, with basic coordination skills, the volunteer resources can often be put to effective use, making a positive difference in the affected community.

The course will discuss the benefits spontaneous volunteers can bring to relief efforts and the challenges they may bring if not coordinated effectively. The course will also introduce the elements of a sound spontaneous volunteer management plan. Special emphasis is placed the use of a Volunteer Reception Center (VRC)—the backbone of any well-organized spontaneous volunteer management program. A VRC is a place and a process for registering and connecting volunteers to opportunities to help with disaster relief and documenting their work.

As we move through the units today, please consider the importance of completing a Spontaneous Volunteer Management Plan, training stakeholders on the elements of the plan, and including a VRC simulation exercise in your jurisdiction's logistics exercises.

COURSE OVERVIEW

COURSE GOAL

The purpose of this course is to introduce the skills and planning considerations that are required to manage large numbers of people who are not affiliated with an experienced relief organization, but who want to help in disasters.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

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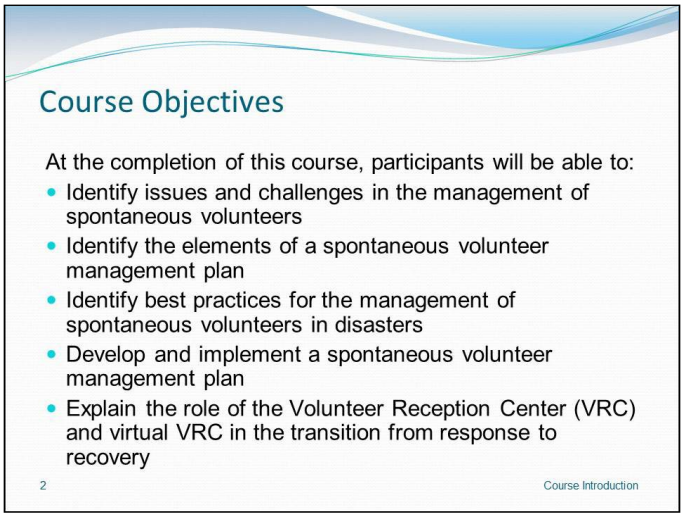
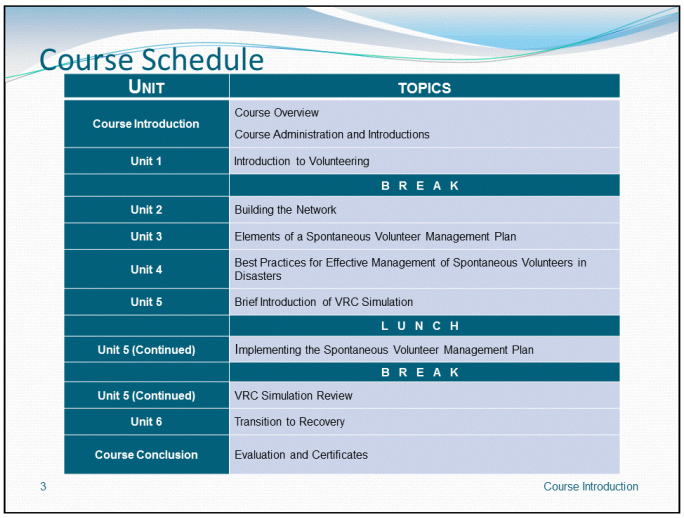


At the completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify issues and challenges in the management of spontaneous volunteers
- Identify the elements of a spontaneous volunteer management plan
- Identify best practices for the management of spontaneous volunteers in disasters
- Develop and implement a spontaneous volunteer management plan
- Explain the role of the Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) and virtual VRC in the transition from response to recovery

SUGGESTED COURSE SCHEDULE

Visual 3



UNIT	TOPICS
Course Introduction	Course Overview Course Administration and Introductions
Unit 1	Introduction to Volunteering
B R E A K	
Unit 2	Building the Network
Unit 3	Elements of a Spontaneous Volunteer Management Plan
Unit 4	Best Practices for Effective Management of Spontaneous Volunteers in Disasters
Unit 5	Brief Introduction of VRC Simulation
L U N C H	
Unit 5 (Continued)	Implementing the Spontaneous Volunteer Management Plan
B R E A K	
Unit 5 (Continued)	VRC Simulation Review
Unit 6	Transition to Recovery
Course Conclusion	Evaluation Certificates

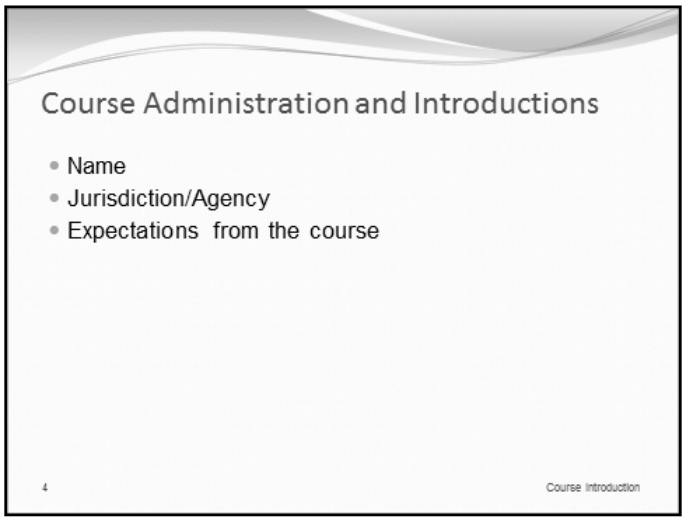
COURSE MATERIALS

The following materials are provided:

- Student Manual for use in the classroom and later reference
- Checklists, forms, and references provided in the Student Manual to supplement course materials

COURSE ADMINISTRATION AND INTRODUCTIONS

Visual 4



This is a chance for you to get to know other participants, as well as the instructors.

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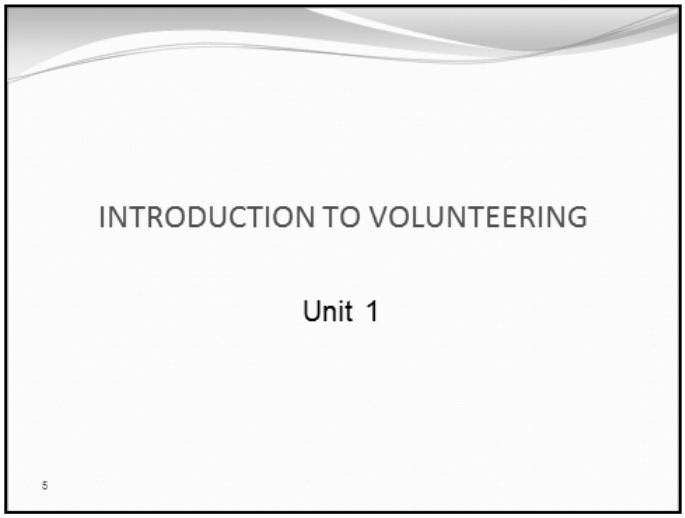
UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO VOLUNTEERING

UNIT INTRODUCTION

Visual 5



The United States has a long and proud history of volunteering unique in the world—a commitment to volunteering that has seen a resurgence since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. The events of 9/11 also illustrated the need for better planning to manage spontaneous volunteers during a disaster so that this valuable resource will not go untapped. It will be worthwhile to look at a brief history of volunteering and emphasize the benefits and challenges of using spontaneous volunteers in a disaster situation.

OBJECTIVES

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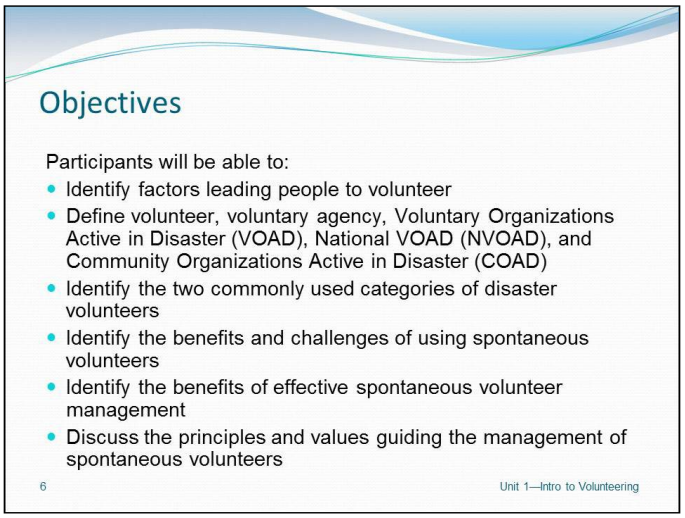


At the completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- Identify factors leading people to volunteer
- Define volunteer, voluntary agency, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), National VOAD (NVOAD), and Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD)
- Identify the two commonly used categories of disaster volunteers
- Identify the benefits and challenges of using spontaneous volunteers
- Identify the benefits of effective spontaneous volunteer management
- Discuss the principles and values guiding the management of spontaneous volunteers

BRIEF HISTORY OF VOLUNTEERING AND DEFINITIONS

VOLUNTEERING…

Visual 7

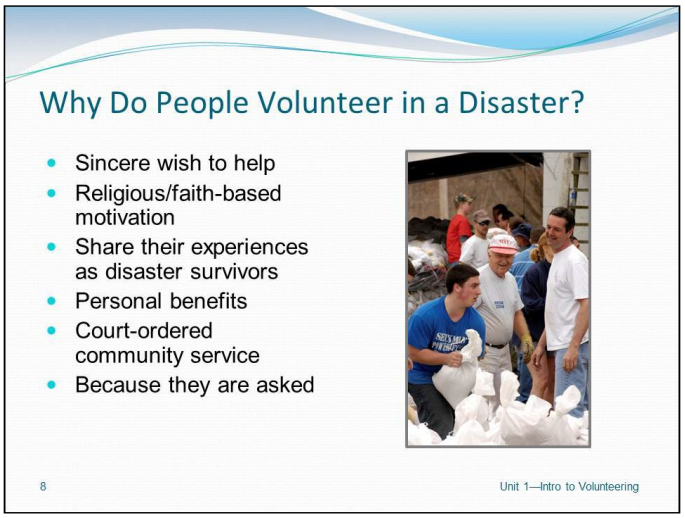
When a disaster strikes, people—our neighbors, friends, relatives—are eager to help in any way they can.

The United States has a long and proud history of volunteering that has grown stronger since the terrorist attacks on 9/11. People volunteer from all walks of life with all types of skill sets. The trend to volunteer is continually on the rise.

Slightly more than 65 million people volunteered in the U.S. during 2005. During the 2007 to 2009 timeframe, average volunteer rates for States ranged from 19% to 44.2%. From 2002 to 2009, the number of American volunteers increased by about 3.6 million persons.

WHY DO PEOPLE VOLUNTEER IN A DISASTER?

Visual 8



There are several factors that lead individuals to volunteer. Some of the main reasons they want to help have been identified:

- They just sincerely want to give back to society, to be part of a cause, or to see a mission accomplished
- Some do it for various religious/faith-based reasons
- Some of them may even be disaster survivors themselves
- Others might be looking for personal benefits, like learning new skills, developing new relationships, networking with people, etc.
- Sometimes people offer to volunteer because of a court-ordered community service requirement
- People volunteer because they are asked

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

Visual 9

Volunteer is an individual who, without remuneration, contributes time and services to assist in the accomplishment of a mission.

Voluntary Agency is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that offers its services on a voluntary basis and/or uses volunteers to provide its services. Many, but not all, voluntary agencies maintain 501(c)(3) status with the IRS.

VOAD (National/State/Regional) is a coalition of voluntary organizations whose members have committed to provide disaster services to their State or region.

Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) is similar in purpose and methods to VOAD, but is sometimes used locally instead of VOAD to promote the inclusion of government and business entities in the coalition.

Faith-based and Community Organizations (FBCOs) are voluntary agencies that often do not yet have a defined disaster role.

Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) is the Nation's State-to-State mutual aid system that, during governor-declared states of emergency, allows States to send personnel, equipment, and commodities to help disaster relief efforts in other States.

INVOLVING VOLUNTEERS – BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

CATEGORIES OF DISASTER VOLUNTEERS

Visual 10

Disaster volunteers can be divided into two broad categories: **Affiliated Volunteers** and **Spontaneous Volunteers.**

Affiliated Volunteers are volunteers who are attached to a recognized voluntary agency that has trained them for disaster response, and has a mechanism in place to manage them in an emergency.

Spontaneous Volunteers are volunteers who can be local or come from outside the impacted area. They have skills and sometimes are trained, but are not currently affiliated with a recognized disaster relief organization.

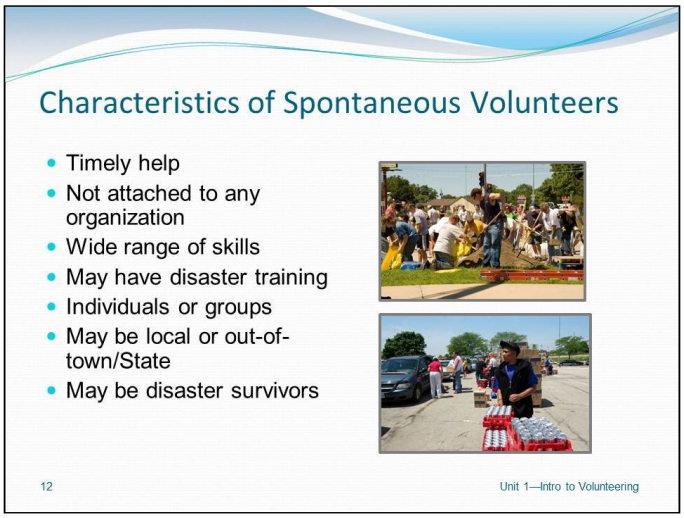
CHARACTERISTICS OF AFFILIATED VOLUNTEERS

Visual 11

Affiliated volunteers are those who are attached to a recognized voluntary agency that has trained them for disaster response and has a management structure in place to use them in an emergency.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS

Visual 12



Spontaneous volunteers are those who volunteer often in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. They are not currently attached to any recognized voluntary relief organization.

They bring a wide range of skills, may be from the affected area, or from outside the area.

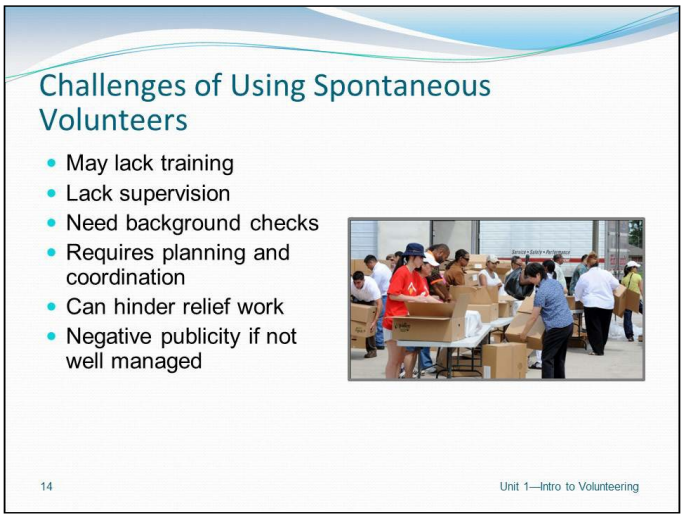
BENEFITS OF USING SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS

Visual 13

- They have proven to be a cost-effective resource during response and short-term recovery operations. In recent disasters, documented hours served by spontaneous volunteers provided communities' entire local share of disaster costs (local match).
- They offer a wide range of expertise and experience, as they come from different walks of life, different cultures, and different places.
- They provide resources that might otherwise be unavailable during a disaster. These might include: foreign-language speakers, heavy equipment operators, radio operators, etc.
- Hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of volunteers will show up to help. Harvesting their passion and skills will build the community's capacity to respond.

CHALLENGES OF USING SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS

Visual 14



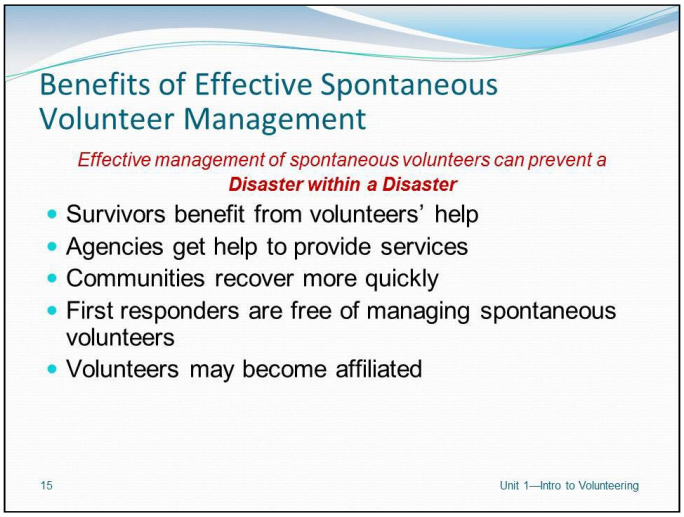
Along with the many benefits of involving spontaneous volunteers, there are also some challenges.

- Some kinds of volunteer work require training or special licenses or certification. Agencies should identify appropriate roles for volunteers in advance and determine how they will be supervised.
- Volunteers referred to work with vulnerable populations (children, elderly, or people with disabilities) will need background checks. Agencies receiving spontaneous volunteers must be prepared to conduct the appropriate screening.
- Volunteer safety, transportation of volunteers into secured areas, and VRC logistics all require planning and coordination among governmental and non-governmental organizations.
- Volunteers, in large numbers and unplanned for, can hinder the relief work by entering the impacted area without the resources they need to sustain themselves. Relief supplies intended for survivors are then needed for volunteers, as well.
- Failure to use spontaneous volunteers could bring negative publicity to local government. Successfully utilizing spontaneous volunteers requires planning by the agencies that will receive them and by the community as a whole.

SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

Visual 15

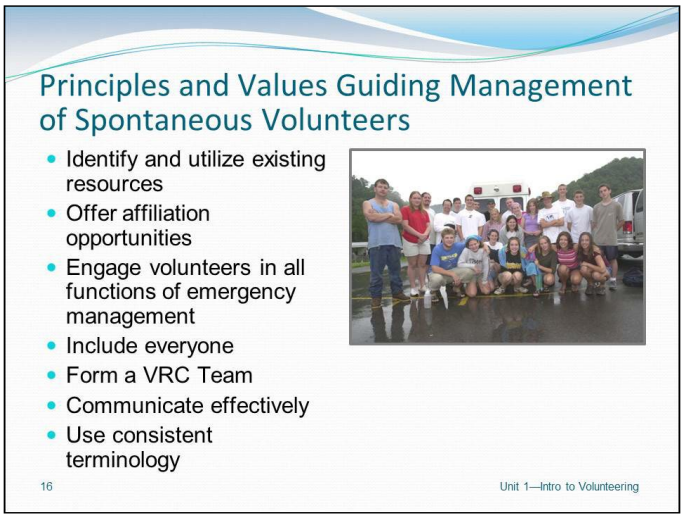


When volunteers are well managed, survivors benefit from their efforts, agencies get the help they need to provide services, and communities recover more quickly.

Well-managed volunteer efforts also allow first responders to focus on tasks that need their attention. Communities and VOADs can also effectively engage and direct citizens as volunteers in future efforts, or recruit them to join their VOAD member organizations.

PRINCIPLES AND VALUES GUIDING MANAGEMENT OF SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS

Visual 16



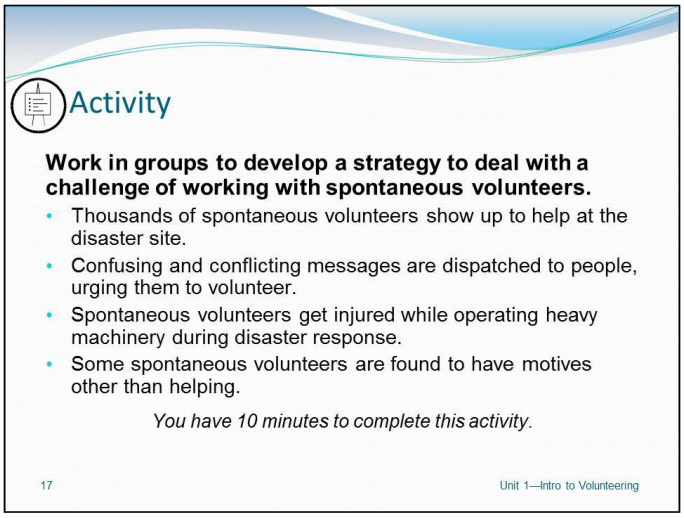
The management of spontaneous volunteers is guided by the following principles and values:

- Identify and utilize all existing resources and organizations to mobilize and involve volunteers effectively. Since everyone has a potential to contribute in times of emergency, volunteering is a valuable part of every healthy community. Local government, private-sector, and non-government organizations all have resources to help manage spontaneous volunteers. When the spontaneous volunteer activity is well managed, it contributes to the healing process of survivors and the entire community.
- Encourage community members to become affiliated with existing disaster preparedness, response, and recovery agencies. Ideally, all volunteers should be affiliated with an established agency/organization, and should be trained for response and recovery activities. However, spontaneous volunteerism is inevitable, and therefore it must be planned for.
- Affiliation leads to the engagement of volunteers in long-term recovery, mitigation, prevention, and preparedness, and equips them to be more effective in response to future disasters.
- Ensure that culture, language, and disability do not become barriers to service opportunities.
- Designate spontaneous volunteer management as a separate function of your Volunteer and Donations Coordination Team (VDCT). Create a VRC team that includes a cross-section of community organizations and resources.
- Develop clear, consistent, and timely communication for effective management of spontaneous volunteers. Using a variety of communication tools and messages can help ensure maximum public education and clarify expectations, thereby minimizing confusion during a disaster.

