

# Ready to Respond



Disaster Preparedness and Response  
for Volunteer Centers

**The Points of Light Foundation**  
**The Allstate Foundation**

1999





Dear Friends:

The Points of Light Foundation, in partnership with The Allstate Foundation, is pleased to present *Ready to Respond: Disaster Preparedness and Response for Volunteer Centers*. This revised manual draws from and updates the previously published companion disaster preparedness manuals, *Ready to Respond: A Disaster Preparedness Manual for Volunteer Centers* and *Ready to Respond: Volunteer Centers, Partners in Disaster Response*. In addition to providing guidance to help create a coordinated disaster preparedness and response effort among Volunteer Centers and local community and national agencies, this new manual also incorporates much of what has been learned during actual disaster response and recovery efforts of Volunteer Centers over the past several years.

Disaster take a huge toll in death and injuries, property damage and economic loss. Over the past few years, an almost unprecedented number of both natural and man-made disasters have created havoc and untold devastation in communities throughout the country. Such activity has proven that no community is immune from being subject to a disaster of one type or another. An even greater tragedy is the fact that much of the devastation can be reduced through existing mitigation techniques, greater public awareness and, in local community disaster preparedness plans, the more effective utilization of spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers.

Volunteer Centers have an important role to play in disaster preparedness and response. The Points of Light Foundation and The Allstate Foundation have taken on the challenge of helping prepare Volunteer Centers throughout the country for the significant task of coordinating the activity of literally thousands of spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers who step to the forefront to help in the aftermath of major disasters. Successful recovery is dependent on a well developed preparedness and response plan and the coordinated collaborative activity of local response organizations and government agencies.

*Ready to Respond: Disaster Preparedness and Response for Volunteer Centers* specifically provides action steps designed to help Volunteer Centers become a major partner in local community collaborative disaster response efforts. We wish you the best of luck as you join with other disaster response organizations and local leaders in preparing for and ultimately responding to disaster response situations in your community.

Sincerely,

Mei Cobb  
Vice President  
Volunteer Center Development

Robert K. Goodwin  
President and CEO



## **THE ALLSTATE FOUNDATION**

**Ron Mori**  
**Executive Director**  
**2775 Sanders Road, Ste. F3**  
**Northbrook, IL 60062**  
**(847) 402-7043**

The Allstate Foundation is proud to have partnered with the Points of Light Foundation to create this important community resource. With the help of this guide, your volunteer center and your community will be better equipped to plan for, and react to, a disaster.

Allstate believes that it is the obligation of American business to share in the responsibility of society's welfare. We share your desire to provide support for those in need, especially at those times when disaster strikes. By joining forces with you and other key stakeholders in this process, we can best provide the kinds of service that our communities need and deserve.

It is unfortunate to say that today, disaster can strike anytime and anywhere. We have seen time and time again, the power of volunteers in emergency situations and the essential role they play in helping residents rebuild their lives. With your help, we can continue to demonstrate the great spirit of community service.



**Ron Mori**  
**Executive Director**  
**The Allstate Foundation**

---

Published by

**The Points of Light Foundation**

Dr. Norman A. Brown  
*Chairman of the Board of Directors*

Robert K. Goodwin  
*President and Chief Executive Officer*

Kenn Allen  
*Senior Vice President*

Mei Cobb  
*Vice President, Volunteer Center Development*

---

# Acknowledgments

- Editor** Margaret Melsh, *The Volunteerism Project*, San Francisco, CA
- Copy Editor** Maura Hurley, San Francisco, CA
- Book and Cover Design and Production**  
Nancy Webb, *Nancy Webb Graphic Design*, Oakland, CA
- Contributors** George Berry, Tina Cheplick, Karen Delaney, Laurie R. Friedman, Susan Stolten, see Appendix (page 53) for list of additional contributors
- Reviewers** Rino Aldrighetti, *National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster*, Takoma Park, MD  
Valerie Bruggeman, *DuPage County Human Resources*, Wheaton, IL  
Tina Cheplick, Independent Consultant, San Rafael, CA  
Mei Cobb, *The Points of Light Foundation*, Washington, DC  
Ben Curran, *Federal Emergency Management Agency*, Washington, DC  
Maj. David Dalberg, *The Salvation Army*, Alexandria, VA  
Paula Davis, *Florida Commission on Community Service*, Tallahassee, FL  
Karen Delaney, *Volunteer Centers of Santa Cruz County*, Santa Cruz, CA  
Bill Dell, Consultant, Aiken, SC  
Penny Dendy, *Volunteer Mobile, Inc.*, Mobile, AL  
Mary Kenna, *Volunteer Center, Community Resources, Inc.*, Fargo, ND  
Maggie King, *Volunteer Center*, Phoenix, AZ  
Elizabeth McNulty, *American Red Cross Headquarters, Falls Church*, VA  
John Patterson, *Nonprofit Risk Management Center*, Washington, DC  
Kelle Rimmel, Independent Consultant, Sunnyvale, CA  
Laurie Stinson, *The Allstate Foundation*, Northbrook, IL  
Merrilee White, *The Volunteer Center of Sarasota*, Sarasota, FL

*For additional copies of this publication contact:*

**The Points of Light Foundation**

1400 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-729-8000  
Fax 202-729-8100

---

*Dedicated*

with love and appreciation to the memory of Marilyn Mayhill for her wonderful work in developing and implementing the original *Ready to Respond* manuals published in 1993, for her exemplary service to the community before, during, and after Hurricane Andrew, for her leadership, and for giving so much to so many.