- Refer to spontaneous volunteers in emergency management using consistent terminology. Spontaneous volunteers are also referred to as convergent, unaffiliated, or unsolicited volunteers. For this course, we will use the term "Spontaneous Volunteers." (We try to avoid the term "unaffiliated," because volunteers may misinterpret its meaning. They believe they are affiliated because they are employees of a particular hospital or business or members of a church.)

GROUP ACTIVITY: STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH CHALLENGES OF WORKING WITH SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS

Visual 17



UNIT SUMMARY

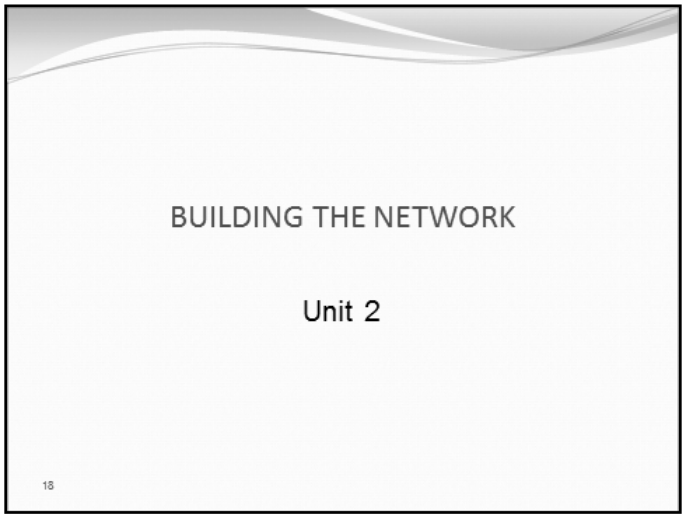
You should now be able to:

- Identify factors leading people to volunteer
- Define volunteer, voluntary agency, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), National VOAD (NVOAD), and Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD)
- Identify the two commonly used categories of disaster volunteers
- Identify the benefits and challenges of using spontaneous volunteers
- Identify the benefits of effective spontaneous volunteer management
- Discuss the principles and values guiding the management of spontaneous volunteers

UNIT 2: BUILDING THE NETWORK

UNIT INTRODUCTION

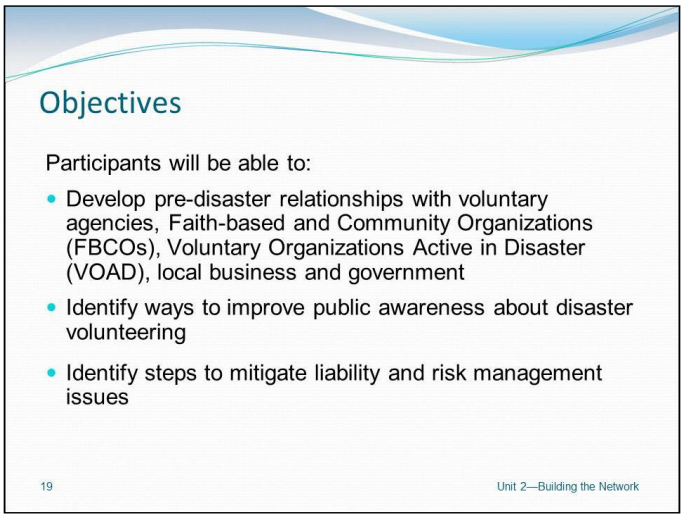
Visual 18



Planning to utilize and manage the spontaneous volunteers in a disaster can help emergency managers perform better when responding to a disaster. Let us start with planning for spontaneous volunteer management by building an effective network of government and non-governmental organizations.

OBJECTIVES

Visual 19



At the completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- Develop pre-disaster relationships with voluntary agencies, Faith-based and Community Organizations (FBCOs), Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), local business and government
- Identify ways to improve public awareness about disaster volunteering
- Identify steps to mitigate liability and risk management issues

EFFECTIVE TOOLS FOR BUILDING THE NETWORK

PRE-DISASTER RELATIONSHIPS WITH VOLUNTARY AGENCIES, FBCOS, AND VOAD

Visual 20

- The "Four Cs" of the VOAD movement—communication, cooperation, coordination, and collaboration—build on one another and are the hallmark of all highly successful relationships among government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Develop a plan to communicate with voluntary agencies, faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs), and the VOAD/COAD coalition, if any, in the area to address their volunteer needs prior to a disaster. This will help eliminate some of the problems associated with the management of spontaneous volunteers during an emergency.
- Establish cooperative agreements with private and public agencies. Many agencies have resources that can be made available during disasters. These could include a facility in which to set up the Volunteer Reception Center; management and/or staffing of a VRC; and equipment and supplies, such as furniture, computer equipment, office supplies, etc. Use written Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) to establish inter-agency agreements. Written agreements help to clarify roles and expectations and can minimize misunderstanding during response and recovery.

  A mutual aid system can be set up to acquire resources when your own have been exhausted. A mutual aid system is a pre-established network to facilitate the sharing of personnel and other resources needed during disaster response.

- Develop interagency collaboration for shared decision-making; sharing resources, tasks, and information; dealing with differences among agencies' terminology, experiences, and priorities; and respect for others' ways of doing things. Interagency collaboration benefits the community by eliminating duplication of services, expanding resource availability, and enhancing problem solving.

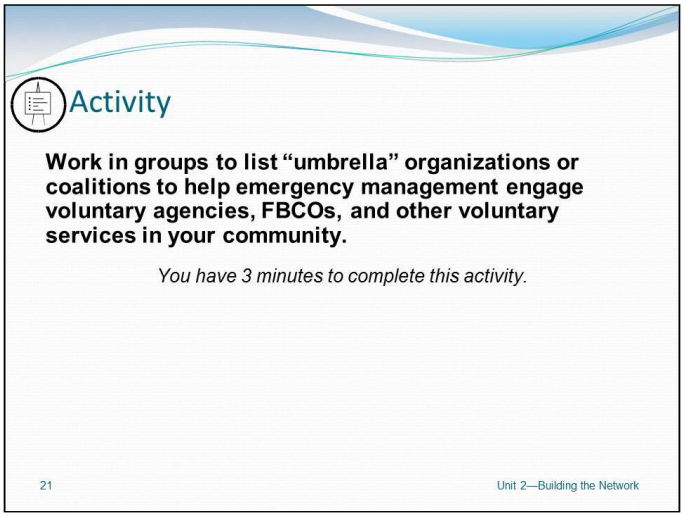
  A good way for county emergency managers to begin connecting with community voluntary agencies is through VOAD, if one exists in the region.

- Dynamic partnerships can also be created with Citizen Corps Councils, AmeriCorps, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), and Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) programs, as well as volunteer connector organizations.

  Maintain working relationships with local volunteer connector organizations, since these keep a large database of local candidates seeking volunteer opportunities and many also provide volunteer management training.

ACTIVITY: IDENTIFY VOLUNTARY AGENCIES, FBCOS, AND OTHER VOLUNTARY SERVICES

Visual 21



List community umbrella organizations and other resources to identify voluntary agencies, FBCOs, and other voluntary services in your community.

1.

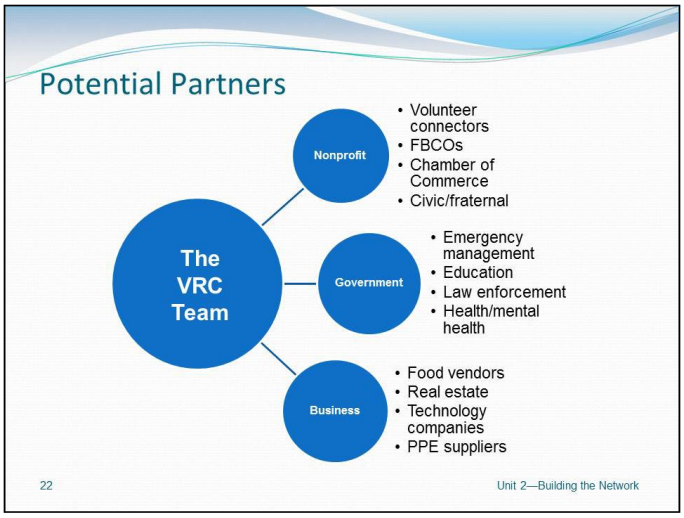
2.

3.

4.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Visual 22



Non-profit

Government

Business

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE MEDIA AND PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Visual 23

Planned media and public awareness campaigns can go a long way to avoid a disaster within a disaster by encouraging people to become trained by and to affiliate with recognized disaster relief organizations.

- Identify who is the target audience – be aware of the characteristics of the targeted population
- Use a variety of media to reach a wider range of population – websites, speakers, briefings, newsletters, listservs, social media, etc.

  During the killer storms of April 27, 2011, in Birmingham, AL, social media changed the way people use and spread information and also how they get involved with recovery efforts. Read the full story at http://blog.al.com/bblalock/2011/05/post_2.html

The New York Daily News of April 30, 2011, carried a story with the headline, "Volunteers Rush to Help Storm-Torn Towns in South as Death Toll Climbs."

- **DEVELOP STANDARD MESSAGES TO USE BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER A DISASTER: PRE-SCRIPTED PRESS RELEASES READY TO BE RELEASED; TALKING POINTS FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TO USE WITH THE MEDIA**
- Develop media outreach strategy to reach a diverse population for whom culture, language, and/or disability may be a barrier to getting the information

SPECIAL ISSUES

WAYS TO MITIGATE LIABILITY AND RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Visual 24

While it is impossible to entirely prevent legal action against the jurisdiction or the agency operating the VRC, proper management practices will minimize legal problems related to safety, risk, and liability that might arise when dealing with spontaneous volunteers during a disaster. Therefore, it is very important to take steps to promote volunteer safety and minimize risks.

- Research State laws that affect utilization of spontaneous volunteers. For example, Good Samaritan Laws provide limited immunity to spontaneous volunteers
- Encourage agencies and organizations receiving spontaneous volunteers to clarify their liability insurance protection limits
- Identify procedures to screen and register all spontaneous volunteers
- Provide orientation/training to all volunteers. Ensure that volunteers acknowledge the safety training they received by signing an attendance record
- Follow legislation that mandates the training and certification that volunteers need to perform a certain task (like heavy equipment handling, CPR, etc.)
- Provide clearly defined job descriptions and standard operating procedures (SOPs). The job descriptions should clearly state the limits of their authority (i.e., what they can do and what they cannot do without specific authorization)
- Ensure that documentation of hours worked and of the specific types of work done by volunteers is maintained. These data can be used by county/State officials for their match to received Federal funds from FEMA if properly documented and appropriate data are used

UNIT SUMMARY

You should now be able to:

- Develop pre-disaster relationships with voluntary agencies, Faith-based and Community Organizations (FBCOs), Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), local business and government
- Identify ways to improve public awareness about disaster volunteering
- Identify steps to mitigate liability and risk management issues

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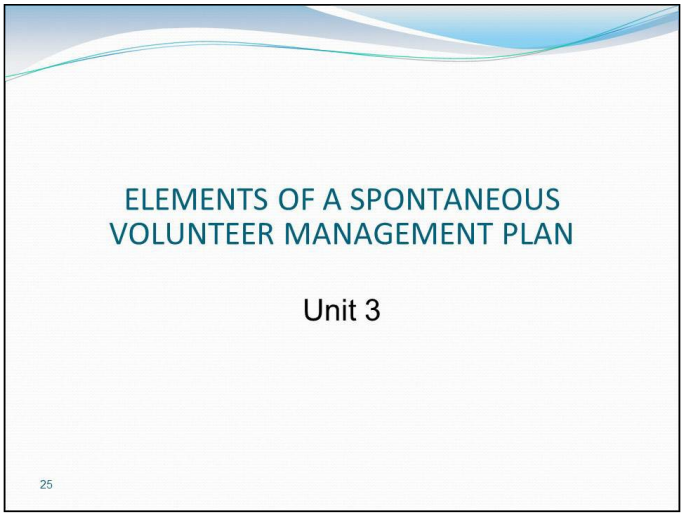
UNIT 3: ELEMENTS OF A SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PLAN

UNIT INTRODUCTION

Visual 25

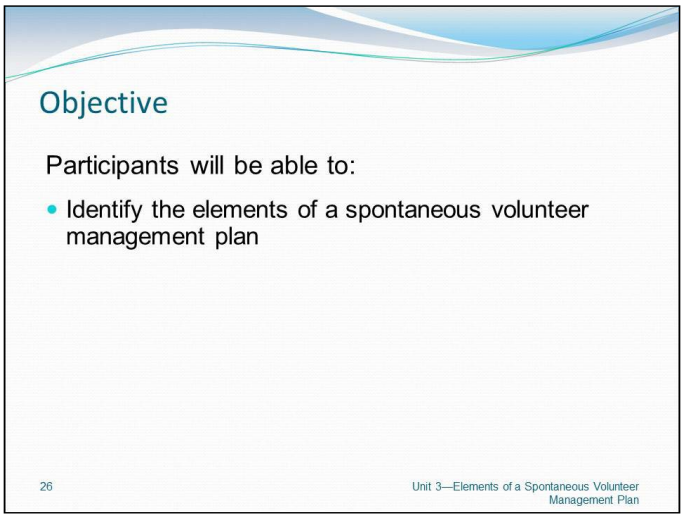


Many jurisdictions have experienced disasters that were followed almost immediately by an influx of volunteers whose intent was to help the impacted community. This arrival of hundreds—or thousands—of spontaneous volunteers can be mobilized to protect property from further damage, clear debris, and even save lives, IF you have a plan in place for managing them.

The difference between a "mob" and a "cadre" of spontaneous volunteers is a jurisdiction with a plan and a community prepared to train and supervise eager and compassionate volunteers.

OBJECTIVE

Visual 26



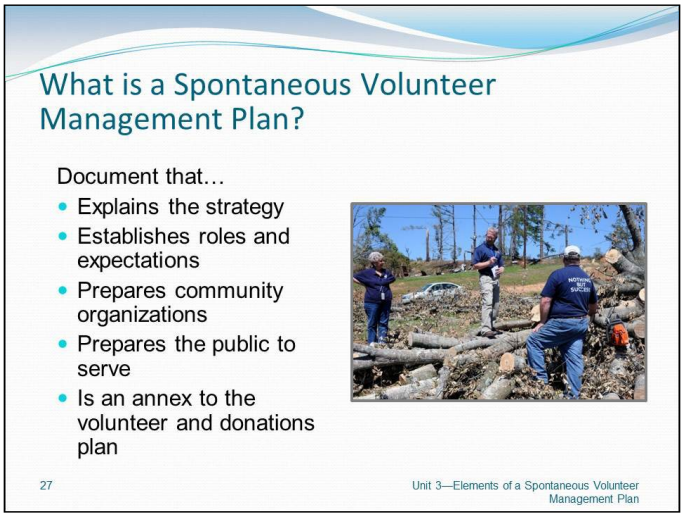
At the completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- Identify the elements of a spontaneous volunteer management plan

DEVELOPING A SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR YOUR JURISDICTION

WHAT IS A SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PLAN?

Visual 27



This document:

- Spells out the community's strategy for managing spontaneous volunteers
- Prepares the community to effectively utilize spontaneous volunteers
- Brings together government and non-governmental entities and establishes roles and expectations for each
- Prepares the public to serve in the most helpful ways
- Is an annex to the broader volunteer and donations management plan

WHAT SHOULD A JURISDICTION'S SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PLAN INCLUDE?

Visual 28

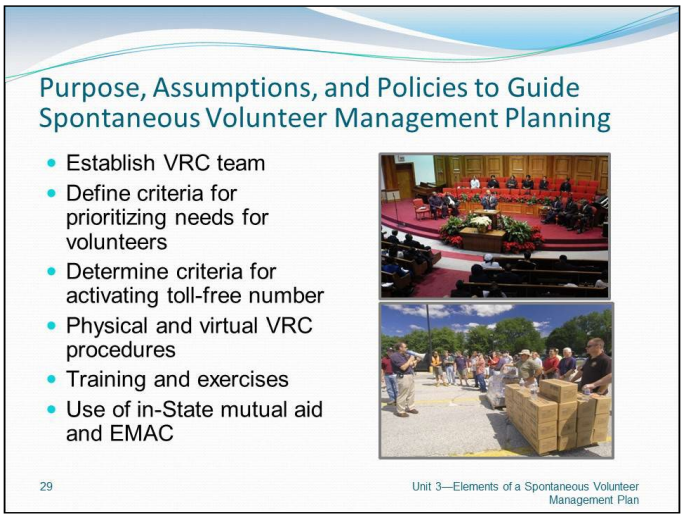
A spontaneous volunteer management plan should:

- Include the purpose, assumptions, and policies to guide the management of spontaneous volunteers
- Guide community organizations to utilize spontaneous volunteers in a disaster
- Include pre-disaster public education strategies
- Prepare organizations to activate and operate a VRC
- Include post-disaster public messaging strategies
- Include a detailed VRC operations plan

Let us now look at each of these in detail.

PURPOSE, ASSUMPTIONS, AND POLICIES TO GUIDE SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Visual 29

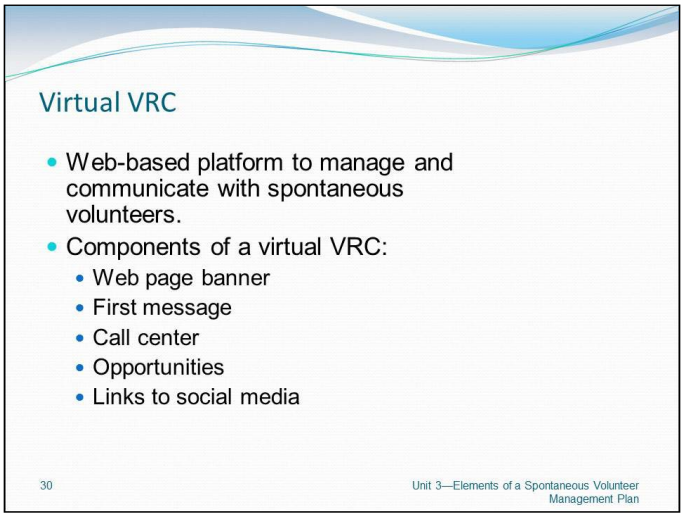


This section of the spontaneous volunteer management plan should explain the purpose of the plan, the concept of operations, planning assumptions, and risk management policies that guide the development of the plan. No single organization or department of government can successfully manage spontaneous disaster volunteers without support and interaction from other community entities. The plan should:

- Describe the relationships between the emergency management agency, the organization(s) designated to manage spontaneous volunteers and other community stakeholders, and explain who will be responsible for all associated costs. It is important to engage other organizations and county government departments to serve on the VRC team. They may not be directly involved in VRC operations but may have useful resources or expertise.
- Determine the criteria for whether/when to activate a toll-free number.
- Determine criteria for opening a physical VRC.
- Include whether and how a virtual VRC (online registration system for connecting volunteers with opportunities to serve) will be used in addition to a physical VRC. Decide on basic data needed for volunteer registration, such as driver's license number, availability, and skill sets, and specify whether and how background checks will be conducted.
- Define the criteria for prioritizing requests for volunteers.
- Include training and exercises on managing spontaneous volunteers. Work with community partners and local emergency management agencies to expand disaster exercises to include management of spontaneous volunteers.
- Include how in-State mutual aid and the Emergency Management Assistance Compact might be used to augment VRC management.

VIRTUAL VRC

Visual 30



In today's technological world, virtual Volunteer Reception Centers can be very useful in managing and communicating with spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers.

A virtual Volunteer Reception Center—in other words, a web-based platform that allows volunteers to register—communicates a consistent message to those interested in volunteering, displays current opportunities to volunteer related to the disaster, and has a mechanism to communicate with the volunteers who register.