Marilyn Myers Mayhill, 1938–1997

Executive Director, Volunteer Broward, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida (1982–1994)

---

# Contents

Introduction .....	1
Assessing Your Readiness and Capacity .....	3
Analysis of Volunteer Center State of Readiness for Disaster Response .....	4
Evaluating Your Center’s Capacity for Disaster Response .....	6
I Getting Ready to be Involved .....	7
Step 1: Designate a Disaster Response Coordinator/Team .....	9
Step 2: Adopt a Resolution Committing the Volunteer Center to Disaster Response .....	11
II Joining Your Community’s Disaster Response Team .....	12
Step 3: Become Part of Your Community’s Disaster Response Plan .....	16
Step 4: Delineate Volunteer Center Role and Manage the Risks .....	17
Step 5: Establish Cooperation Agreements with Local Disaster Response Agencies .....	18
Step 6: Become a Member of VOAD or Other Interagency Planning Group .....	20
III Developing Your Response Plan .....	22
Step 7: Develop a Disaster Response Activation Checklist .....	24
Step 8: Prepare Volunteer Center Personnel and Facilities .....	25
Step 9: Develop a Volunteer Center Evacuation Plan .....	27
Step 10: Establish a Contingency Plan for Volunteer Center Operations .....	28
Step 11: Develop a Public Information Plan .....	30
Step 12: Develop a Disaster Volunteer Mobilization Plan .....	31
IV Enhancing Your Capacity .....	35
Step 13: Establish an Inventory of Professional, Corporate, and Trade Volunteer Resources .....	36
Step 14: Establish a Cost Recovery Plan for Disaster-Related Expenses .....	38
Step 15: Establish Mutual Aid Agreements with Neighboring Volunteer Centers .....	39
Step 16: Involve Volunteers in Your Operation .....	40
V Training and Testing .....	41
Step 17: Establish a Disaster Training Program .....	43
Step 18: Test Your Response Plan .....	44
VI When Disaster Strikes .....	45
VII Long-Term Disaster Recovery and Winding Down Operations .....	49
Conclusion .....	51
Appendix .....	53



## Introduction

*The Volunteer Center of the future mobilizes people and resources to deliver creative solutions to community problems.*

—VC2000 Vision Statement

There is no time when the resources of a Volunteer Center may be more appreciated than in a disaster. People in disaster planning know all too well the value of an organization that can quickly mobilize and deploy large numbers of volunteers to meet a broad array of community needs. The skills and ability to do what every Volunteer Center does every single day—match someone who wants to help with a need in the community—is exactly what disaster response systems across the country have typically lacked.

In a disaster, large numbers of untrained volunteers who have no connection to disaster relief agencies come forward to help. These spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers—also called convergent volunteers because they often converge at the scene of a disaster—can become a problem unless there is a designated place where their time and talents are efficiently and effectively linked with disaster relief and recovery efforts.

Mobilizing volunteers for disaster response is clearly a fit with the mission of Volunteer Centers. Every Volunteer Center that currently recruits and refers volunteers already has the core competencies necessary to mobilize and deploy spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers in a disaster.

Participation in collaborative planning will help a Volunteer Center determine how its expertise and resources can strengthen the efforts of other agencies and ensure a coordinated response when disaster strikes. For instance, spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers—sent by Volunteer Centers—can work side by side with trained volunteers to expand the capacity of major disaster relief agencies. Spontaneous volunteers can also fill staffing gaps and enhance the ability of community-based organizations to respond to their constituents. Finally, some Volunteer Centers may organize volunteer teams to provide direct services to help individuals and families recover when other resources are limited or unavailable.

*Ready to Respond: Disaster Preparedness and Response for Volunteer Centers* was created to help your Volunteer Center become an effective partner in community efforts to prepare for and respond to disasters. It is designed to be specific enough to enable your Center to establish a thorough and comprehensive disaster response plan, yet generic enough to allow tailoring the plan to the specific needs, capabilities, and desires of your local community.

The original *Ready to Respond* manuals were published with the generous underwriting support of the Allstate Insurance Company to serve as a disaster response road map for Volunteer Centers. Since their publication, the *Ready to Respond* manuals have been invaluable in guiding Volunteer Centers throughout the country

to create new disaster plans and programs or refine existing ones. Indeed, the manuals, together with a national training program for Volunteer Centers and other initiatives of The Points of Light Foundation, have led to the growth of a network of Volunteer Centers ready for disaster.

With publication of this revised and updated edition, we have consolidated the two original volumes into a more convenient, single-volume format; updated the content to reflect lessons learned from more recent disasters; and noted changes in the way people communicate, especially the increasing use of pagers, cell phones, and e-mail.

The publication of *Ready to Respond: Disaster Preparedness and Response for Volunteer Centers* renews and strengthens a shared commitment of Allstate and The Points of Light Foundation to help Volunteer Centers be prepared for disaster and to play key roles in community disaster planning and response.

This manual is not a blueprint, but a guide. It offers suggestions and examples that can help your Volunteer Center create the right program for your needs. The key point: planning is essential. Planning will give you the confidence to respond and the expertise to be flexible. With a well-considered disaster response plan in place, your Volunteer Center will be ready to act quickly and efficiently to serve emergency needs.

**Note:** If, during the course of reading this manual, you start to feel overwhelmed, come back and read this paragraph again; it will help you refocus.

- Of all the roles a Volunteer Center performs in a community, disaster response may have the greatest potential for directly saving lives, preventing injuries, and saving property from damage or destruction.
- Every journey begins with a single step.
- Don't let the complexity and interdependence of all the disaster functions paralyze you. Give yourself credit for stepping forward. Then pick one area and just start doing what makes sense. New energy will come from completing one task.

## Assessing Your Readiness and Capacity

Volunteer Centers vary in their readiness for response. An essential first step in developing a disaster response program is to conduct a careful evaluation of your Center's capabilities and your community's capacity to respond to an emergency.

The following checklist is the framework around which you can build your disaster plan and enhance your community's ability to respond in disaster situations. Use it to candidly evaluate your Center's current ability to cope with the massive influx and referral of spontaneous offers to volunteer. Be honest in this initial evaluation; don't hesitate to put a check in the NO column and don't feel overwhelmed if you have more NOs than YESes. An accurate assessment of your current capacity for disaster response is an absolute necessity in laying the groundwork for the development of a functional disaster response plan.