Steps to create a virtual Volunteer Reception Center include creating a banner, writing the first message, coordinating with a local call center, identifying and posting opportunities, and creating links to social media.

GUIDANCE FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

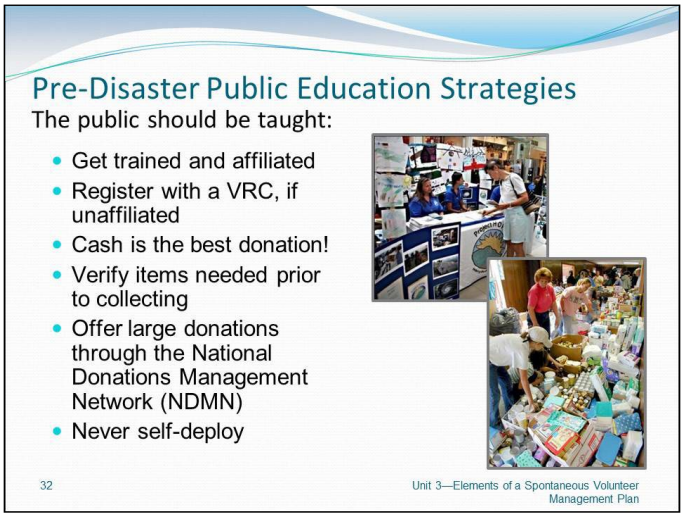
Visual 31

The plan should guide community organizations as they prepare in advance to utilize spontaneous volunteers in a disaster. It should:

- Help organizations anticipate the disaster-related needs of their clients and the greater community
- Help them identify the specific needs they might be asked to meet in a disaster
- Help them identify appropriate roles for volunteers to augment agency staffing
- Write job descriptions for those volunteer roles
- Encourage them to consider in advance the risks and liability of using volunteers in the proposed roles

PRE-DISASTER PUBLIC EDUCATION STRATEGIES

Visual 32

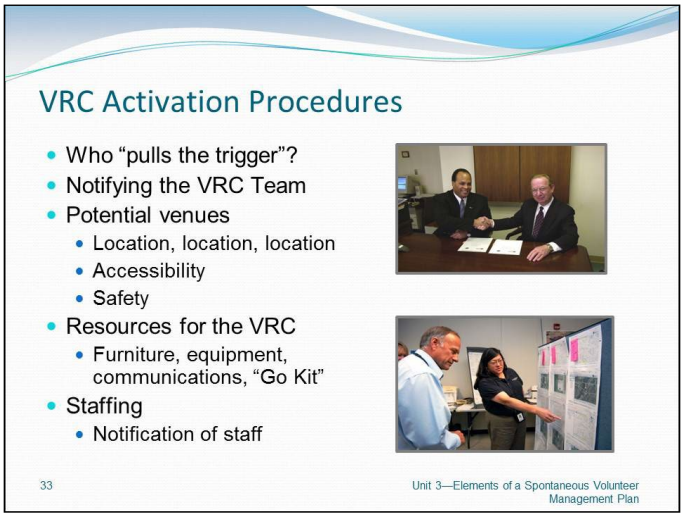


The plan should detail how the public will be educated in advance about the importance of:

- Getting trained and affiliated with a relief organization prior to a disaster
- Offering their help through the Volunteer Reception Center, if unaffiliated
- Not self-deploying to the disaster site. Self-deploying volunteers can put themselves and others in harm's way and can hamper relief efforts
- Verifying what items are and are not needed PRIOR to collecting goods for disaster relief
- Using the National Donations Management Network (NDMN)

VRC ACTIVATION PROCEDURES

Visual 33



When a disaster strikes, hundreds or thousands of people come forward with all good intentions to help those who have been affected by the disaster. A Volunteer Reception Center is a means to organize the voluntary response. A VRC is a process for registering spontaneous volunteers and matching their skills to agencies needing assistance in response to a disaster.

The Plan should:

- Determine who "pulls the trigger"
- Explain how the VRC team will be notified
- List the criteria for site selection
  - Size adequate for the number of volunteers responding
  - Easily accessible from major thoroughfares
  - Safety—the VRC should not be co-located with a donations warehouse with large truck traffic
- List the resources needed at a VRC
- Provide an overview of VRC staffing

The plan should include guidance to prepare one or more organizations to activate and operate a Volunteer Reception Center. It should:

- Establish expectations of all partners via Memorandums of Understanding (MOU)
- Guide them in building a VRC Team consisting of decision makers from a variety of local organizations. Consider representatives from volunteer centers, local governments, private sector, media, etc., in the VRC Team. Some examples include the representatives of the county emergency management agency, the agency tasked with operating the VRC, the facility manager for the selected venue, a representative of the local information and referral service (2-1-1 or other), an organization that will provide transportation to the volunteers, law enforcement, a health/mental health provider, and a local food vendor to provide/donate meals for VRC staff.
- Identify how the VRC Team will be equipped with the resources needed for success

- Include a Volunteer Reception Center "Go Kit" to include all office supplies, forms, checklists, maps, etc. Also, identify any additional resources that might be required during the response and recovery operations, such as special equipment, tables, chairs, etc.
- Create a VRC "Go Kit" contents list and identify who is responsible for assembling it

♦ Identify potential sites to set up the Volunteer Reception Center and develop contingency plans in the event that pre-identified sites are unavailable

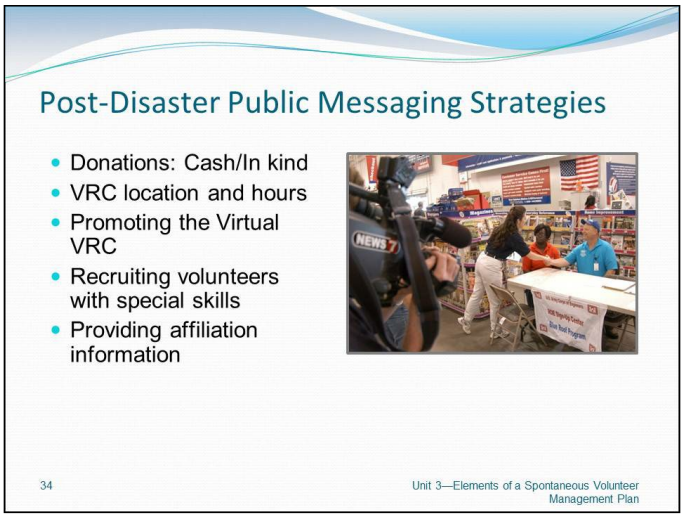
- Include special considerations while selecting a site, such as the provision of adequate space for all VRC functions, availability of parking, accessibility for functional needs persons, proximity to the affected area, etc.
- Determine what organization is responsible for obtaining the site and paying incurred costs (such as rent, maintenance, damages, and utilities) following a disaster

♦ Identify necessary procedures to get the VRC up and running

- These include procedures for staffing the VRC and orientation, placement, supervision, and evaluation of the VRC staff

POST-DISASTER PUBLIC MESSAGING STRATEGIES

Visual 34



The plan should include post-disaster public messaging strategies to be used during a VRC activation, including:

♦ How to let the public know the VRC location and hours of operation

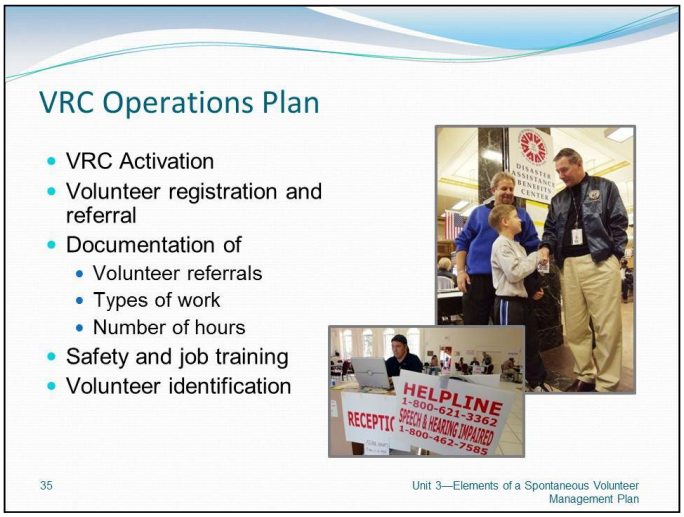
♦ How to recruit volunteers with special skills to meet specific needs

♦ How to inform the public about what donations are and are not needed

♦ How and where to affiliate with an organization in order to continue serving in the recovery phase and in future disasters

VRC OPERATIONS PLAN

Visual 35



The plan should include a detailed VRC operations plan that explains how:

- The VRC is activated
- Volunteers are registered and referred to opportunities
- Referrals, activities of volunteers, and volunteer hours are documented. Documentation of volunteer service is critical to ensure the jurisdiction receives maximum financial benefits. The types of work eligible for reimbursement by FEMA and the dollar value of each type of work may be interpreted differently from one disaster to another. Volunteer managers should work closely with the jurisdiction's emergency management agency and budget department to ensure that all required documentation is maintained, and that it is presented in a usable format.
- Safety and job training are provided to spontaneous volunteers. Training promotes volunteer safety. Documentation of training helps to manage liability.

VRC OPERATIONS PLAN (CONTD.)

Visual 36

- Volunteers are provided identification and (sometimes) transported to work sites. The agency tasked with operating a VRC should discuss the various purposes for issuing volunteer identification to determine the most efficient and cost-effective type of identification to use
- The VRC communicates with the jurisdiction's Public Information Officer to ensure timely, consistent information to the public
- Other community stakeholders (law enforcement, mental health, clergy, transportation specialists, etc.) are integrated into the VRC operations to provide security, behavioral/spiritual support, transportation of volunteers into secure areas, and other services
- The VRC is "right-sized" as needed, then demobilized
- Databases and other records of volunteers' experience, skills, and contact information are maintained
- Operating costs are aggregated and submitted for reimbursement (communication between the VRC and the county budget department is necessary to establish deadline for requesting reimbursement of VRC expenses)
- Volunteers are thanked and publicly recognized for supporting relief operations

UNIT SUMMARY

In this unit, we discussed the elements of a spontaneous volunteer management plan.

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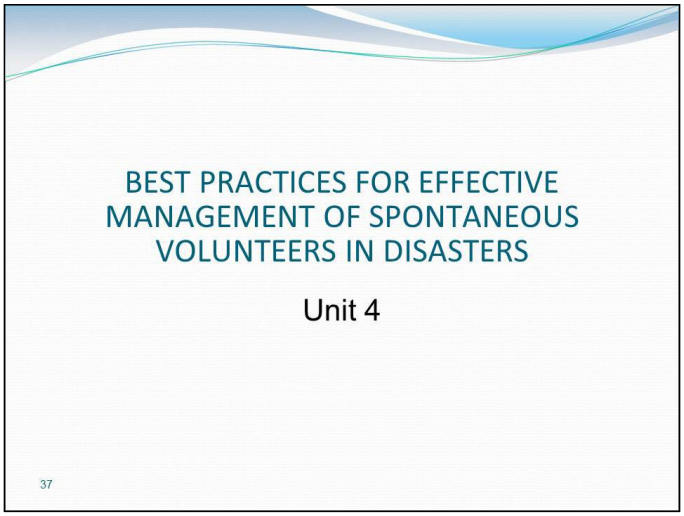
UNIT 4: BEST PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS IN DISASTERS

UNIT INTRODUCTION

Visual 37



The purpose of this session is to bring out best practices to manage spontaneous volunteers effectively in disasters.

DISCUSSION: BEST PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS IN DISASTERS

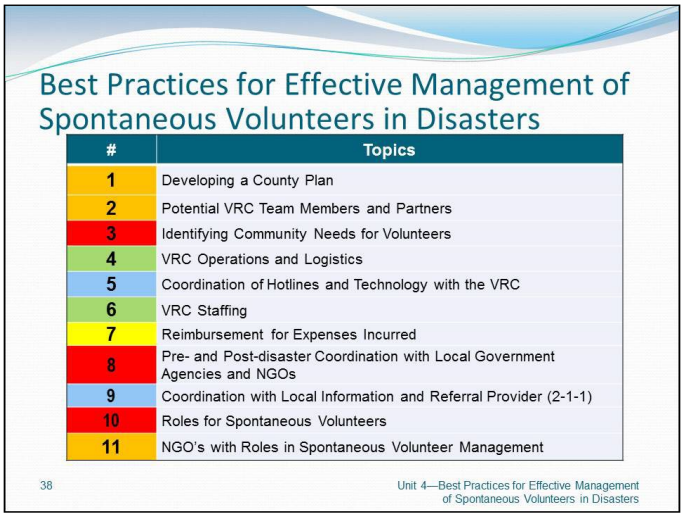
Disasters often demand the undivided attention of the affected area's officials, and that of the world. Some of the recent disasters underscored the need to identify some tested strategies for the effective management of spontaneous volunteers.

This discussion will present action points with the accompanying best practices. The discussion will help you develop necessary procedures to facilitate the management of spontaneous volunteers.

The recommendations made during the discussion will contribute to your success in managing spontaneous volunteers effectively in your jurisdiction. Some of you may have already included these suggestions in your plan for the management of spontaneous volunteers.

Please discuss these ideas in your groups and explain why you have/would implement these or why would they not work in your jurisdiction.

Visual 38



1. Developing a County Plan

Contributor	Suggestions
Margaret Melsh Principal Melsh Consulting Services	♦ Develop a solid relationship and understanding between the local emergency management agency and the agency being considered to manage a VRC ♦ Reinforce the relationships and understanding between the local emergency management agency and the agency being considered to manage a VRC, if at all possible, by some kind of written agreement that defines each organization's roles and responsibilities
Brooke Fussell Community Preparedness and Response Coordinator The Governor's Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives	♦ Every county that receives Citizen Corps or other Community Preparedness funds from the State is mandated to have a Volunteer Coordinating Agency (VCA) ♦ The designated VCA manages spontaneous volunteers and donations in its county

1. Developing a County Plan

Contributor	Suggestions
Bonnie Nahas Disaster Services Coordinator Volunteer Prince William	♦ Be sure to include [in the planning process] non-government organizations and non-profits who have missions outside of disaster but who may be called upon for relief efforts. They already use volunteers, have position descriptions, and volunteer management expertise. If they are called upon, they may take in spontaneous volunteers, train them, and mentor them. You don't want to wait until you need these folks to ask if they will serve or to figure out what their capabilities are ♦ The disaster does not know jurisdictional boundaries. Volunteer Prince William is written into the emergency operations plans of two cities and the county. We may very well use a city facility to operate a VRC, even if the main event is within the county, but outside the city limits. We will not open three separate VRCs for an event affecting all three jurisdictions. Talk ahead of time about how to handle such issues
Carolyn Kincaid Executive Director Volunteer Center of the Virginia Peninsula	♦ With increased concern about terrorism, we now plan to operate a VRC during response, as needed, rather than only in short-term recovery ♦ In our area (Peninsula on East Coast with potential for bio-hazard issues), we now have an understanding with local health officials that we would respond ASAP to medically related disasters that require quick dispensing of medication to save lives. They have adopted the VRC model for working with medical volunteers who show up unannounced to assist ♦ Recognizing that an influx of spontaneous volunteers can cause additional problems for the impacted community, we continue to emphasize and define the VRC role as MANAGEMENT of spontaneous volunteers when they arrive. We do not RECRUIT them, except by specific skill as requested by the Incident Command or a partner organization with specific needs

Unit 4—Best Practices for Effective Management of Spontaneous Volunteers in Disasters

1. Developing a County Plan

Contributor	Suggestions
Merrilee White Emergency Management Consultant Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service (Volunteer Florida)	♦ Some department of county government should be ultimately responsible for the management of spontaneous volunteers ♦ Even if a county has entered into agreement with an NGO to operate the VRC, the responsible county entity can provide effective support because they often have better access to the resources of other county departments ♦ The plan must clearly define the purpose and meaning of the identification badge or wristband provided to spontaneous volunteers ♦ "Credentials" worn by volunteers can elicit expectations about skills, experience, insurance, or liability that may not be based in fact or reality. All stakeholders, including the volunteers, must understand the purpose and limitations that the identification carries

2. Potential VRC Team Members and Partners

Contributor	Suggestions
Brooke Fussell Community Preparedness and Response Coordinator The Governor's Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives	♦ Alabama VOAD, HandsOn, local houses of worship, American Red Cross, United Way, The Salvation Army, Lutheran Social Services, United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), and local environmental groups all play key roles in Alabama's spontaneous volunteer management

2. **Potential VRC Team Members and Partners**

Contributor	Suggestions
Dante Gliniecki Statewide Volunteer Coordinator State of Missouri State Emergency Management Agency	♦ The State of Missouri, Missouri Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (MOVOAD), the Governor's Faith-based and Community Service Partnership for Disaster Recovery (The Partnership), and the State Emergency Management Agency have collaborated with the Missouri United Methodist Disaster Response Team (MUMDRT) and with the AmeriCorps Emergency Response Team in St. Louis (ERT) to develop the capacity to manage unaffiliated volunteers ♦ MUMDRT's statewide presence, with its numerous congregations and solid commitment to disaster relief, and the ERT's fast moving, well-trained, and equipped response teams, allow Missouri to establish Volunteer Reception Centers when and where needed ♦ This system has been tested over and over again in Missouri. VRCs have been established in rural areas as well as in urban environments. The system has worked in floods, tornadoes, ice storms, and other disasters. The Missouri Model represents an inspiring collaboration of faith-based, private sector, public service, and government organizations
Merrilee White Emergency Management Consultant Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service (Volunteer Florida)	♦ All organizations with roles in spontaneous volunteer management should have agency continuity plans to ensure they survive the disaster ♦ The county emergency management agency can provide continuity planning resources

3. Identifying Community Needs for Volunteers

Contributor	Suggestions
Margaret Melsh Principal Melsh Consulting Services	♦ As early as you can, work proactively and persistently to find out what the needs are in the impacted community and where the volunteer opportunities are ♦ If you can't get through to local service agencies by phone, e-mail, or Twitter, be prepared to put on your roller skates or send some volunteers out to do this for you
Josh Corlew Emergency Preparedness Manager HandsOn Nashville	♦ Need identification was our biggest bottleneck initially. Because of the widespread damage, getting confirmation from the city about where volunteers were needed was very slow. Having a way to self-identify needs became instrumental in our response ♦ One thing that we wished we had put in place prior to the flood was a system through which individuals could report their needs, the need could be verified, then passed to us for project creation. I recommend partnering with another agency, such as 2-1-1, that has call center capabilities to set up the intake portion of this system
Kellie Bentz Director of Disaster Services HandsOn Network & Points of Light Institute	♦ It is critical to build the relationships PRIOR to the storm with organizations that may need spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers (SUVs) during the immediate aftermath, or at least have a good network. In LA, we have continually invited VOAD partners to participate in VRC exercises so everyone is aware and understands the model

4. VRC Operations and Logistics

Contributor	Suggestions
Bonnie Nahas Disaster Services Coordinator Volunteer Prince William	♦ We have an MOU with our county Park Authority to use recreation centers ♦ Look at libraries and community centers as well ♦ Remember, the folks in your Office of Economic Development generally know where empty storefronts and warehouses are and how to get in touch with the property managers!