Next, review the remainder of the manual. Notice that the contents are divided into topical sections with introductory comments and related action steps. The action steps, which are numbered, correspond to the same-numbered questions on the checklist and contain detailed guidance on how to turn each NO to a YES. As you read, pay particular attention to the action steps that match the items marked NO on your checklist.

Now, returning to the NO items on your checklist, develop a detailed action plan with sequential tasks, target dates, and staff assignments. As you develop this plan, you need not follow precisely the order of the action steps in the manual. In reality, some of the steps will overlap and many can be addressed simultaneously. Logic and the needs of your Volunteer Center and community should dictate the sequencing of activities.

A word of caution: Do not try to do everything at once. It may take a full year to complete all the items on the checklist.

**Note:** As you proceed through your disaster response planning process, you will obtain many contacts throughout the community, from emergency management officials to volunteer resources. We recommend that you compile a categorized list of these contacts, including addresses and 24-hour contact numbers, and that you keep the list in an easily accessible area. This "disaster resource directory" should be updated periodically to facilitate activating operations in an actual disaster response situation. A sample is included in the Appendix on page 54.

## Analysis of Volunteer Center State of Readiness for Disaster Response

Yes	No		Completion Date
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Is a paid or volunteer staff member assigned and trained as Disaster Response Coordinator?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Is an alternate coordinator designated?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If you have more than one site, is there a coordinator for each site?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Has the board of directors/advisory board adopted a resolution committing the Volunteer Center to disaster response?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Does your community have an emergency response plan?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it designate a role for the Volunteer Center in emergency situations?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Are the Volunteer Center's disaster role and responsibilities clearly defined and shared with all concerned?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are appropriate risk management policies and procedures in place?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Are cooperation agreements in place with local offices of disaster relief agencies, such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Is your Volunteer Center a member of a local interagency disaster planning group, such as VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster)?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Is there an activation checklist for launching operations in a disaster?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Are the Volunteer Center's facility/staff prepared?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Is a plan in place for evacuating the Volunteer Center offices?	_____

Yes	No		Completion Date
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Do you have a contingency operations plan if the Volunteer Center facility cannot be used?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If electrical power is lost?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If telephone service is lost?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	11. Is a public information plan in place?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	12. Is a disaster volunteer referral plan in place?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	13. Do you have a list of volunteer resources from local professional, corporate, and trade contacts?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	14. Does the Volunteer Center have a cost recovery plan for disaster-related expenses?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	15. Are mutual assistance plans in place with neighboring Volunteer Centers?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does your Volunteer Center have e-mail and Internet access to communicate with other Volunteer Centers and disaster partners?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	16. Is there a plan for involving volunteers in Volunteer Center operations?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	17. Are staff and volunteers trained at least annually in disaster response?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	18. Is a plan in place for testing the Volunteer Center's emergency operations procedures?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the Volunteer Center participate in community disaster response drills?	_____

## Evaluating Your Center's Capacity for Disaster Response

As your Volunteer Center considers its role in disaster response, evaluate some basics:

What are the Center's physical limitations? How much office space and how many telephone lines do you have? Do you have a way to get paid and volunteer staff to your office or to an alternate site in an emergency, such as access to vans or four-wheel-drive vehicles?

What is your technological capacity? Do you have access to a photocopier? A fax machine? Computers? Modems and Internet access? Cellular telephones? Pagers? A generator? Portable equipment such as a laptop computer? Broadcast fax capability? Does your staff know how to use the equipment?

Remembering that staffing refers to both paid and unpaid workers, what is your staffing potential? How many people can you put to work during an emergency?

What are your budget limitations? Do you have contingency funds to use in an emergency or authorization from your funding agency to respond to disaster needs?

What special skills does your Volunteer Center bring? Do you have experience working with people from varied cultural backgrounds? People of various ages? Foreign language speakers? People with disabilities?

## SECTION

## Getting Ready to Be Involved

Getting buy-in at all levels of your organization is essential if your disaster program is to be effective. Employees, board members, and other volunteers all have key roles to play in response, preparedness, and planning.

Leadership for the disaster planning process is critical for its success. Select a coordinator to lead the effort and, if at all possible, an assistant coordinator. These positions can be filled by paid staff, board members, or community volunteers. A team of two or more has several advantages over a one-person effort: It provides an expanded skill set to apply to the problems at hand; distributes the workload; keeps team members motivated; and is a great way to involve volunteers.

The primary role of the coordinator/team is planning—developing the Volunteer Center’s disaster plan and program over a period of time. But when a disaster occurs, the coordinator/team must play a different role, that of activating and managing the Volunteer Center’s response operations. In the latter role, the coordinator/team will manage a larger response team made up of all Volunteer Center employees and willing volunteers.

Assignment as disaster coordinator or team member should not be taken lightly. Because the coordinator and team members will develop specialized knowledge and skills in disaster preparedness and response, they must be ready to respond when a disaster strikes, no matter how inconvenient. While the Center’s personnel policies and response plan will spell out expectations for all staff, the disaster coordinator/team will provide leadership for the response team and must be fully committed to act.

One risk that Volunteer Centers face is turnover. Whether the coordinator is a board member, paid staff, or community volunteer doesn’t really matter. The fact is, people come and go. Prepare for this possibility by asking for and expecting frequent reports and written documentation of plans, procedures, agreements, resource lists, etc.

Focus your efforts on getting buy-in from the highest-level decision makers in your Center. These are most likely to be your board of directors and your executive director. Once their backing is in place, ask for a board resolution affirming the organization’s commitment.

Here are some hints on how to win top-level commitment for a disaster plan:

- Assess your Volunteer Center’s disaster planning needs.
- Assess the hazards and vulnerabilities your Volunteer Center faces.
- Evaluate the benefits to your Center, such as added visibility and an expanded volunteer base.
- Identify the resources you think you will need to successfully complete the project and ideas of where you might access them.

- Prepare a proposal detailing the project, explaining the hazards and vulnerabilities, the scope of the project, your estimate of the resources needed and their cost, and the reasons why you believe the project is necessary.

Volunteer Centers undertaking the building of such a plan and program may well ask how it is to be funded. The reality is it may be difficult to get start-up funds and communities vary greatly in resources and priorities. While some Volunteer Centers have received financial support from a local United Way, community or corporate foundation, local business, or service club, most have approached the task by committing existing resources, primarily in the form of staff time. As your Center faces this question, make the commitment to start and progress as quickly as time and available funds allow.

Weigh the funding issue against the benefits to the Volunteer Center of having a disaster plan and program. Chief among those benefits is the feeling of security that comes from being prepared for any emergency. Many Centers find that working together on disaster planning enhances teamwork in other areas of endeavor, and the experience of helping one's community recover from a disaster is a source of tremendous satisfaction. Another benefit reported by Volunteer Centers is an increase in their visibility in the community as a result of disaster planning or response efforts.



*The idea of any organization or entity trying to deal with a disaster alone is not feasible. All the resources and creativity of a community must be brought into play in order to recover. Harnessing resources and connecting people is what Volunteer Centers do best.*

**—Damon McLeese, City of Aurora (CO) Volunteer Center**

**Step 1****Designate a Disaster Coordinator/Team**

Many factors may influence who is assigned as the coordinator and assistant coordinator. The size, organizational structure, and location of your Volunteer Center are important considerations. The coordinator may be the Volunteer Center executive director, another paid staff member, or a volunteer staff member. Keep in mind that the coordinator will have the key role in the subsequent development of the Volunteer Center's disaster response plan. Depending on the size of your Center and staffing availability, you may want to appoint additional members to the team.

- 1. Appoint a coordinator and an assistant coordinator.  
Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_  
Assistant Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Develop formal job descriptions for each role established to ensure clear responsibilities and lines of authority. A sample job description is provided on the next page.
- 3. Add additional team member names if desired.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4. For Centers with more than one site, appoint a coordinator and assistant coordinator for each site.

## Sample Job Description

Disaster Response Coordinator—The Disaster Response Coordinator may be a paid or volunteer staff member. The coordinator is responsible for the overall development and maintenance of the Volunteer Center’s disaster response plan. The coordinator’s responsibilities are categorized by two situations:

### Normal Volunteer Center Operations

- In accordance with the guidelines set forth in this volume, develop the Volunteer Center’s disaster response plan or, if applicable, review and revise the existing plan.
- Acquire and maintain preparedness equipment and supplies.
- Establish contacts with local emergency response officials and disaster relief agencies.
- Establish contacts with local agencies that would need volunteers in disaster situations.
- Maintain a volunteer resource inventory of local professional, corporate, and trade contacts; connect groups with other disaster relief agencies for predisaster training and assignments.
- Develop and send template press releases regarding volunteer needs in times of disaster to newspapers, television stations, and radio stations.
- Recruit volunteers to supplement paid staff for disaster response; train staff and volunteers for disaster preparedness and response.

### Disaster Response Operations

- Activate the Volunteer Center’s disaster response plan.
- Notify community emergency response officials when the Volunteer Center is ready for operations.
- Make initial contact with other disaster response agencies in accordance with established memoranda of understanding.
- Contact each listing in your professional, corporate, and trade volunteer resource inventory to determine their availability.
- Develop and maintain a list of volunteer service needs in agencies. Update the list frequently and disseminate it to the personnel taking incoming calls from people wanting to volunteer.
- Notify neighboring Volunteer Centers in accordance with established mutual aid agreements.
- Maintain frequent contact with media sources to update information being disseminated to the public regarding volunteer needs.
- Debrief personnel and prepare final report.

## Step 2

# Adopt a Resolution Committing the Volunteer Center to Disaster Response

- 1. Determine if your Volunteer Center's board of directors/advisory board has adopted a resolution addressing the Center's role in disaster response.
- If yes, the disaster coordinator should review the resolution to determine if it adequately expresses the goal of referring spontaneous nonaffiliated volunteers in times of disaster.
- If no, the disaster coordinator should recommend adoption of a resolution or policy statement committing the Center to a disaster response function.
- 2. Make this policy statement part of the disaster response plan records.
- 3. Address personnel issues in disaster response operations, such as extended working hours and compensation for overtime. Propose personnel policy changes or additions as needed and request board approval.

## Sample Board Resolution

Moved that the Board of Directors of the Volunteer Center of XXXXX hereby resolves the following:

- The Volunteer Center is named in the XXXXX County Plan for Disaster Recovery as the organization designated to refer spontaneous nonaffiliated volunteers to agencies providing assistance in disaster recovery.
- The Volunteer Center Disaster Response Coordinator and the Assistant Coordinator shall be paid at the regular salary rate for the time worked at the Regional Recovery Center with compensatory time awarded as follows: One day off for every week worked in disaster response operations. Note: This line item is applicable only if the Disaster Response Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator are paid staff members.

## SECTION



## Joining Your Community's Disaster Response Team

Begin an inquiry into your community's preparedness for disaster by finding out what the local or state emergency response plan entails and how it utilizes volunteers.

Government agencies or departments, such as water and transportation services, fire and police departments, are likely to have disaster contingency plans. A city or state office of emergency services or civil defense office may be in place, as well. A large city may have a detailed plan that addresses the following areas:

- Definition of disaster/emergency
- Command structure during emergency operations
- Initial stage emergency response
- Damage assessment
- State/county disaster assistance
- Federal disaster assistance
- Coordination of humanitarian relief
- Public information
- Long-term recovery

A smaller community may rely on a more informal response network, including a volunteer fire department and emergency response teams.

If there is a plan, who is responsible for its implementation? How often is it updated? Who has copies? What is, or could be, the Volunteer Center's role?

Some communities plan for emergencies with the assistance of a coalition known as VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster). Others have developed independent interagency coalitions for disaster planning and response. The Volunteer Center should look for such a group, join it, and become an active member.

Your community, its hospitals, or military installation may have an annual disaster drill. The Volunteer Center should participate.