4. VRC Operations and Logistics

Contributor	Suggestions
Brooke Fussell Community Preparedness and Response Coordinator The Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives	♦ Physical Volunteer Staging Areas have ranged from a card table with posters and a small amount of office supplies for documentation to large facilities capable of registering, briefing, training, credentialing, documenting, and deploying thousands of volunteers per day
Matthew A. Lyttle Emergency Response Program Manager Volunteer Fairfax	♦ In a Volunteer Reception Center, minimize the number of functions that must take place at each station. By separating out tasks, you give the VRC staff the ability to master one particular job ♦ Also, having spontaneous volunteers walk from station to station helps them to better understand the purpose of the VRC and how they are being processed. When a station is responsible for too many steps, it can cause delays and mistakes that will affect the flow of the entire VRC ♦ You can never have too much signage! Volunteers will have more questions than you can possibly imagine, so the more information you can post on signs for them to read themselves, the better
Matthew A. Lyttle Emergency Response Program Manager Volunteer Fairfax	♦ When practicing VRC operations, be sure to exercise the setup and demobilization of the VRC, as you will find just as many options for streamlining there as you will in the actual VRC operations ♦ Provide spontaneous volunteers with a "passport" that allows them to see how far along in the process they are. This also serves as proof that they visited every station in the right order
Adraine McKell Executive Director Volunteer Manatee	♦ The mapping station at a VRC is critical. And it's a great "job" for a local person who is familiar with the area ♦ Plan ahead of time for supplies to support volunteers. Water and food for survivors come in truckloads, but often aren't suitable for volunteers on the go (i.e., bottled water in 12-oz. bottles rather than gallons)

4. VRC Operations and Logistics

Contributor	Suggestions
Kellie Bentz Director of Disaster Services HandsOn Network & Points of Light Institute	♦ The VRC or VMC is not the only solution to managing or communicating with volunteers, but merely one tool/model to help manage SUVs ♦ In Gustav and Ike, while these were major disasters, we decided NOT to do a physical, in-person Volunteer Reception Center, but instead stood up a virtual volunteer center. After some revision, this proved to be even MORE effective in the recent Gulf oil spill
Josh Corlew Emergency Preparedness Manager HandsOn Nashville	♦ For projects that will be organized by the VRC, but will take place out in the community, establish a large team (50–100) of trained Volunteer Leaders who can be mobilized to lead volunteer disaster relief projects on a moment's notice in time of disaster

5. Coordination of Hotlines and Technology with the VRC

Contributor	Suggestions
Lee Foster, M.S. Director of Resource and Disaster Management HandsOn Central Ohio	♦ HandsOn Central Ohio had a great experience using Google during H1N1 [swine flu epidemic]. We created a Google Form (using Google Docs) to create an online registration form for potential volunteers. Based on the information collected, we contacted the volunteers to bring them in for Clinic orientation and then had sign-up sheets for the various upcoming H1N1 clinics that needed volunteers. This form worked great; we placed a button on our homepage that linked visitors directly to the Google Form. Once the volunteers completed the form, the data appeared automatically in a spreadsheet on the back-end for us to see the potential volunteers ♦ We went with Google Apps because we needed something we could manipulate and have control over the fields. Had the need come along, we could have shared the back-end spreadsheet with anyone who wanted it (EMA, Health, MRC, etc.)

5. Coordination of Hotlines and Technology with the VRC

Contributor	Suggestions
Merrilee White Emergency Management Consultant Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service (Volunteer Florida)	♦ Somewhere in the middle of the response to Hurricane Charley, we began using a web-based volunteer registration system in conjunction with our Volunteer and Donations Hotline. While we never actually used any of the registered out-of-State volunteers during the response phase, consistent messaging via the two systems effectively met the most urgent need at the time, which was to prevent an influx of spontaneous volunteers, for whom counties had no means of providing basic support

6. **VRC Staffing**

Contributor	Suggestions
Josh Corlew Emergency Preparedness Manager HandsOn Nashville	♦ Our staff was heavily taxed during the 2010 flood, so plans for support and redundancy are being made for future events, including cross-training other staff members on disaster preparedness plans, in the event that the person responsible is affected or unavailable
Brooke Fussell Community Preparedness and Response Coordinator The Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives	♦ We utilize the mutual aid system. The county affected by the disaster that does not have the ability to set up a Volunteer Staging Area (VSA) will call in teams from around the State to bring in trained volunteers, set up a VSA, and train personnel in their county
Bonnie Nahas Disaster Services Coordinator Volunteer Prince William	♦ Train some volunteers from other agencies at your next VRC training/practice drill ♦ Make sure they have an understanding of how it works and why it is needed. These folks generally already have the volunteer management skills that make them good at matching volunteers to posted jobs ♦ Try to get some of them to sign up as VRC volunteers if they can be spared from their regular volunteer duties
Sue Carter Kahl (former) Executive Director Volunteer San Diego	♦ The San Diego fires were the first time that we activated our volunteer Disaster Cadre. We didn't operate a physical VRC. We managed volunteers virtually over the phone or online. This made the most sense for that type of incident. Disaster Cadre volunteers assisted with the volunteer response and our internal operations

7. Reimbursement for Expenses Incurred

Contributor	Suggestions
Sue Carter Kahl (former) Executive Director Volunteer San Diego	♦ It would be helpful for organizations managing spontaneous volunteers to know what types of agreements and forms need to be used and what documentation should be maintained during the incident to be eligible for reimbursement from government sources
Merrilee White Emergency Management Consultant Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service (Volunteer Florida)	♦ After four back-to-back hurricanes, many Florida volunteer centers were severely impacted by the unexpected and unbudgeted costs of overtime, supplies, fuel, and food for VRC staff ♦ An MOU is needed between county government and the entity designated to operate the VRC that clearly spells out the procedures for requesting reimbursement
Meg Storer Communications and Development Manager 2-1-1 San Diego	♦ 2-1-1 San Diego has a contract with the county office of emergency services. We are reimbursed by FEMA through the county

8. Pre- and Post-disaster Coordination with Local Government Agencies and NGOs

Contributor	Suggestions
Bonnie Nahas Disaster Services Coordinator Volunteer Prince William	♦ Work in advance with organizations less experienced in using volunteers, to enhance their volunteer management practices. Offer training! ♦ The disaster is not the time for them to learn best practices in volunteer management ♦ Some government partners may not use volunteers regularly and will need more coaching
Merrilee White Emergency Management Consultant Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service (Volunteer Florida)	♦ The "Agency Orientation Packet" (Appendix E) contains forms for requesting volunteers and documenting their service, and explains the responsibilities of the agency receiving spontaneous volunteers from the VRC. It can be printed and distributed, as is, to community organizations needing volunteers

9. **Coordination with Local Information and Referral Provider (2-1-1)**

Contributor	Suggestions
Brooke Fussell Community Preparedness and Response Coordinator The Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives	♦ In disaster, 2-1-1 provides general disaster updates, fields all volunteer calls, manages the volunteer database, and can sort volunteers by Zip Code to offer volunteer opportunities to unaffiliated volunteers
Sue Carter Kahl (former) Executive Director Volunteer San Diego	♦ Our local 2-1-1 engaged volunteers well. The volunteers primarily helped answer calls from people who were seeking information about a variety of topics (is my home threatened, where is the closest evacuation center, I'm trying to find my family, etc.) ♦ 2-1-1 had a pool of volunteers already, but needed many more to staff the surge in calls. I believe most were spontaneous and most of them came through Volunteer San Diego ♦ All volunteers received orientation and training before their shifts began
Meg Storer Communications and Development Manager 2-1-1 San Diego	♦ 2-1-1 San Diego has an MOU with Volunteer San Diego, and used 1,200 volunteers in 11 days in an array of capacities, from administrative support to logistical support. Most served by taking calls from citizens looking for shelter options, road closures, and relief information ♦ Many of these volunteers also supported our resource center by gathering information we used to populate our online database

10. **Roles for Spontaneous Volunteers**

Contributor	Suggestions
Sue Carter Kahl (former) Executive Director Volunteer San Diego	♦ One of our lessons learned in San Diego's fires in 2007 was that there were plenty of volunteers who responded or wanted to respond ♦ With a little pre-disaster planning on how to use them, many more organizations could have benefited from the help of spontaneous volunteers ♦ We have since done a lot of outreach and education to organizations that may have "surge" needs in a disaster (whether they are primarily a disaster-related organization or not) ♦ We have let them know about the services that Volunteer San Diego provides and offered tools for thinking through their needs in advance of the incident
Brooke Fussell Community Preparedness and Response Coordinator The Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives	♦ Basic volunteer roles are determined by the Incident Command, which sets up grids and requests volunteers for deployment after they've been processed through VSA ♦ Our volunteers helped with debris removal and peer-to-peer, door-to-door informal outreach to survivors ♦ With basic training, volunteers served as peer listeners and provided referrals to professional services as needed
Merrilee White Emergency Management Consultant Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service (Volunteer Florida)	♦ After a hurricane, hundreds of volunteers canvassed neighborhoods to secure signed Right of Entry forms for the Army Corps of Engineers Blue Roof Program. The Corps eventually had to hire additional canvassers in order to stay ahead of the contractors hired to apply the tarps ♦ One challenge was trying to explain to volunteers who had spent many long, hot days canvassing neighborhoods, why some of their counterparts were being paid for the same work ♦ If roles initially filled by spontaneous volunteers are later filled by paid workers, volunteers should be notified by the VRC or their supervisors. They should not learn about this development from their paid co-workers ♦ See the Additional Resources section for information on the National Emergency Grants program that, under certain circumstances, employs survivors for some kinds of relief work

10. **Roles for Spontaneous Volunteers**

Contributor	Suggestions
Kellie Bentz Director of Disaster Services HandsOn Network & Points of Light Institute	♦ In response to Gustav, volunteers distributed food, water, MREs, oxygen tanks and supplies; removed trees and other debris with chainsaws; and served in the EOC answering phones. Volunteers also applied tarps to damaged roofs; however, volunteers need training on documenting the damage prior to tarping so families and businesses get the full benefit of their insurance

11. **NGOs with Roles in Spontaneous Volunteer Management**	
Contributor	**Suggestions**
Phyllis Onstad Community Partnerships Specialist CaliforniaVolunteers	Phyllis Onstad with CaliforniaVolunteers provides the last word and a great summary, with the following advice for NGOs with roles in spontaneous volunteer management: 1. Emergency managers, volunteer centers, HandsOn affiliates and other NGOs need to build strong relationships before disaster hits. 2. To be credible partners, NGOs need to learn the language of disaster, especially NIMS and ICS. (Training is available at http://www.training.fema.gov.) 3. NGOs need a solid plan and MOUs spelling out how they are going to finance their activities during a disaster. 4. To be fully reliable in a disaster, NGOs need both a Continuity Plan and an Emergency Operations Plan – before disaster strikes. 5. Messaging that is consistent with the spontaneous volunteer management plan needs to be prepared and approved by relevant stakeholders in advance. 6. The organization operating the VRC needs to build pre-disaster relationships with other non-profits that will need and be in a position to engage volunteers – and have disaster job descriptions written ahead of time. 7. Volunteer centers and other NGOs need to participate in VOAD/COAD and other local coalitions and networks. 8. No time for turf wars during a disaster – they just make everybody look bad. We need to work together! Managing this resource is a big job and all the stakeholders need to "play nicely in the sandbox."

Unit 4—Best Practices for Effective Management of Spontaneous Volunteers in Disasters

ACTION POINTS

1. Developing a County Plan

2. Potential VRC Team Members and Partners

3. Identifying Community Needs for Volunteers

4. VRC Operations and Logistics

5. Coordination of Hotlines and Technology with the VRC

6. VRC Staffing

7. Reimbursement for Expenses Incurred

8. Pre- and Post-disaster Coordination with Local Government Agencies and NGOs

9. Coordination with Local Information and Referral Provider (2-1-1)

10. Roles for Spontaneous Volunteers

11. NGOs with Roles in Spontaneous Volunteer Management

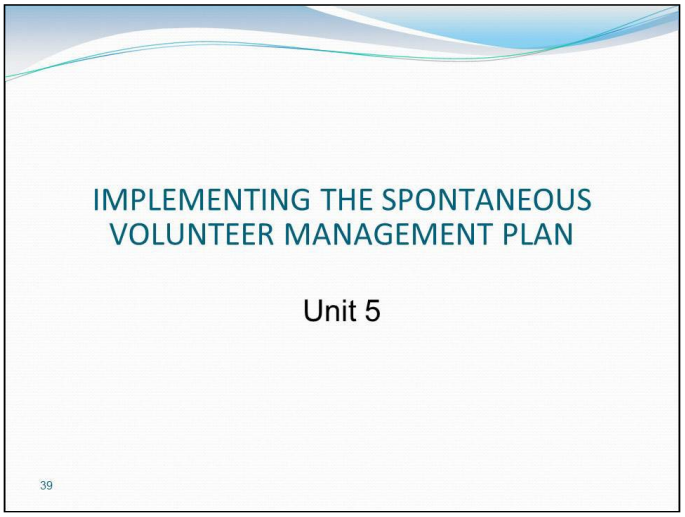
UNIT SUMMARY

This discussion covered real-world solutions to real issues related to spontaneous volunteer management. These strategies can be used or modified based on the needs of the jurisdiction.

UNIT 5: IMPLEMENTING THE SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PLAN

UNIT INTRODUCTION

Visual 39



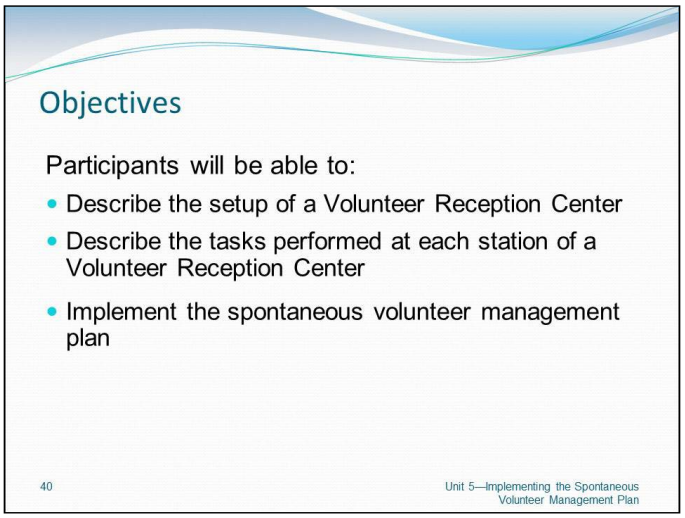
The VRC model that will be demonstrated in this unit is very basic, requires no electricity or technology, and can be set up and operated anywhere there is sufficient space—indoors or out.

Every disaster and every community is different and the VRC location and processes must be modified according to the local conditions and needs. Some of the volunteer management functions, such as job training, safety briefing, and documentation of the work volunteers do, may be done at local worksites or other agencies.

Flexibility is key, and VRC managers and staff must be willing to adapt to the changing environment, while ensuring that all of the necessary volunteer management functions are completed.

OBJECTIVES

Visual 40

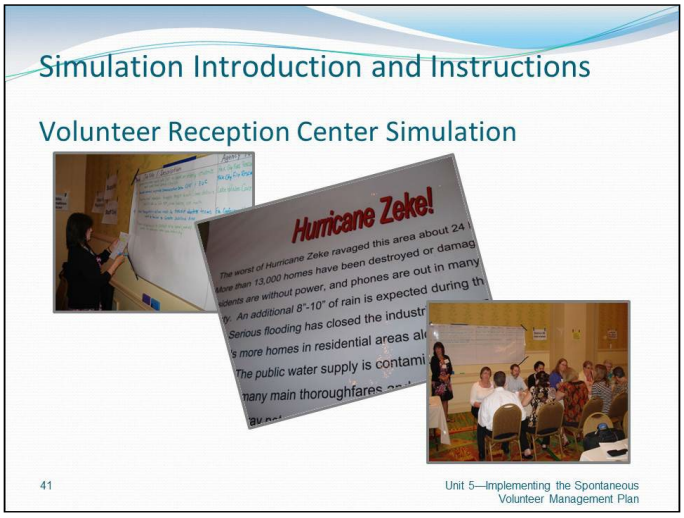


At the completion of this unit, you will be able to:

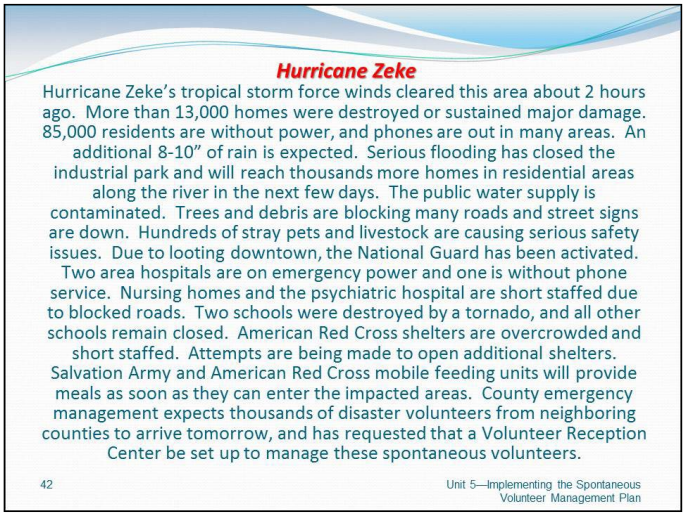
- Describe the setup of a Volunteer Reception Center
- Describe the tasks performed at each station of a Volunteer Reception Center
- Implement the spontaneous volunteer management plan

SIMULATION INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTIONS

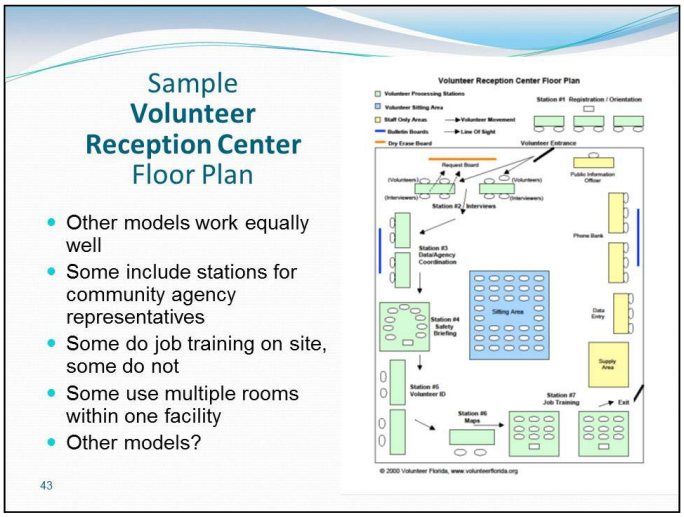
Visual 41



Visual 42



Visual 43



RUN THE VRC SIMULATION

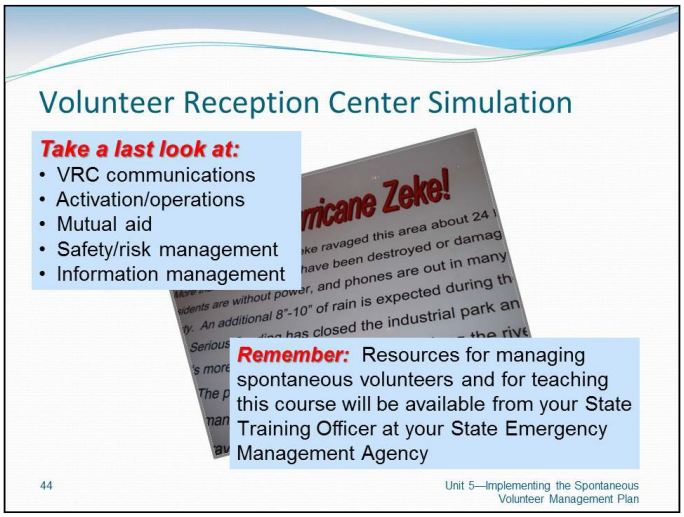
SIMULATION WRAP-UP

You now have a basic understanding of:

- The processes involved in setting up a Volunteer Reception Center
- Forms, checklists, and other resources required to run a VRC smoothly

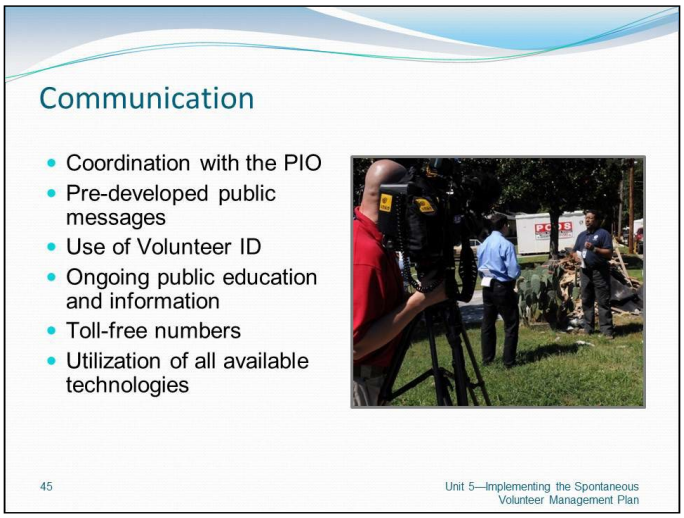
SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PLAN ACTIVATION PROCEDURES

Visual 44



COMMUNICATION

Visual 45

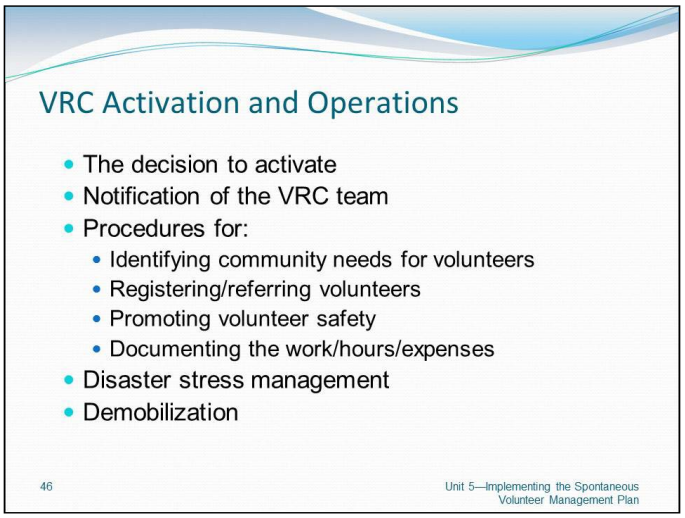


Address all communication needs outlined in the plan, including:

- Coordinating with the Public Information Officer at the Emergency Operations Center
- Utilizing pre-developed public messages using media outreach strategy
- Ensuring that receiving agencies are aware of their responsibility for any additional credentialing or identification procedures
- Providing ongoing information and/or linkages for spontaneous volunteers on opportunities, organizations, and benefits of affiliating after the disaster
- Dedicating toll-free numbers
- Utilizing available technologies like websites, social media, and listservs to ensure that all stakeholders have access to current information on volunteer recruitment and opportunities

VRC Activation and Operations

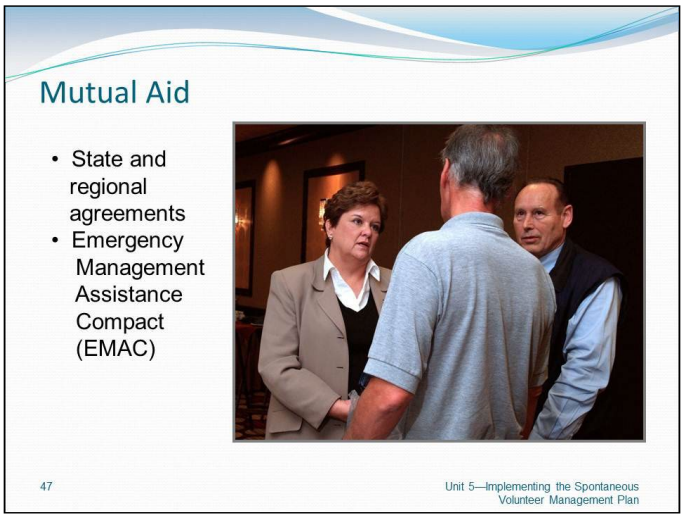
Visual 46



Activate the VRC Team and deploy a liaison to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to ensure timely communication between the EOC and the VRC.