Frequently the American Red Cross is the designated lead disaster response agency because of its congressional charter to provide relief in time of disaster and its agreements with local or state governments. Other organizations may play leadership roles as well. Typically, such organizations convene other groups to develop and maintain a community-wide disaster response plan.

Regardless of who takes the lead in disaster response, there is a role for many volunteer-based groups, including neighborhood and civic clubs, congregations, and human services organizations. After a major disaster, arts and literary organizations, schools, museums, and libraries may be closed. Their skilled volunteer

coordinators could provide temporary, but invaluable, assistance in recruiting and interviewing volunteers.

If the support of the volunteer community is not incorporated into an emergency response plan, your Volunteer Center may wish to convene representatives of various organizations, along with lead response agencies, to discuss a collaborative effort that specifically incorporates volunteers in relief efforts. See “Planning for Volunteer Needs” on page 36 for a list of responsibilities often taken on by voluntary organizations. Informally survey representatives before or during such a meeting to find out what services each participating group can offer.

Don’t forget to include local businesses and corporations in your planning, especially those with active community volunteer programs. Their well-organized, well-coordinated volunteer teams can assist in building relationships as well as delivering services. Work through a corporate volunteer council or local chamber of commerce to reach many companies at once.

### **Defining the Volunteer Center’s Role**

Consider the most effective role for your Volunteer Center within the community plan. Many Volunteer Centers expand their traditional volunteer recruitment and referral role to assume a leadership position in coordinating a community’s spontaneous unaffiliated volunteer response during a crisis and as long as recovery continues. Whatever its role, the Volunteer Center can provide tremendous support to other agencies mobilizing and managing their own volunteers for disaster relief.

One of the questions likely to come up is whether your Center will send volunteers to help people in their homes or businesses. Consider carefully, preferably in advance, how your Center will respond to these requests. While many Volunteer Centers manage direct service activities that may prepare them to assume such a role, others do not. Consider also whether other agencies in the community are better prepared to provide this kind of service and are willing to take it on. For a fuller discussion of this topic and suggested guidelines from a Volunteer Center that does refer volunteers to individuals, see page 55 in the Appendix.

Volunteer Centers may also be asked to take on roles that go beyond volunteer mobilization, for instance, information and referral or management of donated goods. Again, such decisions require careful consideration, preferably before a disaster occurs.

Your Volunteer Center can play a valuable predisaster role by offering a workshop for the staff of mental health agencies, child care organizations, adult daycare facilities, animal care groups, and other agencies that need guidance in how to use volunteer assistance during an emergency. Help them anticipate the effect of a disaster on their program, how volunteers might help, and what volunteer skills would be needed, including standardized job titles and descriptions. Establishing a “common language” will help communicate effectively to the Volunteer Center during a disaster. Such training could be offered in cooperation with the Red Cross or other agencies with disaster expertise.

Consideration of the Volunteer Center's role in disaster leads directly to concerns about liability. Assuming your Volunteer Center's disaster role is essentially the same as its everyday role, chances are the appropriate risk management policies and procedures are already in place. Check to see whether they are, and how they will apply in a disaster situation.

If your Center takes on new roles in a disaster, additional steps may be required to minimize the added risk. Read the following section for suggestions on risk management for disaster volunteer programs. See also "Should Your Center Make Referrals to Individuals?" in the Appendix on page 55.

### **Keeping Risks Under Control**

When disaster strikes and volunteers flock to help, two potential calamities could suddenly threaten your Volunteer Center: liability for harm caused by your volunteers and liability for injuries that volunteers suffer while helping. To minimize risk, your Center should follow three simple steps: plan, train, and document.

By developing a detailed disaster response plan to guide your Volunteer Center's efforts during the next emergency, you will go a long way toward avoiding future problems. Section III of this manual provides guidance on the steps you will need to take to develop such a plan.

Keep records of training your Volunteer Center provides for disaster volunteers, including when and what they have been taught, especially about safety procedures. While your goal in dealing with disasters and volunteers should be to prevent harm, it's sensible to remember that your Center may be held liable for the quality of its supervision and training.

Keep in mind that while most liability cases are settled without trials, defense can be costly. Prepare your organization by having all agreements in writing. You can help keep your defense costs down should a suit arise by having documentation on every aspect of your operation readily accessible.

Assess and address the potential risks for each category of volunteers associated with your disaster program, including pretrained volunteers who help staff during disaster operations; spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers recruited after the disaster to help staff your operations; spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers referred by your Volunteer Center to other agencies for disaster work; and spontaneous volunteers deployed by your Center to do disaster work in the community who may or may not be managed and supervised by your Center.

In addition, you will want to determine how your state law regards the liability of volunteers in emergency situations. Volunteer protection laws are designed specifically for volunteers undertaking their ordinary activities. Even if the volunteer is exempt from liability, a claim can still be brought against your Volunteer Center.

It is also important to know whether volunteers are covered by workers' compensation. If workers' comp doesn't apply—and it probably doesn't—the Center may want to investigate providing accident and injury insurance for volunteers. In any regard, you should be able to advise your volunteers about their coverage.

Risk management requires more than just reviewing your insurance needs. It is an important management tool for helping you review your operation and keep it under control. Understand your Center's risk management guidelines and how they would apply in disaster situations. For more information on risk management for volunteer programs, obtain a copy of *Mission Accomplished: A Practical Guide to Risk Management for Nonprofits* (see page 17, bottom, for source information). And by all means, have your plans reviewed by a risk management expert.

### Strengthening Relationships with Other Organizations

Once nonprofit and other groups agree on their roles in disaster response—always in collaboration with local government and lead disaster response agencies—a memorandum of understanding can be prepared. It will provide important documentation that prevents duplication of efforts, closes gaps in service, and contributes to smooth delivery of aid to those in need. See sample Memorandum of Understanding on page 19.