STATE OR REGIONAL MUTUAL AID AGREEMENTS

Visual 47



Activate State, regional, and/or local mutual aid agreements to support the VRC Team or a Volunteer Reception Center, if necessary.

SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Visual 48

Risk management and safety issues create challenges for volunteer and emergency management at disaster scenes. Disaster sites present threats to the safety of professional responders and also volunteers. Strong volunteer management safeguards are required for spontaneous volunteers who show up in or near the disaster areas.

- Provide training and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to spontaneous volunteers, if required
- Use the identification system that approves spontaneous volunteers to have access to disaster sites to assist in the response and recovery operations
- Develop and implement security procedures for spontaneous volunteers. Local jurisdictions must develop security procedures for spontaneous volunteers to have access to designated areas of the disaster site. Can use different-colored wristbands to denote areas volunteers can access or dates on which they will be working
- Volunteer organizers should maintain documentation of all referrals and training

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Visual 49

- Maintain a database of spontaneous volunteers with special skills
- Establish a central phone bank combined with a web portal to provide volunteers with a connection to ongoing opportunities, and help volunteer coordinators match volunteer skills with these opportunities. A web portal can also connect some volunteers to ongoing needs in the community. This will also promote volunteer affiliation
- Promote coordination between VRC Team and long-term recovery groups to identify new/ongoing opportunities
- Ensure continuity of services to stakeholders and volunteers as the transition from response to recovery is complete. This can be achieved by providing volunteer information to stakeholders and offering affiliation information to volunteers

UNIT SUMMARY

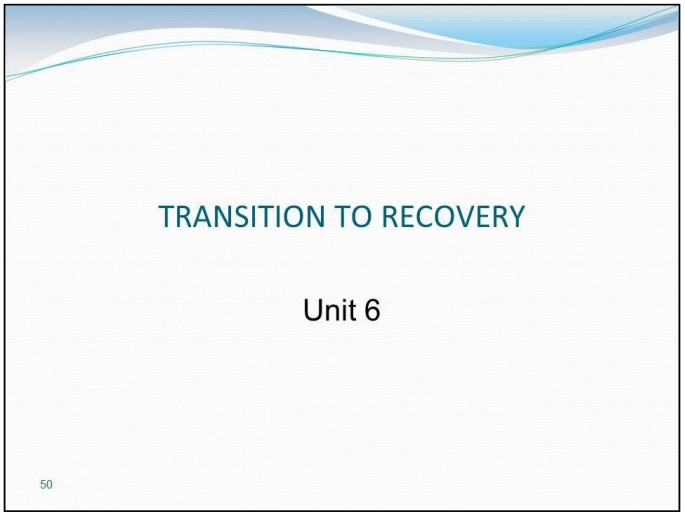
You should now be able to:

- Describe the setup of a Volunteer Reception Center
- Describe the tasks performed at each station of a Volunteer Reception Center
- Implement the spontaneous volunteer management plan

UNIT 6: TRANSITION TO RECOVERY

UNIT INTRODUCTION

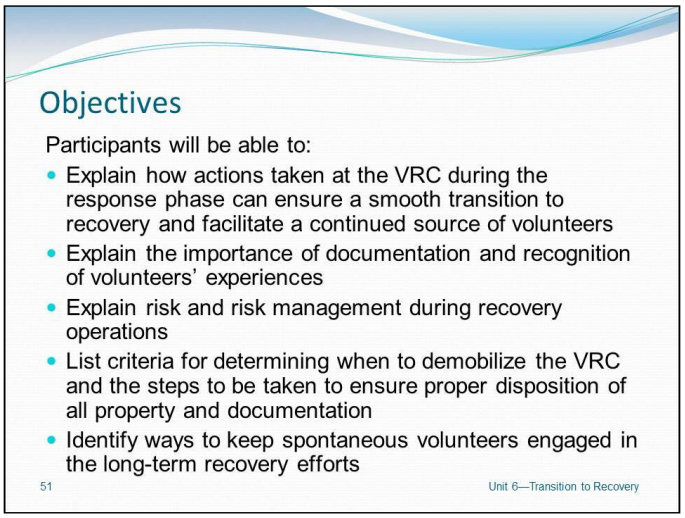
Visual 50



The need for volunteers to aid in recovery from disaster can extend as long as several years.

OBJECTIVES

Visual 51

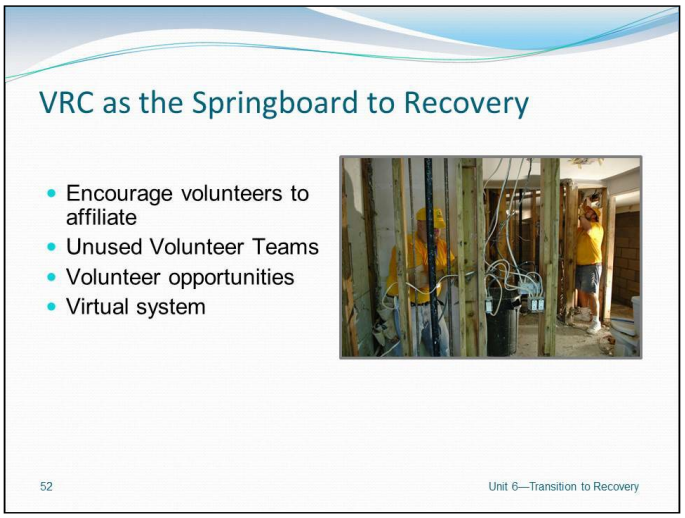


At the completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain how actions taken at the VRC during the response phase can ensure a smooth transition to recovery and facilitate a continued source of volunteers
- Explain the importance of documentation and recognition of volunteers' experiences
- Explain risk and risk management during recovery operations
- List criteria for determining when to demobilize the VRC and the steps to be taken to ensure proper disposition of all property and documentation
- Identify ways to keep spontaneous volunteers engaged in the long-term recovery efforts

VRC AS THE SPRINGBOARD TO RECOVERY

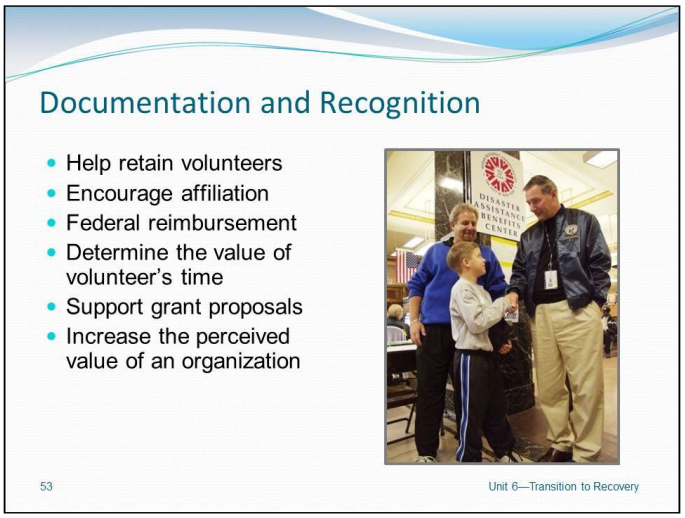
Visual 52



- Some volunteers who registered with the VRC will also be available when recovering from a disaster and should be encouraged to affiliate with an organization working in recovery
- Some Volunteer Teams from outside the impacted area that could not be used should be contacted about helping in recovery
- If a virtual VRC was used in conjunction with a physical VRC, long-term recovery volunteer opportunities will gradually replace the more urgent needs posted during response and short-term recovery
- If a virtual system was not used early on, recovery might be a good time to try it

DOCUMENTATION AND RECOGNITION

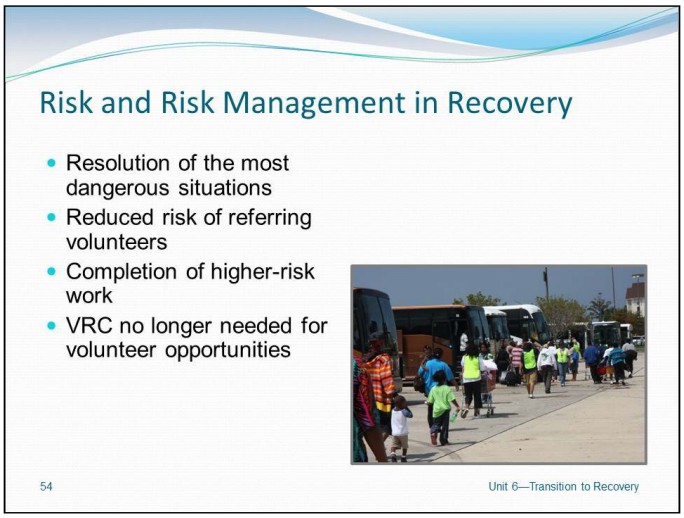
Visual 53



- Recognition by city/county officials or the government helps retain volunteers and encourages them to affiliate
- Hours served by spontaneous and affiliated volunteers doing work that is eligible for FEMA reimbursement may be used as the non-Federal share or local match for the Federal reimbursement. This can amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars in savings to the jurisdiction
- The county staff responsible for preparing the jurisdiction's Project Worksheet (PW) is responsible for assigning values to all donated resources
- Documentation of voluntary accomplishments can be used to support grant proposals and increase the perceived value of an organization to the community (FEMA website)

RISK AND RISK MANAGEMENT IN RECOVERY

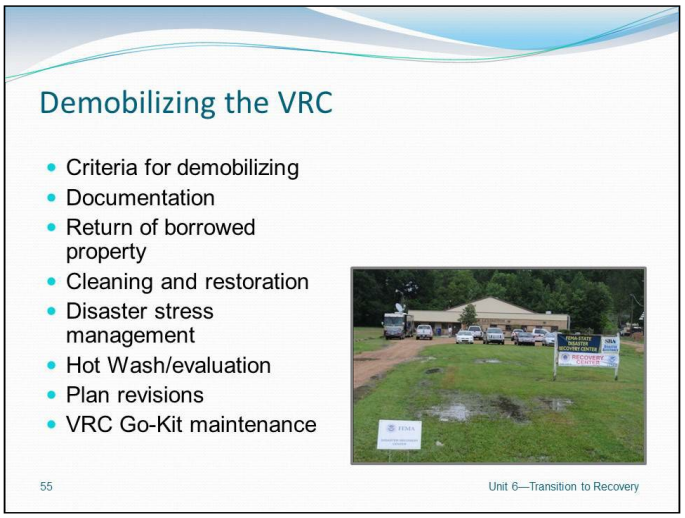
Visual 54



- Many of the dangerous situations that occurred while responding to a disaster have been resolved—high water has receded, much of the debris has been cleared, stray pets and disoriented wildlife are back where they belong
- The slower pace of recovery reduces the risk of inadvertently referring a volunteer to an inappropriate service opportunity
- Much of the higher-risk work has been completed
- Volunteers—individuals and teams—can connect directly to long-term recovery groups and unmet-needs committees to offer their services, and no longer need the VRC to find opportunities to serve
- The VRC site might become a check-in station for volunteers scheduled to arrive for work projects

DEMOBILIZING THE VRC

Visual 55



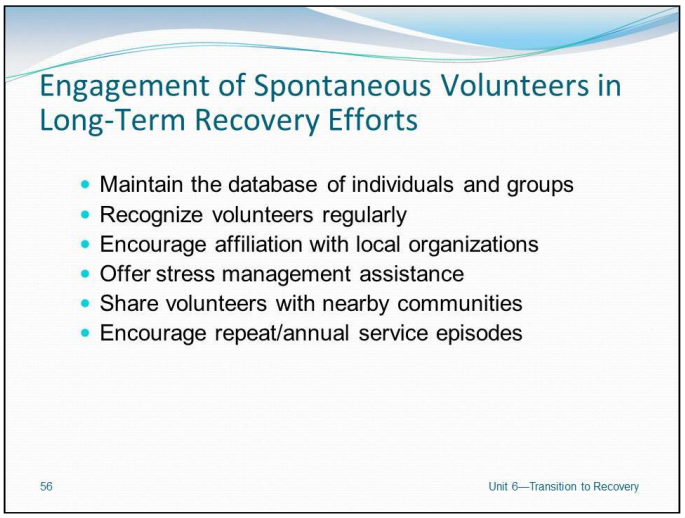
In the same way that a Multi-agency Donations Warehouse is activated by the State to manage unsolicited donated goods and is paid by FEMA, a VRC manages unsolicited (spontaneous) volunteers, provides life safety and sustainment services, and is a service for which the county may be reimbursed by FEMA.

When the influx of spontaneous volunteers subsides and the remaining volunteers can be managed by the organization responsible for the VRC in its regular office, or directly by the long-term recovery organizations, the VRC may be demobilized according to the spontaneous volunteer management plan. The VRC Director and the County Emergency Manager or Volunteer and Donations Coordination Team Leader should monitor the flow of volunteers and, if possible, come to agreement on the closing date a few days in advance. This allows a smoother demobilization and the opportunity to schedule a Hot Wash so that all staff—paid and volunteer—can participate. Steps generally include:

- Maintenance of documentation
- Return of borrowed property
- Cleaning and restoring the venue to its original condition
- Ensuring that all VRC personnel (paid and unpaid) have access to assistance with disaster stress management, if needed
- Hot Wash to discuss the forms, procedures, partners, and operating hours to determine whether changes need to be made to improve future operations

ENGAGEMENT OF SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS IN LONG-TERM RECOVERY EFFORTS

Visual 56



Ongoing procedures to engage spontaneous volunteers in long-term recovery efforts include:

- Providing long-term recovery stakeholders with access to the volunteer database once the VRC closes
- Planning for availability of stress management services to volunteers
- Restocking VRC supplies and PPE to ensure readiness
- Sharing resources such as templates for messages, motivation techniques, and reasons to affiliate with agencies using spontaneous volunteers

Follow-up procedures to engage spontaneous volunteers in long-term recovery efforts include:

- Recognizing and thanking spontaneous volunteers. Some jurisdictions have provided certificates of appreciation to spontaneous volunteers who have helped. Recognition by local elected officials is always an appropriate way to recognize volunteers. The Governor's office may also arrange for public recognition of volunteers
- Encouraging affiliation with voluntary agencies, VOAD, or FBCOs for long-term retention
- Evaluating important functions and making sure recommended revisions are made to the spontaneous volunteer management plan

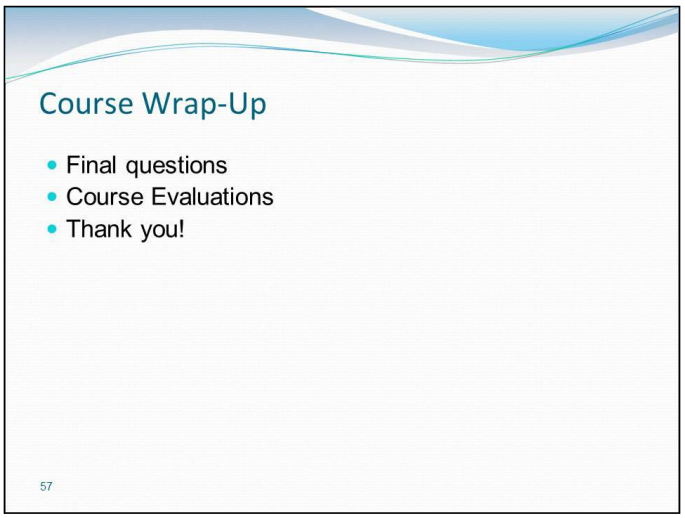
UNIT SUMMARY

This unit covered:

- How actions taken at the VRC during the response phase can ensure a smooth transition to recovery and facilitate a continued source of volunteers
- The importance of documentation and recognition of volunteers' experiences
- Risk and risk management during recovery operations
- Criteria for determining when to demobilize the VRC and the steps to be taken to ensure proper disposition of all property and documentation
- Ways to keep spontaneous volunteers engaged in the long-term recovery efforts

COURSE WRAP-UP

Visual 57



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APPENDICES AND HANDOUTS

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APPENDIX A: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)

SAMPLE MOU

NOTE: an accessible version of this this document can be found on pages 49–50 of the source report: California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, "They will come: Post-Disaster Volunteers and Local Governments," November 2001.

APPENDIX D
SAMPLE:

Inter-agency Memorandum of Understanding

VOLUNTEER CENTER OF SONOMA COUNTY
EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN COUNTY OF SONOMA

I. PURPOSE

A. A private nonprofit agency, the Volunteer Center acts as a clearinghouse for the recruitment and placement of volunteers throughout Sonoma County.

B. As appropriate during and immediately following a disaster the Volunteer Center will be responsible for establishing Volunteer Reception Centers and/or a phone bank which will recruit and refer convergent volunteers with government and nonprofit agencies.

C. County of Sonoma provides a range of public services and anticipates needing volunteers to assist with the provision of these services. The EOC Human Resources Coordinator designates the Volunteer Program Specialist to act as liaison with the volunteer center.

II. ACTIVATION OF PLAN

A. Upon direction from the County Volunteer Program Specialist, Department of Emergency Services, or Personnel Department, the Volunteer Center of Sonoma County will proceed to recruit volunteers, match these convergent volunteers to appropriate tasks, and maintain accurate records of volunteers referred.

B. In the event of a catastrophic disaster where large numbers of volunteers are needed, the Volunteer Center shall establish Volunteer Reception Centers (VRC) and/or a phone bank to facilitate the timely recruitment and referral of volunteers where necessary in Santa Rosa, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, Sonoma and/or other locations as resources permit.

III. ORGANIZATION

A. The Volunteer Center of Sonoma County is wholly responsible for the effective operation of the Volunteer

Reception Centers (VRC) in Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Petaluma and Sonoma. If resources permit, VRCs will be set up in other locations upon direction from the Department of Emergency Services. Should it become necessary (as in the event of massive communications interruption) for the County Personnel Director or his/her designee to establish a VRC utilizing Volunteer Managers, the Volunteer Center will be notified as soon as possible. Upon arrival of Volunteer Center staff, control of the VRC will be relinquished.

B. To ensure effective use of all convergent volunteers, offers of service received by the County Emergency Operations Center and the Volunteer Center will be referred to the appropriate work site based on a priority assigned by the County EOC Human Resources Coordinator or his/her designee.

IV. COST RECOVERY

In the event Sonoma County is declared an official disaster area, the Volunteer Center will be eligible for recovery of documented costs beyond normal operating expenses as deemed appropriate by administrating state and federal agencies. The County will assist with this recovery of documented costs.

For County of Sonoma:

/s/ _____ _____
Dept. of Emergency Services — Date

/s/ _____ _____
Personnel Director — Date

For Volunteer Center of Sonoma County:

/s/ _____ _____
Executive Director — Date

/s/ _____ _____
President, Board of Directors — Date

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING CHECKLIST

CHECKLIST FOR A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Overall intent – reflects what the parties are intending to do.

The parties – name, type of organization, city, and State of headquarters.

The period – a start and end date of the partnership.

Assignments/responsibilities – describes each organization's responsibilities separately, beginning with those that are the sole responsibility followed by any shared responsibilities.

Disclaimers – employee's relationship to each partner, and what the partnership is not intended to do, guarantee, or create.

Financial agreements – spells out in detail, including which entity will pay for each item and when payment is due.

Risk sharing – describes who will bear risk of a mishap. Never assume responsibility for something over which you don't have control. Ideally, indemnification provisions should be mutual: each party is responsible for its own acts or omissions. (Make certain each partner is not only *willing* but is *able* to pay.)

Signatures – by each partner's representative who is authorized to bind the organization contractually.

In summary, understand your partners' motives, communicate your expectations, and document the agreement in writing. With care, caution, and due diligence, collaborative efforts with other organizations can be an effective way to conserve resources and advance your organization's missions.

More Information

This fact sheet was developed by the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. If you'd like more information on this topic or a related topic, please visit https://www.**nonprofitrisk**.org/.

The development of this fact sheet was made possible by generous funding from the Public Entity Risk Institute (www.riskinstitute.org).

Nonprofit Risk Management Center
15 N. King St., Suite 203, Leesburg, VA 30176 – Phone: 202-785-3891 – Fax 703-443-1990

APPENDIX B: VOLUNTEER RECEPTION CENTER "GO KIT" FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS

VRC EXERCISE SETUP, BRIEFING, AND PLAY

EXERCISE SETUP (BEFORE PARTICIPANTS ARRIVE)

- ☐ Arrange VRC Station tables and chairs for smooth flow of people through separate entrance and exit if available
- ☐ Distribute pre-packaged envelopes of materials needed at each Station
- ☐ Tape signs on walls over the VRC Stations
- ☐ Tape job descriptions to tables at each station
- ☐ Place a hat or flag (to summon Runners) at each station
- ☐ Attach "request" board to wall at Station #2 Interviews. (See VRC Training Kit Contents in Unit 5)
- ☐ Write some of your volunteer requests (in alternating colors) on the whiteboard. File those request forms in the "Open Requests" file. This gets the play started more quickly. New requests are added as old ones are completed

BRIEFING

- ☐ As participants arrive, ask them to fill up the chairs at the stations first, then those in the middle of the room. Ask those at the stations to read the job descriptions taped there
- ☐ Pass out disaster scenario sheets and Station badges
- ☐ Explain the premise of this training: Disaster volunteers will come to help, whether you have planned for them or not. Hundreds or thousands of unaffiliated (and unplanned-for) volunteers will hinder rather than help the traditional response agencies
- ☐ Discuss who will/could operate a Volunteer Reception Center, if one is needed locally
- ☐ Review signs and ask someone seated at each VRC station to explain what happens at their station
- ☐ Discuss the need for accurate recordkeeping (liability, proof that safety and job training were provided, and local match for FEMA reimbursement)
- ☐ Explain why the VRC doesn't do background checks on volunteers and that such checks are the responsibility of the receiving agency
- ☐ Pass out volunteer registration forms. Ask each person to fill out one with their real-life information, and a second for a new persona (be creative!) with new skills (you may or may not want people to go around twice. Extra discussion time might be more valuable)

BEGIN THE ROLE-PLAY EXERCISE

- ☐ Begin processing volunteers, watching to be sure Runners respond as needed
- ☐ To keep the play moving smoothly, VRC Director should respond quickly to raised hands, confused expressions, and any signs of frustration in your participants (someone else with experience could help as a facilitator)
- ☐ If a question pertains to only that one station, such as clarification of the job description, try to answer it on the spot
- ☐ For questions that seem to involve more than one Station, say something like "That is a valid question and a very important point. Could you please bring it up again when we stop the play to discuss some of these issues?"
- ☐ Pause the play once or twice as needed. Encourage participants to ask their questions, voice concerns, etc. (Often the problems are caused by forms not being completed properly.) Ask participants to suggest solutions and engage the group in solving the problems. (Some suggestions will be impractical for reasons beyond participants' knowledge)
- ☐ Stop play 15–20 minutes before the scheduled end of your training. Lead a discussion of the Post-Exercise Questions if they are appropriate to your trainees. Answer participant questions
- ☐ Discuss the importance of consistency in VRC plans throughout the State or region to facilitate mutual support

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NOTE: Digital copies of many of the forms and checklists in this appendix can be downloaded from the Spontaneous Volunteer Management page of Volunteer Florida's website at the following address: http://www.volunteerflorida.org/emergency-management/em-resources/volunteer-management

SIGNAGE FOR VOLUNTEER RECEPTION CENTER

You will need one enlargement, unless otherwise specified, for each of the 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	WHERE TO POST
Disaster Volunteer Reception Center (2)	On street visible from either direction
Station #1 Registration	Registration/orientation area
Enter	Volunteer Entrance to VRC
Station #2 Interviews	Interview Area visible from Volunteer Entry
Station #3 Data/Agency Coordination	Data Coordination visible from Station #2
Station #4 Safety Briefing	Safety Briefing visible from Station #3
Station #5 Volunteer I.D.	Volunteer ID area visible from Station #4
Station #6 Maps	Map station visible from Station #5
Station #7 Job Training	Job Training visible from Stations #5 and #6
Exit	Exit visible from Stations #5, #6, and #7
Staff Only (1+ as needed)	Staff rest area, areas off limits to spontaneous volunteers
Phone Bank	Agency Coordination area. If not possible, in a quiet area away from the spontaneous volunteers
Supplies (Staff Only)	Door of a secure storage area
Public Information Officer	Public Information Officer's Table near the VRC entrance
Transportation to Worksite	At exit to transportation staging area
Large arrows that can be used for either direction as needed.	These are not needed between VRC stations, but may be needed in conjunction with the Transportation sign or others

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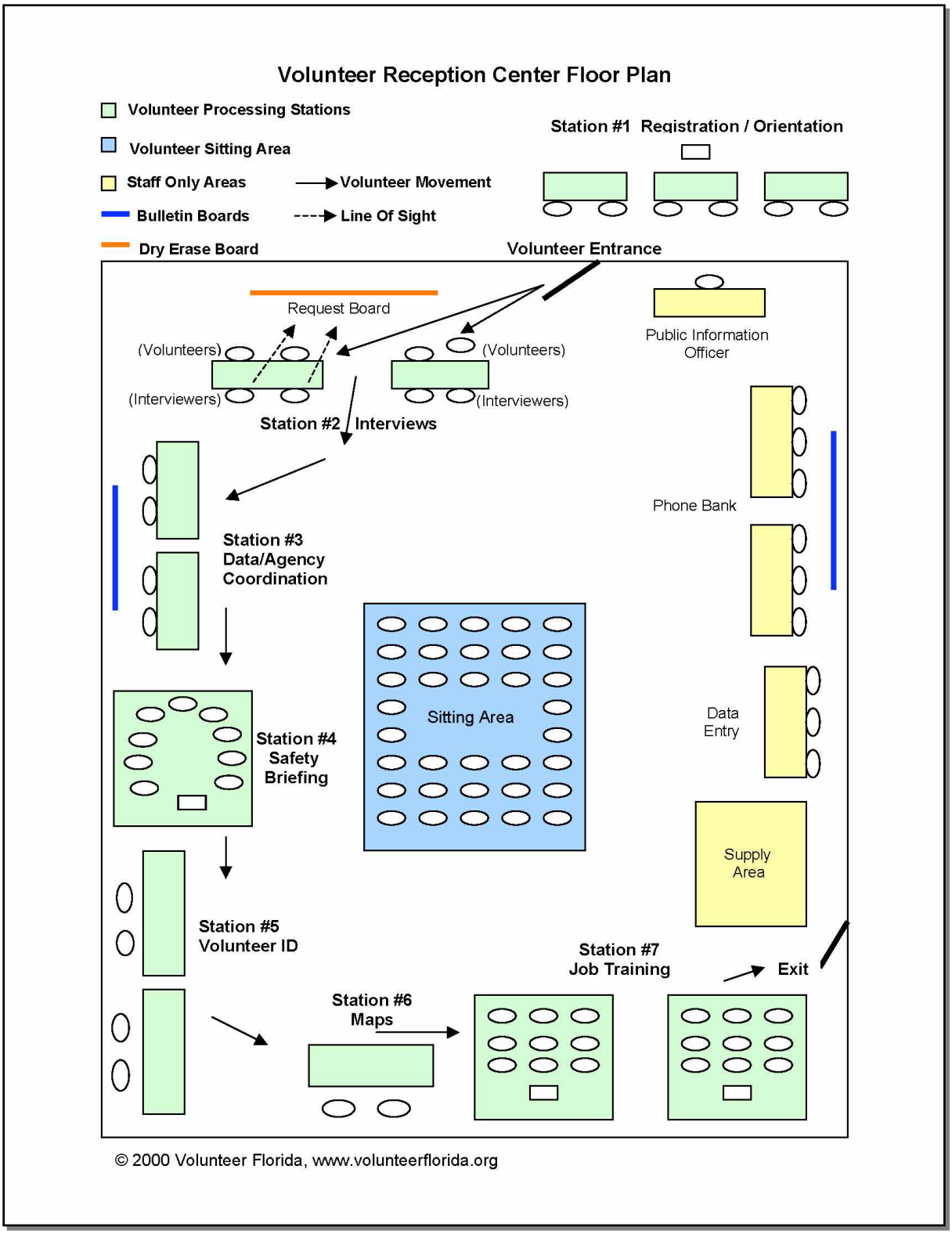
VOLUNTEER RECEPTION CENTER FLOOR PLAN



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APPENDIX C: VOLUNTEER RECEPTION CENTER "GO KIT" SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

Volunteer Center Disaster Coordinator's "Go Kit"

OFFICE SUPPLIES

- Felt pens (set of 4 dry-erase)
- Eraser (dry-erase)
- 1 highlighter
- Pens (box of 12)
- Pencils (box of 12, sharpened)
- 2 lined pads of paper
- Copy paper, about 25 sheets
- 2 sheets from easel chart pad, folded
- 3x5 cards (pack of 100) and file box
- 1 dozen file folders and box of labels
- 3 hanging file folders and labels
- Push pins (pack of 25)
- 1 clipboard
- Stapler, staples
- Masking and Scotch tape
- Name tags
- Post-its, 3 packs of 3" x 3"
- 1 Post-it fax pad
- 1 dozen #10 envelopes
- 1 medium-size binder clip
- Scissors
- Pencil sharpener
- Paper clips (box of 100)
- Disposable camera

FORMS, LISTS, MAPS, ETC.

- Emergency phone list
- Job checklists
- Volunteer intake forms
- Agency volunteer request forms
- Other forms–volunteer/staff time logs, etc.
- City and county maps
- Coins (for pay phones)

EQUIPMENT (optional)

- Battery-operated clock
- Battery-operated radio

(Source: http://www.energizeinc.com/art/subj/documents/ready_to_respond.pdf , December 2010, page 62.)

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APPENDIX D: JOB AIDS

WAYS TO RECOGNIZE AND MOTIVATE VOLUNTEERS

Informal

- Address a volunteer by name
- Say "thank you"
- Write a thank-you note
- Say "good job"
- Treat a volunteer to coffee
- Take him or her to lunch
- Ask how work is going and stop to listen and discuss the response
- Ask for input
- Include volunteers in staff meetings
- Include volunteers in an orientation video

Formal

- Give annual recognition at an appreciation banquet
- Hold an awards ceremony during National Volunteer Week
- Throw a holiday party for volunteers
- Place a photo and article in the local newspaper featuring volunteers
- Place a "Volunteer of the Month" photo on the agency bulletin board
- Present volunteers with plaques, certificates, pins, t-shirts, coffee mugs, etc.
- Ask a volunteer to serve on an advisory board
- Offer advanced training

- Give more responsibility, such as the opportunity to train or supervise other volunteers

(Source: IS-244, Developing and Managing Volunteers, Independent Study, February 2006)

VRC DEMOBILIZING/CLOSING ACTIONS

The following Volunteer Reception Center demobilizing/closing actions are the responsibility of the VRC Director.

- Coordinate plans to close the Volunteer Mobilization Center with Director, Logistics, and facility's manager in advance of the actual closing
- Host a debriefing with staff to collect "Lessons Learned" at the end of a shift
  - Utilize Mental Health Professionals
- Communicate to staff the name of the agency where volunteer recruitment and referral will continue when the VRC site closes
- Assign staff to coordinate the following tasks:
  - Removal of VRC signage (Logistics)
  - Collect all paperwork, including staff logs, and forward to the VRC Director or the Volunteer Center as soon as possible
  - Inventory supplies and return "Go Box" to original location. Forward inventory to Director (Logistics)
  - Complete an inventory of any supplies owned by the facility that were used by the VRC, and forward to Director
  - Collect all receipts for reimbursement; forward information to Director
  - Return all rented or borrowed equipment
  - Arrange for cleaning of the facility if necessary and return furniture and equipment to pre-occupancy condition
  - Review and submit to Director any invoices or pending financial commitments. Tell any suppliers to send final bills to the Volunteer Reception Center
  - Prepare a list of staff, other voluntary organizations, and vendors to be thanked or recognized
  - Collect any other names and addresses for acknowledgments; forward information to Director
- Prepare a narrative report on what went well, what needs improvement, and any challenges faced and how they were handled
- Include information on position descriptions that worked well and what did not work well. Be sure to include staff recommendations
  - Recommendations can be collected at debrief or at sign-out
  - 3×5 cards or logs at VRC stations can be used
- Schedule vacate/exit appointment with Logistics and facility's manager to review and record any damage on Preliminary Site Checklist
- Document (written description, photo, or drawing) any damage as clearly as possible

(Adapted from Volunteer Center Serving Howard County – Closing Actions, Pages 29–31 from the Center's Volunteer Management Center (VMC) SOP)

VIRTUAL VRC

Virtual Volunteer Reception Center

Prior to deciding if your organization/VOAD or State Commission should "stand up" a Volunteer Reception Center (VRC), your first step is to activate a virtual volunteer reception center or in other words 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 (SUV).

***Even if a physical VRC is "stood up," the virtual VRC stays active and sends consistent messages and notifications to those volunteers who register when opportunities become available to volunteer.**

Steps to Creating a Virtual Volunteer Reception Center:

1) **Banner** for website—need policy as to when to enact/enable the Banner (for LA SERVE= based on calls received in office). It is suggested that this banner be populated prior to a disaster and customized when a disaster strikes. Once decision is made that the Banner is needed, go into technology platform to "enable." As 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."

Example: With the Gulf Oil Spill, the Banner was enabled the day the state of emergency was declared.

2) **Write first message** (first thing done for Virtual VRC—need consistent message)
   a. Post on website
   b. 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 refreshed on how to take calls (become behind scenes call center—explain how to register on website and if the volunteer who calls is unable to go online, the person answering the call will go online and register for the volunteer).

4) **Begin identifying opportunities** and posting opportunities. Once event occurs begin identifying opportunities. (ideally, you want to pre-populate your technology platform pre-disaster and customize once the disaster strikes)

   - At State level pull from affiliates/volunteer centers, then send the folks who have registered
   - At local level pull from partners for opportunities
   - If you can get a job description before the event from the organization, have them pre-populated and turn them on with the banner or as appropriate.

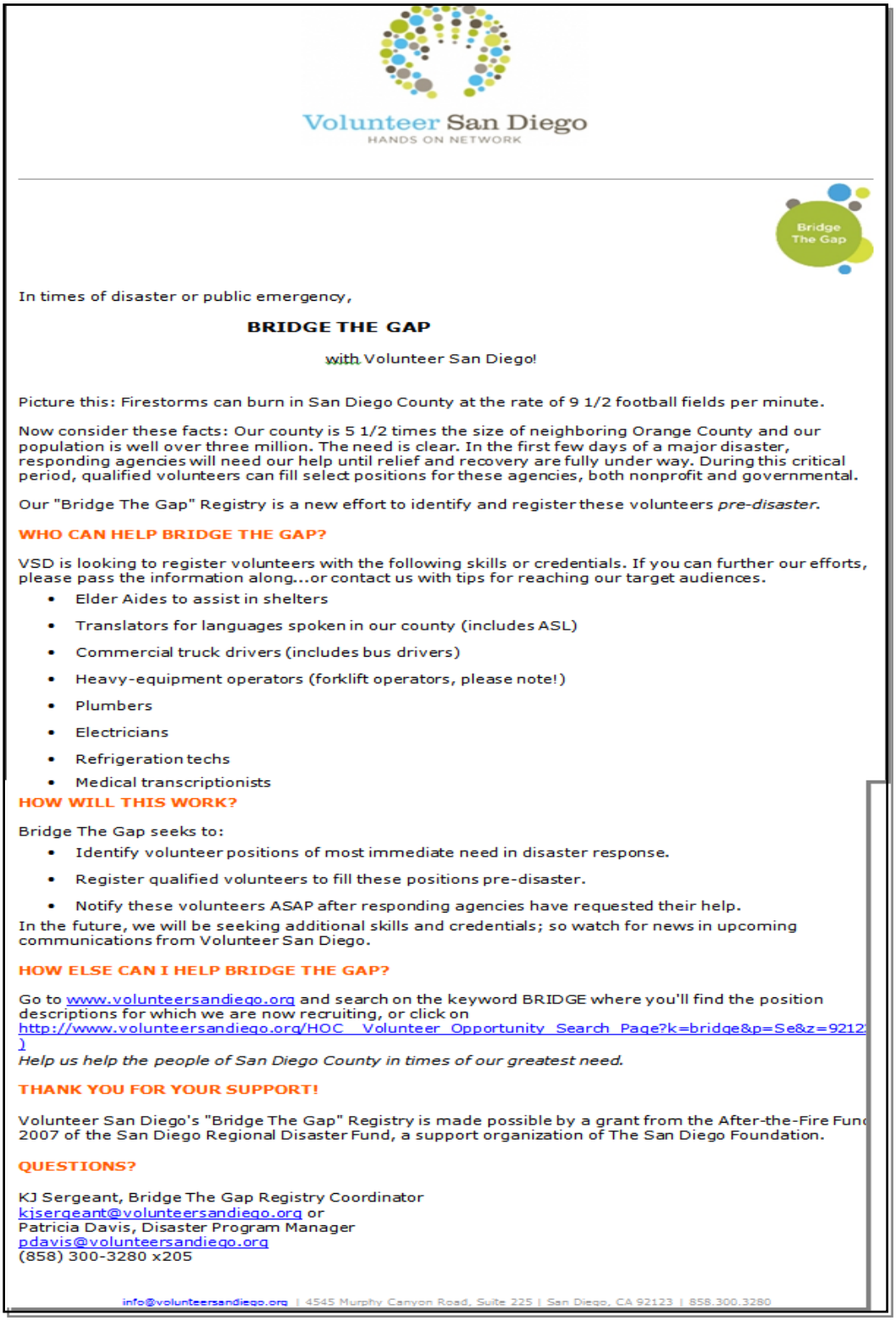
5) **Create Link to Social Media** platforms and post links on Social Media pages (Twitter/Facebook/Blogs) directing persons interested in volunteering to the Virtual VRC site to register.

   - Have all agencies with local and State VOADs posting same message related to volunteering.

Contributors to this document: Kellie Bentz, Director Disaster Services, Points of Light; Janet Pace, Executive Director, Louisiana State Commission on Volunteering & Service

WEBPAGE TO MAKE A VIRTUAL VRC

WEB ADVERTISEMENT—VOLUNTEER SAN DIEGO



Volunteer San Diego
HANDS ON NETWORK

Bridge The Gap

In times of disaster or public emergency,

BRIDGE THE GAP

with Volunteer San Diego!

Picture this: Firestorms can burn in San Diego County at the rate of 9 1/2 football fields per minute.

Now consider these facts: Our county is 5 1/2 times the size of neighboring Orange County and our population is well over three million. The need is clear. In the first few days of a major disaster, responding agencies will need our help until relief and recovery are fully under way. During this critical period, qualified volunteers can fill select positions for these agencies, both nonprofit and governmental.

Our "Bridge The Gap" Registry is a new effort to identify and register these volunteers *pre-disaster*.

WHO CAN HELP BRIDGE THE GAP?

VSD is looking to register volunteers with the following skills or credentials. If you can further our efforts, please pass the information along...or contact us with tips for reaching our target audiences.