A typical memorandum includes the following:

- Purpose

- Definition of disaster

- Method of cooperation—preparedness and response

- Activation procedures

- Cost recovery/reimbursement of disaster-related expenses

An important aspect of your agreement is determining in advance how to work with the media. In the event of disaster, the public should receive correct and consistent information about where and how to volunteer. To avoid conflicting messages, only one person from each agency should talk to the media. Consider appointing a joint public information officer to speak for all response agencies. See Step 11 for more information on this topic.



*Disaster preparedness not only brings out the opportunity for more collaborations, it identifies key players in problem solving and community building.*

—**Sherry Mitchell,**  
**George W. Romney Volunteer Center, Detroit, MI**

## Step 3

## Become Part of Your Community's Disaster Response Plan

Your city or county should have an emergency operating plan and an emergency management official responsible for the plan. Plans for communities vary widely, depending on size, location, degrees of need, and available resources. Review your community's plan to determine if and how extensively the management of volunteers is included in the plan.

It is possible to have agreements with different levels of government concurrently. For example, if you are county-based, you may want to have agreements with both your county government and the cities within it. Start with the largest entity that corresponds to your Center's geographical area and develop an agreement. Then, if appropriate, use that document as a model for others.

1. Identify your community's emergency management official.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

(office, home, mobile, pager)

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

2. Contact the emergency program official and set up a meeting to introduce yourself, discuss the background of your Volunteer Center's disaster program, and obtain a copy of the community's emergency operation plan. If the community does not have an emergency operating plan, recommend establishing one.

**Note:** The absence of a community disaster response plan does not preclude the continuation of your Volunteer Center plan development and implementation. On the contrary, it gives you an excellent opportunity to provide input in the development of a well-defined community disaster response plan that avoids duplication of effort and facilitates productivity.

3. Review your community's plan to determine if it specifies a role for volunteers.
- If it does, determine how the Volunteer Center can complement the plan with regard to mobilization of spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers.
- If it does not, recommend to the emergency program manager that the plan be amended to formalize the volunteer effort and include a role for the Volunteer Center.

#### Step 4

## **Delineate Volunteer Center Role and Manage the Risks**

It is of critical importance that the Volunteer Center's disaster role and function be clearly understood by the Center staff, agencies, and the community in general. Some Volunteer Centers perform primarily as a volunteer referral agency while others, with the help of volunteers, provide direct services to community residents. Because Volunteer Centers function within the context of their own unique communities, each Center should define its disaster role based on its community's needs and adopt appropriate policies and procedures.

Obviously, in the aftermath of a disaster, the volume, pace, and intensity level of operations are going to be significantly greater than normal, underscoring the importance of focusing on the Center's mission: mobilizing volunteers to meet community needs. It is critical to ensure that all concerned parties are aware of the Volunteer Center's role in disaster response. Stay in the business you are in. Don't try to be all things to all people.

Concerns about liability are heightened for most of us when planning for and responding to disasters. The best approach is to determine what risk management components are already in place, how they will apply during a disaster, and whether additional steps need to be taken.

- 1. Decide what your Volunteer Center will and will not do in disaster response. Develop your list to apply to your Center and community. Create a written summary and distribute copies to Center staff (paid and unpaid) and all concerned agencies. A sample from a Texas Volunteer Center is included in the Appendix, page 57.
- 2. When memoranda of understanding are being established with other agencies, always include a disclaimer releasing the Volunteer Center from selected responsibilities regarding referred volunteers. This may seem superfluous, but having the statement in writing helps ensure that customer agencies are aware of the Volunteer Center's function. Example: The Volunteer Center is not responsible for screening, verifying credentials, training, or recognizing volunteers being referred to the Red Cross.
- 3. Adopt appropriate risk management policies and procedures. Obtain a copy of *Mission Accomplished: A Practical Guide to Risk Management for Nonprofits*. This book and other publications on liability and risk management can be obtained from the Nonprofit Risk Management Center, 1001 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20036-5504.

## Step 5

## Establish Cooperation Agreements with Local Disaster Response Agencies

Because of its congressional charter to provide mass care in time of disaster and its agreements with local or state governments, the American Red Cross is often the designated lead voluntary disaster response agency. The Salvation Army and other agencies may also play leadership roles.

1. Contact the directors of local units of disaster relief agencies. Explain the role of the Volunteer Center and the status of your disaster response plan. Describe how the Volunteer Center could enhance the overall relief efforts by coordinating the unaffiliated spontaneous volunteers. It is most important to clarify that the Volunteer Center's goal is to streamline volunteer coordination and avoid duplication of effort. The number of spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers who arrive at Red Cross or Salvation Army relief sites in the aftermath of a disaster may exceed the needs of these agencies. Rather than turning the volunteers away, the agencies can direct the volunteers to contact the Volunteer Center, which may know of an area where volunteers are needed. Likewise, if the disaster relief agencies do need volunteers for a particular project, they can contact the Volunteer Center as a source.

Local Disaster Relief Agency Contacts:

American Red Cross \_\_\_\_\_

Salvation Army \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Convene representatives of the various organizations involved in emergency response, including lead community and volunteer agencies, to discuss collaborating to incorporate spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers in relief efforts.
3. Draw up a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with each of the lead disaster response groups to pledge your mutual support in disaster relief. A sample is provided on the next page.

Agency/Organization

Date MOU Signed

American Red Cross

\_\_\_\_\_

Salvation Army

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Memorandum of Understanding Between the Volunteer Center and \_\_\_\_\_

### Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum of understanding is to establish a working relationship between the Volunteer Center and \_\_\_\_\_. It suggests a pattern by which we may coordinate our personnel and service facilities, and provides a broad framework for the cooperation between the organizations in time of emergencies and disasters. The outcome of the cooperation between the two organizations is the expeditious recruitment, assignment, training, and recognition of volunteers for our service area.

### Definition of Disaster

A disaster is an occurrence such as a hurricane, tornado, storm, flood, high water, wind-driven water, tidal wave, earthquake, drought, blizzard, pestilence, famine, fire, explosion, building collapse, transportation wreck, or other situation that causes human suffering or creates human needs that victims cannot alleviate without assistance.