- Elder Aides to assist in shelters
- Translators for languages spoken in our county (includes ASL)
- Commercial truck drivers (includes bus drivers)
- Heavy-equipment operators (forklift operators, please note!)
- Plumbers
- Electricians
- Refrigeration techs
- Medical transcriptionists

HOW WILL THIS WORK?

Bridge The Gap seeks to:

- Identify volunteer positions of most immediate need in disaster response.
- Register qualified volunteers to fill these positions pre-disaster.
- Notify these volunteers ASAP after responding agencies have requested their help.

In the future, we will be seeking additional skills and credentials; so watch for news in upcoming communications from Volunteer San Diego.

HOW ELSE CAN I HELP BRIDGE THE GAP?

Go to www.volunteersandiego.org and search on the keyword BRIDGE where you'll find the position descriptions for which we are now recruiting, or click on
http://www.volunteersandiego.org/HOC_Volunteer_Opportunity_Search_Page?k=bridge&p=Se&z=9212
)
Help us help the people of San Diego County in times of our greatest need.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Volunteer San Diego's "Bridge The Gap" Registry is made possible by a grant from the After-the-Fire Fund 2007 of the San Diego Regional Disaster Fund, a support organization of The San Diego Foundation.

QUESTIONS?

KJ Sergeant, Bridge The Gap Registry Coordinator
kjsergeant@volunteersandiego.org or
Patricia Davis, Disaster Program Manager
pdavis@volunteersandiego.org
(858) 300-3280 x205

info@volunteersandiego.org | 4545 Murphy Canyon Road, Suite 225 | San Diego, CA 92123 | 858.300.3280

APPENDIX E: AGENCY ORIENTATION PACKET

Disaster Volunteer Reception Center (VRC)

Agency Orientation Packet

VOLUNTEER FLORIDA

A tool for community agencies requesting volunteers from a VRC

Purpose

The purpose of this packet is to provide basic information about a Volunteer Reception Center that is now serving the region impacted by _____(disaster name). The information, forms, and instructions contained in this packet will help your organization to safely and effectively utilize the many spontaneous volunteers wanting to help.

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DISASTER VOLUNTEER RECEPTION CENTER
Agency Orientation Packet

What is a VRC?

A Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) is an operation in which spontaneous, unaffiliated disaster volunteers are registered and referred to local agencies to assist with relief efforts. At the VRC, volunteers will:

1. Complete a registration form and sign a general release of liability statement
2. Accept a referral to an organization needing their services (Referral includes a description of their duties and complete address and contact information for the agency to which they have been referred)
3. Receive a form of identification approved by local officials
4. Participate in a safety briefing
5. Agree in writing to follow all safety instructions and directions from supervisors at their work sites

What are my agency's responsibilities when requesting/accepting volunteers from the VRC?

Agencies requesting/receiving volunteers from the VRC should use generally accepted procedures for managing volunteers, including the provision of:

1. Orientation to your organization and the volunteer position
2. Job training to prepare the volunteer for the work expected of him/her
3. Safety training specifically related to the position
4. Supervision and feedback on the volunteer's efforts
5. Recognition for the assistance the volunteer provided to the organization and disaster survivors

What happens when the volunteer's job is completed?

Recycle the volunteer! You may either invite them to become a permanent volunteer for your organization and provide additional training and opportunities for them to serve, or you may encourage them to return to the VRC for another assignment.

What if, for any reason, the volunteer doesn't meet the needs of my organization?

If a volunteer doesn't have the skills or ability you need, or doesn't seem to be a good fit for your organization, please let the VRC know! A quick phone call to the VRC can help a volunteer find a more appropriate service opportunity OR can prevent a difficult volunteer from being referred to other agencies.

What are the risks associated with using spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers?

The risks inherent in utilizing unknown volunteers are about the same as with any volunteer opportunity, provided that the generally accepted volunteer management procedures listed above are used. In many cases, the risk of not using unaffiliated volunteers to help survivors can be greater than the risk of using them. Florida has many examples from the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons of unaffiliated volunteers providing life-saving assistance to disaster survivors.

This packet includes the following forms:

Request for Volunteers – When you contact the VRC to request volunteers, please provide all information requested on the form. You may choose one of the following options: **

- Fill it out and fax it to the VRC at ( ) _____
- Call the VRC phone bank at ( ) _____ and provide the information in the order in which it appears on the form.
- Email the form as an attachment to _____
- Contact the VRC via ham radio or other communication as directed and provide the information in the order in which it appears on the form.
- Send the completed form to the VRC via a runner or courier.

**** VRC should check the options that are available at this VRC.**

Sample Safety Briefing – This sample briefing should be edited to provide safety information pertinent to the current disaster, to protect volunteers from avoidable injuries and illnesses resulting from their participation in the relief effort. Every volunteer under the supervision of your organization should attend a safety briefing and be provided a copy to take home. To re-enforce the expectation that all volunteers will follow the recommended safety guidelines, ask each volunteer to sign a statement that they have received, understand, and will follow the safety guidelines provided to them.

Release of Liability – Customize this form to include your organization's name. Use as needed to ensure and document that the person signing it understands that there are risks associated with the activity for which the Release is being used. As with any Release of Liability, it is not intended to prevent legal action from being taken against your organization. It does serve as evidence that you had informed the signer of possible risks and that he/she accepted responsibility for adverse events resulting from their participation.

Authorization to Perform Free Services – Customize this form for use when your organization and its staff or volunteers offer a free service to a homeowner, such as debris removal or temporary roof repairs.

FEMA Disaster Assistance Policy (DAP 9525.2) available at www.fema.gov – Organizations that will use volunteers to complete work that is eligible for FEMA reimbursement should become familiar with this resource. Your county may include as local match the value of the hours worked by some volunteers, when submitting the county's request for FEMA reimbursement. **This can be a tremendous value to the county but only if you have carefully documented:**

- The dates and number of hours volunteers served on work that is eligible for reimbursement
- Description of the type and location of the work

Worksite Sign-in/Sign-out Record – Stress to all of your worksite supervisors the importance of utilizing this or a similar form at each worksite. You are likely to be asked by your board and funders, the State Commission on Volunteerism, the media, and others what your organization and volunteers contributed to the relief effort. These records:

- Are vital to support a request for FEMA reimbursement, if eligible
- Allow you to quantify and thoroughly document your organization's contribution
- Facilitate a quick response to media inquiries and showcase your accomplishments

REQUEST FOR VOLUNTEERS FORM

NOTE: An accessible version of this form can be downloaded from
http://www.volunteerflorida.org/emergency-management/em-resources/volunteer-management

Request for Volunteers

(Complete one form for each job description.)

Event name/# _____ Today's Date:_____ Start Date:_____ End Date:_____

Title of Volunteer Position: _____

Agency Name: _____ Agency Contact: _____

Agency Address: _____ Phone: _____ Ext:_____

Duties: _____

_____

Volunteers must be physically able to:_____

Number Needed: _____ Dates/Hrs Needed:_____

For this position, volunteers must be at least ____ years of age.

Skills Needed

Description		Description

Follow-up Contacts with Requesting Agency / Clarification of Need

Date	Comments

Volunteers Referred

Name	Date	Name	Date

Request closed on ____/____/____ Completed ☐ No placements possible ☐ No longer needed ☐

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SAFETY BRIEFING FOR VOLUNTEERS

NOTE: An accessible version of this document can be downloaded from
http://www.volunteerflorida.org/emergency-management/em-resources/volunteer-management

Safety Briefing for Volunteers

(Presenter: Be sure to edit this training for the specific incident.)

Thank you for volunteering today!

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 may 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 survivors 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.

   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.**

6. Older children can help with some kinds of disaster recovery work, but parents must sign a release of liability form for each child under the age of 18. Children should remain in school, if it is open. Older children may be able to participate with parents on weekends.

7. In case you are injured while volunteering and need medical care, you should plan on paying for that care. The agency with which you are volunteering ***might*** have a policy that will cover you while you volunteer for disaster relief. If you are volunteering under the direction of a government entity, you ***might*** be covered by their Workers Compensation policy. It's best to ask questions and not make any assumptions about health/accident coverage.

8. **Follow carefully any instructions given to you at your job site.**

9. **Please attend any debriefing activity provided at your worksite after your shift.**

Volunteer Florida, Revised 6-06

VOLUNTEER LIABILITY RELEASE FORM

(insert organization logos)

Volunteer Liability Release Form

In consideration of my desire to serve as a volunteer in disaster relief efforts to be conducted by __(Organization Name)___, 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 __(Organization Name)__.

Further, I, for myself and my heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, hereby release, waive and discharge __ (Organization Name)__ 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.

Date:_____ Signature:_____

Print Name:_____

AUTHORIZATION TO PROVIDE FREE SERVICES FORM

(insert organization logos)

Authorization for (Organization Name) to Provide Free Services

Client's Name	
Spouse' Name	
Client Street 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 (Organization Name) 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 (Organization Name) board of directors.

I hereby give permission to (Organization Name) to use my name, picture or story for the purpose of public relations. I hereby freely release (Organization Name) 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.

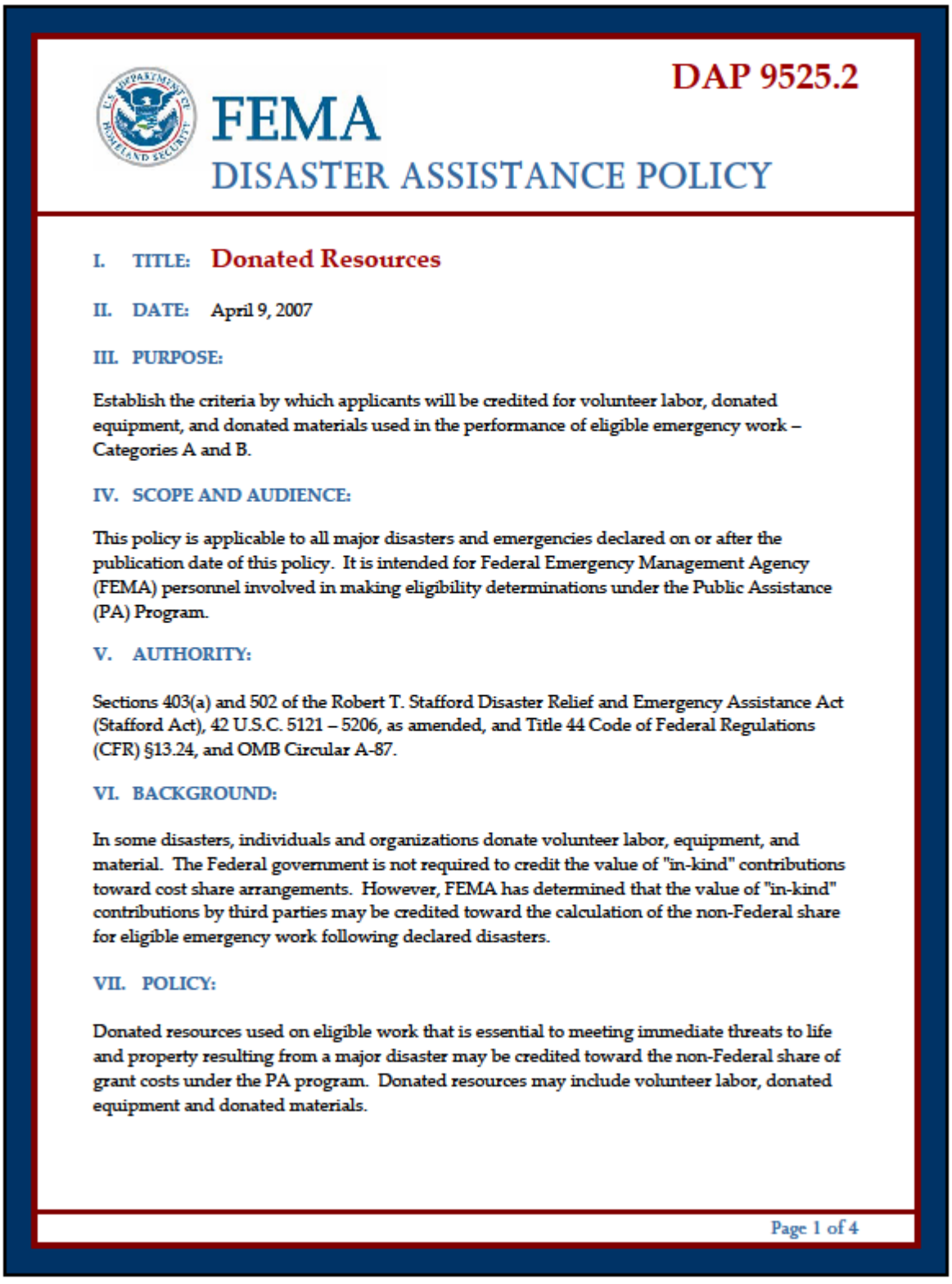
Dated this _____ day of _____, 20_____.

_____ _____
Signature of Owner Witness

_____ _____
Signature of Spouse Witness

FEMA Disaster Assistance Policy

NOTE: An accessible PDF version of this document can be downloaded from FEMA at: http://www.fema.gov/pdf/government/grant/pa/9525_2.pdf



DAP 9525.2

FEMA

DISASTER ASSISTANCE POLICY

I. TITLE: Donated Resources

II. DATE: April 9, 2007

III. PURPOSE:

Establish the criteria by which applicants will be credited for volunteer labor, donated equipment, and donated materials used in the performance of eligible emergency work – Categories A and B.

IV. SCOPE AND AUDIENCE:

This policy is applicable to all major disasters and emergencies declared on or after the publication date of this policy. It is intended for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) personnel involved in making eligibility determinations under the Public Assistance (PA) Program.

V. AUTHORITY:

Sections 403(a) and 502 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act), 42 U.S.C. 5121 – 5206, as amended, and Title 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §13.24, and OMB Circular A-87.

VI. BACKGROUND:

In some disasters, individuals and organizations donate volunteer labor, equipment, and material. The Federal government is not required to credit the value of "in-kind" contributions toward cost share arrangements. However, FEMA has determined that the value of "in-kind" contributions by third parties may be credited toward the calculation of the non-Federal share for eligible emergency work following declared disasters.

VII. POLICY:

Donated resources used on eligible work that is essential to meeting immediate threats to life and property resulting from a major disaster may be credited toward the non-Federal share of grant costs under the PA program. Donated resources may include volunteer labor, donated equipment and donated materials.

Page 1 of 4

DAP 9525.2

FEMA
DISASTER ASSISTANCE POLICY

A. Eligibility. Donated resources are eligible to offset the non-Federal share of eligible Category A and B costs if they meet the following criteria:

1. The donated resources must be documented by a local public official or a person designated by a local public official. The documentation must include a record of hours worked, the work site, and a description of work for each volunteer, and equivalent information for equipment and materials. Regional Administrators may establish alternate documentation requirements when required by an extraordinarily demanding situation.

2. The donated resources must apply to emergency work that has been organized by an eligible applicant and is eligible under the PA program. Examples include, but are not limited to:

   a. Removing eligible debris.
   b. Filling and placing sandbags.
   c. Donating equipment to raise or reinforce a levee.
   d. Donating materials, such as rocks or sand.
   e. Search and rescue when part of an organized search and rescue operation.
   f. Professional safety inspections.
   g. Mass food and shelter for victims, when not the mission of the organization.

3. The donated resources must be documented on one or more Project Worksheets (PWs).

B. Value of Resources. 44 CFR 13.24 addresses how donated resources are to be valued. The following instructions are based on that part of the CFR:

1. Volunteer Labor: The value of volunteer labor is discussed in 44 CFR 13.24 (c) (1). The rate placed on volunteer labor should be the same rate (plus reasonable fringe benefits) ordinarily paid for similar work within the applicant's organization. Premium rates will not be used. If the applicant does not have employees performing similar work, the rate should be consistent with those ordinarily performing the work in the same labor market. To determine the value of volunteer labor, the labor rate should be multiplied by the total number of volunteer labor hours. Credit may be given for volunteer labor in any field reasonably required for emergency work, including the work of volunteer equipment operators.

2. Donated Equipment: To determine the value of donated equipment, determine the number of hours that each piece of donated equipment was used and multiply it by the applicable applicant's or FEMA's Equipment Rate, whichever is lower. The out-of-pocket cost

to operate the equipment may be claimed as a donation for credit under this policy unless it is included in a reimbursed equipment rate.

3. Donated Materials: Only materials donated by third party entities are eligible for credit. Typical donated materials include sand, dirt, and rocks, and other materials associated with flood-fighting activities. To determine the value of donated materials, use the current commercial rate for such material based on previous purchases or information available from vendors. Materials donated from other Federal agencies may not be included.

C. Calculations. The following guidance is to be used for calculation purposes:

1. "Total project cost" means the out-of-pocket costs (labor, materials, and contracts) plus the value of donated resources (limited to the maximum allowed, as provided in the next paragraph).

2. The maximum credit allowed for donated resources is calculated by dividing the non-Federal cost share percentage by the Federal cost share percentage (e.g., 25%/75% = .333 and 10%/90% = .111) and multiplying that factor by the out-of-pocket expenses for a particular PW or multiple PWs. When multiple PWs are going to be used for emergency work, the donations credit (with documentation listing each applicable emergency work PW) may be placed on one "credit" PW after all emergency work is completed.

3. The documented donations credit (not to exceed the maximum credit allowed for donation) is to be entered on the PW as a line item of the project cost. Any excess credit may be distributed to other emergency work PWs but may not exceed the maximum allowable credit for each PW.

D. Limitations.

1. The donations credit is capped at the non-Federal share of emergency work (Category A and Category B) so that the Federal share will not exceed the actual out-of-pocket cost. Any excess credit can be credited only to other emergency work for the same applicant in the same disaster. The value of excess donated resources cannot be credited toward another applicant, toward other State obligations, or toward permanent work.

2. A State may claim credit for the value of donated resources only according to the disaster cost-share agreement for the non-Federal share of cost for the eligible work. Credit for donated resources may not be applied for any work performed during a 100% Federally-funded period because the non-Federal share for that period would be zero.

DAP 9525.2

FEMA
DISASTER ASSISTANCE POLICY

3. Reasonable logistical support for volunteers doing eligible work may be considered an eligible cost or donations credit by the Regional Administrator.

4. Donated resources submitted for credit toward the non-Federal share may not be from another Federal grant or from other Federally funded sources.

VIII. ORIGINATING OFFICE: Disaster Assistance Directorate (Public Assistance Division).

IX. SUPERSESSION: This policy supersedes Response and Recovery Directorate Policy 9525.2, dated August 17, 1999, and all previous guidance on this subject.

X. REVIEW DATE: Three years from date of publication.

David Garratt
Acting Assistant Administrator
Disaster Assistance Directorate

Page 4 of 4

WORK SITE SIGN-IN/SIGN-OUT RECORD

NOTE: An accessible version of this form can be downloaded from http://www.volunteerflorida.org/emergency-management/em-resources/volunteer-management

Work Site Sign-in/Sign-out Record

Event Name/#_____ **City/County** _____ **Site**_____

Date_____ **Site Supervisor**_____ **Phone**_____

Your work today helps this community in two ways! It will help individuals and families recover more quickly, and each hour you contribute can ALSO help the community financially. The value of your volunteer hours may be used to offset the State cost share/match for the Federal assistance. ***Thank you for volunteering today!***

Please read before signing in: I have received safety instructions for working at this site and agree to follow the safety procedures and the directions of the site supervisor.

Volunteer's Name		Time In	Time Out	Time In	Time Out	Total Hours	Brief Description of Work (clear debris, tarp roofs, etc.)
Last	First						

NJ Office of Volunteerism – 11/28/12

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APPENDIX F: MISCELLANEOUS RESOURCES

NY DAILY NEWS ARTICLE

NYDailyNews.com
DAILY NEWS News

News | Sports | Gossip | Entertainment | Events | Local | Opinion | Life & Style | uPhoto | More Sections +

National | World | Politics | Crime | Headlines / Archives | Photos | Columnists | News Blogs

NYDN Home → Collections → Death Toll

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Volunteers rush to help storm-torn towns in South as death toll climbs

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BY KATHLEEN LUCADAMO
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER
Saturday, April 30, 2011

Tornado-torn towns have received desperately needed help from volunteers - including football rivals - as the death toll continued to climb.

The University of Alabama, housed in tornado-stricken Tuscaloosa, was offered volunteers from six big colleges, including sports nemesis Ole Miss.

The others are Auburn, Louisiana State, Mississippi State, Penn State and South Carolina, according to a spokesperson for the University of Alabama.

Students were collecting supplies they hoped to hand deliver and holding fund raisers for their college counterparts.

They joined scores of do-gooders who have flocked to tornado-ravaged cities where hundreds were ripped from their homes - and those whose houses are still standing have no electricity.

K9 Search and Rescue Specialists Inc.'s Tracy Sargent works with her dog Chance as they assist Tuscaloosa authorities, searching the rubble for survivors in Tuscaloosa, Ala., Saturday, April 30, 2011. (AP Photo/Dave Martin)

The Red Cross set up two shelters in Tuscaloosa to house 240 people and feed hundreds more. The National Guard has stepped in to enforce curfews and residents lined up at relief stations for water, food and other necessities like flashlights.

(Source: http://articles.nydailynews.com/2011-04-30/news/29514654_1_death-toll-volunteers-rush-tornado)

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HANDOUT 1: SOME BEST PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS IN DISASTERS

1. Developing a County Plan

Margaret Melsh suggests:

- Develop a solid relationship and understanding between the local emergency management agency and the agency being considered to manage a VRC
- Reinforce the relationships and understanding between the local emergency management agency and the agency being considered to manage a VRC, if at all possible, by some kind of written agreement that defines each organization's roles and responsibilities

Brooke Fussell suggests:

- Every county that receives Citizen Corps or other Community Preparedness funds from the State is mandated to have a Volunteer Coordinating Agency (VCA)
- The designated VCA manages spontaneous volunteers and donations in its county

Bonnie Nahas suggests:

- Be sure to include [in the planning process] non-government organizations and non-profits who have missions outside of disaster but who may be called upon for relief efforts. They already use volunteers, have position descriptions, and volunteer management expertise. If they are called upon they may take in spontaneous volunteers, train them, and mentor them. You don't want to wait until you need these folks to ask if they will serve or to figure out what their capabilities are
- The disaster does not know jurisdictional boundaries. Volunteer Prince William is written into the emergency operations plans of two cities and the county. We may very well use a city facility to operate a VRC, even if the main event is within the county, but outside the city limits. We will not open three separate VRCs for an event affecting all three jurisdictions. Talk ahead of time about how to handle such issues

Carolyn Kincaid suggests:

- With increased concern about terrorism, we now plan to operate a VRC during response, as needed, rather than only in short-term recovery
- In our area (Peninsula on East Coast with potential for bio-hazard issues) we now have an understanding with local health officials that we would respond ASAP to medically related disasters that require quick dispensing of medication to save lives. They have adopted the VRC model for working with medical volunteers who show up unannounced to assist

- Recognizing that an influx of spontaneous volunteers can cause additional problems for the impacted community, we continue to emphasize and define the VRC role as MANAGEMENT of spontaneous volunteers when they arrive. We do not RECRUIT them, except by specific skill as requested by the Incident Command or a partner organization with specific needs

Merrilee White suggests:

- Some department of county government should be ultimately responsible for the management of spontaneous volunteers
- Even if a county has entered into agreement with an NGO to operate the VRC, the responsible county entity can provide effective support because they often have better access to the resources of other county departments
- The plan must clearly define the purpose and meaning of the identification badge or wristband provided to spontaneous volunteers
- "Credentials" worn by volunteers can elicit expectations about skills, experience, insurance, or liability that may not be based in fact or reality. All stakeholders, including the volunteers, must understand the purpose and limitations that the identification carries

2. Potential VRC Team Members and Partners

Brooke Fussell suggests:

- Alabama VOAD, HandsOn, local houses of worship, American Red Cross, United Way, The Salvation Army, Lutheran Social Services, United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), and local environmental groups all play key roles in Alabama's spontaneous volunteer management

Dante Gliniecki suggests:

- The State of Missouri, Missouri Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (MOVOAD), the Governor's Faith-based and Community Service Partnership for Disaster Recovery (The Partnership), and the State Emergency Management Agency have collaborated with the Missouri United Methodist Disaster Response Team (MUMDRT) and with the AmeriCorps Emergency Response Team in St. Louis (ERT) to develop the capacity to manage unaffiliated volunteers
- MUMDRT's statewide presence, with its numerous congregations and solid commitment to disaster relief, and the ERT's fast moving, well-trained, and equipped response teams, allow Missouri to establish Volunteer Reception Centers when and where needed
- This system has been tested over and over again in Missouri. VRCs have been established in rural areas as well as in urban environments. The system has worked in floods, tornadoes, ice storms, and other disasters. The Missouri Model represents an inspiring collaboration of faith-based, private sector, public service, and government organizations

Merrilee White suggests:

- All organizations with roles in spontaneous volunteer management should have agency continuity plans to ensure they survive the disaster
- The county emergency management agency can provide continuity planning resources

3. Identifying Community Needs for Volunteers

Margaret Melsh suggests:

- As early as you can, work proactively and persistently to find out what the needs are in the impacted community and where the volunteer opportunities are
- If you can't get through to local service agencies by phone, e-mail, or Twitter, be prepared to put on your roller skates or send some volunteers out to do this for you

Josh Corlew recommends:

- Need identification was our biggest bottleneck initially. Because of the widespread damage, getting confirmation from the city about where volunteers were needed was very slow. Having a way to self-identify needs became instrumental in our response
- One thing that we wished we had put in place prior to the flood was a system through which individuals could report their needs, the need could be verified, then passed to us for project creation. I recommend partnering with another agency, such as 2-1-1, that has call center capabilities to set up the intake portion of this system

Kellie Bentz recommends:

- It is critical to build the relationships PRIOR to the storm with organizations that may need spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers (SUVs) during the immediate aftermath, or at least have a good network. In LA, we have continually invited VOAD partners to participate in VRC exercises so everyone is aware and understands the model

4. VRC Operations and Logistics

Bonnie Nahas suggests:

- We have an MOU with our county Park Authority to use recreation centers
- Look at libraries and community centers as well
- Remember, the folks in your Office of Economic Development generally know where empty storefronts and warehouses are and how to get in touch with the property managers!

Brooke Fussell suggests:

- Physical Volunteer Staging Areas have ranged from a card table with posters and a small amount of office supplies for documentation to large facilities capable of registering, briefing, training, credentialing, documenting, and deploying thousands of volunteers per day

Matthew Lyttle suggests:

- In a Volunteer Reception Center, minimize the number of functions that must take place at each station. By separating out tasks, you give the VRC staff the ability to master one particular job
- Also, having spontaneous volunteers walk from station to station helps them to better understand the purpose of the VRC and how they are being processed. When a station is responsible for too many steps, it can cause delays and mistakes that will affect the flow of the entire VRC
- You can never have too much signage! Volunteers will have more questions than you can possibly imagine, so the more information you can post on signs for them to read themselves, the better
- When practicing VRC operations, be sure to exercise the setup and demobilization of the VRC, as you will find just as many options for streamlining there as you will in the actual VRC operations
- Provide spontaneous volunteers with a "passport" that allows them to see how far along in the process they are. This also serves as proof that they visited every station in the right order

Adraine McKell suggests:

- The mapping station at a VRC is critical. And it's a great "job" for a local person who is familiar with the area
- Plan ahead of time for supplies to support volunteers. Water and food for survivors come in truckloads, but often aren't suitable for volunteers on the go (i.e., bottled water in 12-oz. bottles rather than gallons)

Kellie Bentz suggests:

- The VRC or VMC is not the only solution to managing or communicating with volunteers, but merely one tool/model to help manage SUVs
- In Gustav and Ike, while these were major disasters, we decided NOT to do a physical, in-person Volunteer Reception Center, but instead stood up a virtual volunteer center. After some revision, this proved to be even MORE effective in the recent Gulf oil spill

Josh Corlew suggests:

- For projects that will be organized by the VRC, but will take place out in the community, establish a large team (50–100) of trained Volunteer Leaders who can be mobilized to lead volunteer disaster relief projects on a moment's notice in time of disaster

5. Coordination of Hotlines and Technology with the VRC

Lee Foster suggests:

- HandsOn Central Ohio had a great experience using Google during H1N1 [swine flu epidemic]. We created a Google Form (using Google Docs) to create an online registration form for potential volunteers. Based on the information collected, we contacted the volunteers to bring them in for Clinic orientation and then had sign-up sheets for the various upcoming H1N1 clinics that needed volunteers. This form worked great; we placed a button on our homepage that linked visitors directly to the Google Form. Once the volunteers completed the form, the data appeared automatically in a spreadsheet on the back-end for us to see the potential volunteers
- We went with Google Apps because we needed something we could manipulate and have control over the fields. Had the need come along, we could have shared the back-end spreadsheet with anyone who wanted it (EMA, Health, MRC, etc.)

Merrilee White reports:

- Somewhere in the middle of the response to Hurricane Charley, we began using a web-based volunteer registration system in conjunction with our Volunteer and Donations Hotline. While we never actually used any of the registered out-of-State volunteers during the response phase, consistent messaging via the two systems effectively met the most urgent need at the time, which was to prevent an influx of spontaneous volunteers, for whom counties had no means of providing basic support

6. VRC Staffing

Josh Corlew informs:

- Our staff was heavily taxed during the 2010 flood, so plans for support and redundancy are being made for future events, including cross-training other staff members on disaster preparedness plans, in the event that the person responsible is affected or unavailable

Brooke Fussell informs:

- We utilize the mutual aid system. The county affected by the disaster that does not have the ability to set up a Volunteer Staging Area (VSA) will call in teams from around the State to bring in trained volunteers, set up a VSA, and train personnel in their county

Bonnie Nahas recommends:

- Train some volunteers from other agencies at your next VRC training/practice drill
- Make sure they have an understanding of how it works and why it is needed. These folks generally already have the volunteer management skills, which make them good at matching volunteers to posted jobs
- Try to get some of them to sign up as VRC volunteers if they can be spared from their regular volunteer duties

Sue Carter Kahl informs:

- The San Diego fires were the first time that we activated our volunteer Disaster Cadre. We didn't operate a physical VRC. We managed volunteers virtually over the phone or online. This made the most sense for that type of incident. Disaster Cadre volunteers assisted with the volunteer response and our internal operations

7. Reimbursement for Expenses Incurred

Sue Carter Kahl suggests:

- It would be helpful for organizations managing spontaneous volunteers to know what types of agreements and forms need to be used and what documentation should be maintained during the incident to be eligible for reimbursement from government sources

Merrilee White suggests:

- After four back-to-back hurricanes, many Florida volunteer centers were severely impacted by the unexpected and unbudgeted costs of overtime, supplies, fuel, and food for VRC staff
- An MOU is needed between county government and the entity designated to operate the VRC that clearly spells out the procedures for requesting reimbursement

Meg Storer informs:

- 2-1-1 San Diego has a contract with the county office of emergency services. We are reimbursed by FEMA through the county

8. Pre- and Post-disaster Coordination with Local Government Agencies and NGOs

Bonnie Nahas suggests:

- Work in advance with organizations less experienced in using volunteers to enhance their volunteer management practices. Offer training!
- The disaster is not the time for them to learn best practices in volunteer management
- Some government partners may not use volunteers regularly and will need more coaching

Merrilee White suggests:

- The "Agency Orientation Packet" (Appendix E) contains forms for requesting volunteers and documenting their service, and explains the responsibilities of the agency receiving spontaneous volunteers from the VRC. It can be printed and distributed, as is, to community organizations needing volunteers

9. Coordination with Local Information and Referral Provider (2-1-1)

   Brooke Fussell informs:

   - In disaster, 2-1-1 provides general disaster updates, fields all volunteer calls, manages the volunteer database, and can sort volunteers by Zip Code to offer volunteer opportunities to unaffiliated volunteers

   Sue Carter Kahl reports:

   - Our local 2-1-1 engaged volunteers well. The volunteers primarily helped answer calls from people who were seeking information about a variety of topics (is my home threatened, where is the closest evacuation center, I'm trying to find my family, etc.)
   - 2-1-1 had a pool of volunteers already, but needed many more to staff the surge in calls. I believe most were spontaneous and most of them came through Volunteer San Diego
   - All volunteers received orientation and training before their shifts began

   Meg Storer informs:

   - 2-1-1 San Diego has an MOU with Volunteer San Diego, and used 1,200 volunteers in 11 days in an array of capacities, from administrative support to logistical support. Most served by taking calls from citizens looking for shelter options, road closures, and relief info
   - Many of these volunteers also supported our resource center by gathering information we used to populate our online database

10. Roles for Spontaneous Volunteers

    Sue Carter Kahl informs:

    - One of our lessons learned in San Diego's fires in 2007 was that there were plenty of volunteers who responded or wanted to respond
    - With a little pre-disaster planning on how to use them, many more organizations could have benefited from the help of spontaneous volunteers
    - We have since done a lot of outreach and education to organizations that may have "surge" needs in a disaster (whether they are primarily a disaster-related organization or not)
    - We have let them know about the services that Volunteer San Diego provides and offered tools for thinking through their needs in advance of the incident

    Brooke Fussell suggests:

    - Basic volunteer roles are determined by the Incident Command, which sets up grids and requests volunteers for deployment after they've been processed through VSA
    - Our volunteers helped with debris removal and peer-to-peer, door-to-door informal outreach to survivors
    - With basic training, volunteers served as peer listeners and provided referrals to professional services as needed

Merrilee White informs:

- After a hurricane, hundreds of volunteers canvassed neighborhoods to secure signed Right of Entry forms for the Army Corps of Engineers Blue Roof Program. The Corps eventually had to hire additional canvassers in order to stay ahead of the contractors hired to apply the tarps
- One challenge was trying to explain to volunteers who had spent many long, hot days canvassing neighborhoods, why some of their counterparts were being paid for the same work
- If roles initially filled by spontaneous volunteers are later filled by paid workers, volunteers should be notified by the VRC or their supervisors. They should not learn about this development from their paid co-workers
- See the Additional Resources section for information on the National Emergency Grants program that, under certain circumstances, employs survivors for some kinds of relief work

Kellie Bentz suggests:

- In response to Gustav, volunteers distributed food, water, MREs, oxygen tanks and supplies; removed trees and other debris with chainsaws; and served in the EOC answering phones. Volunteers also applied tarps to damaged roofs; however, volunteers need training on documenting the damage prior to tarping so families and businesses get the full benefit of their insurance

11. NGOs with Roles in Spontaneous Volunteer Management

Phyllis Onstad with CaliforniaVolunteers provides the last word and a great summary, with the following advice for NGOs with roles in spontaneous volunteer management:

- Emergency managers, volunteer centers, HandsOn affiliates, and other NGOs need to build strong relationships before disaster hits
- To be credible partners, NGOs need to learn the language of disaster, especially NIMS and ICS. (Training is available at http://www.training.fema.gov.)
- NGOs need a solid plan and MOUs spelling out how they are going to finance their activities during a disaster
- To be fully reliable in a disaster, NGOs need both a Continuity Plan and an Emergency Operations Plan – before disaster strikes
- Messaging that is consistent with the spontaneous volunteer management plan needs to be prepared and approved by relevant stakeholders in advance
- The organization operating the VRC needs to build pre-disaster relationships with other non-profits that will need and be in a position to engage volunteers – and have disaster job descriptions written ahead of time
- Volunteer centers and other NGOs need to participate in VOAD/COAD and other local coalitions and networks
- No time for turf wars during a disaster – they just make everybody look bad. We need to work together! Managing this resource is a big job and all the stakeholders need to "play nicely in the sandbox."

FINAL ASSESSMENT

1. In spite of the long history of volunteerism in the U.S., volunteerism dropped dramatically after 9-11 because volunteers became fearful for their personal safety.
    a. True
    b. False
2. People volunteer:
    a. To give back to society by sharing their abilities, knowledge, and experience
    b. To gain experience and contacts that may lead to employment
    c. Because of religious beliefs
    d. To regain a sense of control over their disaster-impacted lives
    e. All of the above
3. Effective management of spontaneous volunteers:
    a. Reduces the costs of disaster response and recovery
    b. Allows community volunteers, including disaster survivors, to play important roles in the recovery process
    c. Provides opportunities for volunteers to become affiliated with relief agencies
    d. Requires excellent communication with the public
    e. All of the above
4. Which of the following is not a classification of volunteers discussed in this course?
    a. Spontaneous volunteers
    b. Affiliated volunteers
    c. Gratuitous volunteers
    d. Convergent volunteers
5. Which of the following are common characteristics of spontaneous volunteers? "X" all that apply
    a. ___ Usually call before showing up
    b. ___ Bring a wide range of skills and experience
    c. ___ Are affiliated with a voluntary disaster response agency
    d. ___ Want to help because they are grateful the disaster didn't happen to them
6. Which of the following is not one of VOAD's "Four C's"?
    a. Cooperation
    b. Coordination
    c. Control
    d. Collaboration

Final Assessment

7. Which of the following activities require input from the emergency management agency? "X" all that apply

    a. ___ Designation of a local organization to operate the VRC
    b. ___ Development of criteria for prioritizing the requests for spontaneous volunteers
    c. ___ Preparation of VRC staffing rosters
    d. ___ Development of guidelines for the implementation of a virtual VRC
    e. ___ Selection of spontaneous volunteers for specific roles
    f. ___ Implementation of in-State mutual aid agreements and/or EMAC to support VRC operations

8. Hours served by spontaneous volunteers doing work that is eligible for FEMA reimbursement may not be used as local match for the Federal reimbursement because spontaneous volunteers show up unannounced.

    a. True
    b. False

9. Which of the following is not a guiding principle in the management of spontaneous volunteers?

    a. Ensure clear, consistent, and timely communication
    b. Utilize all available local resources, including government, private sector, and non-government organizations
    c. Encourage community members to become affiliated with disaster preparedness, response, and recovery agencies
    d. Even with extensive public information on pre-disaster affiliation, spontaneous volunteerism is inevitable, and must be planned for
    e. A 12' barbed-wire perimeter guarded by armed security is the best way to prevent an influx of unwanted spontaneous volunteers

10. Strategies for effective media and public education campaigns include:

    a. Identifying the target audiences
    b. Using a variety of media
    c. Developing standardized methods
    d. Developing a media outreach strategy
    e. All of the above

11. A good way to prevent lawsuits resulting from injuries to spontaneous volunteers is to:

    a. Research the applicable State liability laws
    b. Ensure safety training is provided to spontaneous volunteers
    c. Provide clearly defined job descriptions and directions to volunteers
    d. None of the above

12. Which of the following are elements of the spontaneous volunteer management plan? "X" all that apply

    a. ___ Pre-disaster public education strategies
    b. ___ VRC operations plan
    c. ___ Identification of individuals to supervise spontaneous volunteers
    d. ___ Post-disaster public messaging plans
    e. ___ Maps of the disaster-impacted community
    f. ___ Purpose, assumptions, and policies

13. Volunteer Reception Center may also be called a _____.

14. A VRC "Go Kit" should include office supplies, forms, lists, maps, and back-up communications equipment.

    a. True
    b. False

15. Educating the public about the best ways to volunteer and donate for disaster relief should begin:

    a. Immediately after the disaster occurs
    b. About one week after the disaster to allow donors time to begin collecting items
    c. When media coverage of the disaster becomes excessive
    d. Prior to a disaster

16. Coordination of spontaneous volunteers in a major disaster requires activating a physical Volunteer Reception Center, and may also include the use of a virtual VRC.

    a. True
    b. False

17. Which of the following should be recruited to serve as part of the VRC Team?

    a. Representatives from volunteer centers
    b. Media representatives
    c. Law enforcement
    d. School district personnel
    e. All of the above
    f. None of the above

18. Which of the following are ways to promote safety and minimize risk of injury to volunteers? "X" all that apply

    a. ___ Ensure that every volunteer receives safety and job training
    b. ___ Provide job descriptions that include limits of volunteers' authority
    c. ___ Provide appropriate supervision of volunteers
    d. ___ Purchase insurance to cover volunteers while they are serving and being transported to/from their worksites
    e. ___ Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) if needed
    f. ___ All of the above

19. Mutual aid agreements between jurisdictions are used to ensure adequate staffing and other resources needed by the Volunteer Reception Center.

    a. True
    b. False

20. What alternative communication methods can be used by the VRC if phone lines are down during a disaster?

    a. Paper flyers/posters
    b. Amateur (ham) radio
    c. Variable message boards
    d. Mobile public address systems
    e. All of the above

21. A Volunteer Reception Center should remain open throughout the disaster recovery phase.

    a. True
    b. False

22. Which of the following cannot be accomplished by a cooperative agreement or memorandum of understanding between the emergency management agency and a community or faith-based organization?

    a. Establish what organization(s) will be responsible for day-to-day operation of a VRC
    b. Secure commitments to provide personnel to staff the VRC
    c. Eliminate safety risks to volunteers referred by the VRC
    d. Identify one or more alternative venues to house the VRC

23. Annual recognition events, affiliation, and long-term retention of spontaneous volunteers are formal ways of recognizing their efforts.

    a. True
    b. False

24. Providing spontaneous volunteers access to mental health screening and referral to disaster stress management assistance will help them to deal with any symptoms of post-disaster stress they may experience.

    a. True
    b. False

25. Recovery operations end with the demobilization of the VRC.

    a. True
    b. False

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