### Method of Cooperation

On a biannual basis, \_\_\_\_\_ and the Volunteer Center will meet to update each other on organizational developments related to the mission of utilizing volunteers in a disaster. A system of rapid communication in time of emergency will be updated as necessary. Opportunities will be sought to work together during large-scale disaster exercises on the basis of this agreement and subsequent plans. Both organizations will share with each other how basic volunteer records are kept and shared. \_\_\_\_\_ and the Volunteer Center will seek to work with the communities in their service areas on volunteer coordination in time of disaster.

During large-scale county emergencies \_\_\_\_\_ and the Volunteer Center will establish communication links between the organizations for the purpose of recruiting and assigning volunteers to \_\_\_\_\_ in the disaster. The Volunteer Center will be kept closely informed of \_\_\_\_\_ volunteer needs. \_\_\_\_\_ will redirect overflow volunteers to the Volunteer Center for assignments. The Volunteer Center is not responsible for screening, verifying credentials, or training volunteers being referred to \_\_\_\_\_. Each organization will make every effort during the disaster to keep the public informed of the cooperative effort between the Volunteer Center and \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ County.

Following the close of disaster operations, volunteers recruited by the Volunteer Center and referred to \_\_\_\_\_ will be recognized by the \_\_\_\_\_ and the Volunteer Center independently or jointly depending on the needs of the organizations. \_\_\_\_\_ is very interested in offering post-disaster training to all volunteers participating in the disaster.

This memorandum of understanding shall be in effect as of the date indicated below and shall remain in effect until 30 days after written notification from either party that they desire to change the provisions of this memorandum.

Agency/Organization	Name	Date
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

## Step 6

## Become a Member of VOAD or Other Interagency Planning Group

To be a player in the disaster arena, you need to build relationships, understanding, and trust. Interagency coalitions are the perfect vehicle for achieving this goal. Especially if your Volunteer Center is new to disaster work, consider the value of maintaining steady attendance at meetings. A year's worth of regular participation during peacetime can save time and improve response capacity during a disaster.

As part of disaster preparedness planning, many communities have formed a coalition known as Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD). The VOAD mission is to foster more effective service to people affected by disaster through cooperation in mitigation and response and avoidance of duplication of effort. VOAD is not an operational organization in and of itself. Rather it is a coalition of various volunteer organizations with formal disaster response plans. These organizations share with each other information about their capabilities, resources, and special areas of expertise.

Local VOAD groups are linked through their affiliation with State VOAD chapters, and State VOADs are affiliated with National VOAD (NVOAD). VOAD is organized primarily around statewide and U.S. Territory chapters, of which there are 49. National members include the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, Lutheran Social Services, Catholic Charities, Church World Service, and many other groups (see Appendix, page 58, for complete list). The Points of Light Foundation has been a member of NVOAD since 1994.

Many communities have formed local interagency coalitions based on models other than VOAD. Their membership includes major response and relief agencies as well as community-based organizations. These coalitions may have funding and paid staff whereas typically VOADs do not. Like VOADs, these groups offer Volunteer Centers the opportunity to learn more about the roles, capacities, and resources of other disaster agencies and to become more connected to the community's response network.

1. Determine if your community or state has a VOAD. If it does, contact the chair, become a member, and attend all meetings.

Community VOAD Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Contact # \_\_\_\_\_

(office, home, mobile, pager)

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

State VOAD Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Contact # \_\_\_\_\_

(office, home, mobile, pager)

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

- 2. If VOAD is not active in your local area, determine if there is another interagency coalition devoted to disaster response planning. If so, contact the chair, become a member, and attend all meetings.

Interagency Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Contact # \_\_\_\_\_

(office, home, mobile, pager)

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION



## Developing Your Response Plan

Once you have evaluated your Volunteer Center's strengths and resources and your community's capacity to respond to an emergency, you are ready to tackle a written plan. A number of considerations will influence the shape of your plan and the scope of your Center's response.

The extent and type of disaster, of course, determines the level and method of response required. Consequently, in any planning process, it is important to consider the many circumstances that could trigger the need for emergency action. A partial list includes:

- Blizzard
- Building collapse
- Chemical spill or industrial accident
- Earthquake
- Explosion
- Fire
- Flood
- Hurricane
- Nuclear accident
- Tornado
- Transportation accident

Your geographical region may have a greater or lesser degree of vulnerability to certain types of disaster, but no location can be considered immune from catastrophe. Your community may never experience a catastrophic hurricane or earthquake, but you may be asked to assist another Volunteer Center.

In any event, different circumstances demand somewhat different responses. A disaster plan will address needs that range from moderate to major as well as several stages of response, including emergency relief, short-term recovery, and long-term assistance, each requiring unique kinds of help. The following are some of the key questions you will have to address in order to develop a comprehensive response plan:

*When and how will the Volunteer Center activate its response plan and initiate disaster operations? Who will make the decision to activate? How will staff be notified, especially if the disaster occurs during nonworking hours?*

*How will staff and facility preparedness impact the Center's ability to respond? Are your employees and volunteers personally prepared at home and work? Have survival equipment and emergency supplies been stocked at your facility?*

*What if your Center needs to be evacuated?* What procedures are in place for protecting people and getting them out safely? How will valuable equipment and irreplaceable records be protected?

*Is your Center prepared to operate in the face of contingencies?* What happens if power or phone service is lost? What is the plan if your facility is uninhabitable or inaccessible?

*Is there a plan for communicating with the media?* Is there a media list to facilitate contacts so you can publicize your operations? Is there an identified spokesperson for your Center who can respond to inquiries from the media?

*What is your Center's plan for mobilizing disaster volunteers?* Are there procedures for identifying and updating community needs? What forms will be needed? How will you handle "problem" calls?

Planning for disaster response is easier, and the results better, when tasks are shared. Consider inviting staff from other disaster relief agencies, local emergency managers, and directors of corporate volunteer programs to plan with you.

A disaster may someday challenge your Volunteer Center to the full extent of its capacity. Advance preparation, a well-drawn plan, and a committed team with broad community support will go a long way toward making your response effective and productive.

By following the steps in this section and capturing the results on paper, you will have completed most of the essential elements of your Volunteer Center's response plan. For suggestions on how to organize the material, there are two sample Volunteer Center disaster plan outlines on pages 59 and 60 of the Appendix.

While not addressed in this manual, your Volunteer Center may also wish to consider its response to other kinds of community emergencies, such as a riot or public health crisis.

**Note:** From this section forward, unless noted otherwise, the word staff will refer to the Volunteer Center's disaster response team encompassing both paid and unpaid disaster workers. To reiterate a point made in Section I of this manual, while only one or a few people may serve on the disaster planning team, it is assumed that all employees and trained volunteers will serve on the Center's disaster response team.



*Whether the service is repairing damaged homes or businesses, feeding neighbors in need, or using their skills and talents for computer work, connections, confidence and a feeling of community will be the results of being prepared for a disaster.*

—Mary K. Hall, Dare Voluntary Action Center, Kill Devil Hills, NC

## Step 7

**Develop a Disaster Response  
Activation Checklist**

Once the Volunteer Center has determined its role within the community disaster response plan, a step-by-step response plan should be developed, beginning with a Volunteer Center disaster response activation checklist.

- 1. Decide how and when your Volunteer Center will activate. Identify who can make the decision and what the possible “triggers” might be, including the occurrence of a disaster significant enough to cause damage in your area; a warning of an impending major disaster; declaration of a local emergency; an official request from your local emergency management official or the American Red Cross.
- 2. Establish a mechanism such as a “phone tree” or call-up list for alerting volunteers and employees in the event of a disaster (see sample on page 61 of the Appendix). This list should include names, addresses, and 24-hour telephone and fax numbers. Alternates should be listed in case primary personnel are not available.
- 3. Distribute the list to all Volunteer Center personnel to keep at home or in an alternate location in the event they are off site when a disaster strikes.
- 4. In case telephone service is interrupted, establish a backup activation plan such as the following:

If a disaster occurs during working hours, all personnel who are not on-site should report to the Center immediately or as soon as feasible. All personnel already on-site should remain there.

If a disaster occurs during nonworking hours, team members should report to the Center within four hours.

## Step 8

# Prepare Volunteer Center Personnel and Facilities

Volunteer Centers that intend to play a disaster response role need to be sure that staff members are as prepared as possible, at home and at work. Each employee and key volunteer should have a family disaster plan that includes a cache of emergency supplies, a home evacuation plan, including an alternate place for family members to meet, and an out-of-area contact who can relay messages. These precautions will increase the chances of your staff being able to remain at work or to return to work sooner.

Check with local disaster relief agencies for community disaster education materials. There are many excellent publications and videos available on personal and family preparedness.

Staff should also have smaller, portable disaster kits in their cars or alternate locations. The car kit should contain, at a minimum, water, a small first aid kit, and a flashlight and batteries. Other useful items include a change of clothes, comfortable shoes, moist towelettes, a toothbrush, and other personal care items.

As you plan for the full range of disaster situations, a primary concern of your Volunteer Center should be its ability to remain functional. Ask yourself, What kind of supplies and equipment would we need in the wake of an earthquake? If a hurricane were imminent? In the event of flooding? If we were stuck at the Center for three days? The Red Cross has many resources to help you answer these questions.

As with any office, plan to keep heavy-duty flashlights and extra batteries on hand, at minimum. Consider potential needs for other supplies and equipment—extra water, food, sanitary supplies, tools, emergency first aid kit. People may be required to stay in the office overnight or even for a few days, so it's advisable to keep at least some basic supplies on hand.

Your office may be destroyed or inaccessible, so lists of volunteers and employees, with addresses and phone numbers, should be in the hands of all supervisors. Create and store a Go-Kit (office in a box) so you can quickly set up operations in an alternate location.

Duplicate sets of accounting records and essential computer programs and data should be stored off site, in two separate locations, if possible. Be sure to include disaster files, such as a database with agency information or list of disaster volunteers. Develop a system for updating information that needs to be current. If you have a laptop computer, keep your disaster files on it and have it ready to go in case you need to move to another location.

**Hint:** Many of us put off assembling supplies and otherwise preparing our homes and our workplaces for disaster. Use humor and other motivational tools to inspire staff to cooperate.

- 1. Ask each staff member to develop a family response plan (American Red Cross has information on how to do this).
- 2. Ask each staff member to assemble and maintain a portable kit for the car or other accessible location.
- 3. Keep a supply of flashlights and batteries on hand in the office.
- 4. Keep a supply of large heavy-duty plastic bags and waterproof tape on hand so equipment such as computers and filing cabinets can be protected from water damage.
- 5. Make a list of other supplies and equipment needed; then acquire, and store them.
- 6. Prepare duplicate documentation of important records and keep them stored in a remote location.
- 7. Develop and maintain a routine for refreshing preparedness items that have a shelf life—certain medical supplies, water, batteries, etc.
- 8. Create and keep ready one or more Go-Kits (office in a box) for operations in an alternate location. See page 62 of the Appendix for a sample Go-Kit contents list.

## Step 9

# Develop a Volunteer Center Evacuation Plan

One of the most important aspects of preparing for disaster response is developing a customized checklist for evacuating the Volunteer Center office spaces. Its primary purpose is to protect the health and safety of those on the premises (including visitors and other non-staff) but consideration should also be given to preserving important records and equipment. In all circumstances, human safety must come first, and property protection or salvage second.

While the following list identifies a number of areas of concern for safeguarding Volunteer Center personnel, facilities, and equipment, it is by no means all-inclusive or applicable to every location. Key differentiating factors will include the part of the country you are in and the types of hazards most likely to happen there, whether your Center owns or rents its space, and whether your facility is self-contained or in a building with other tenants. Evaluate your Center's vulnerabilities and develop your evacuation plan accordingly.

- 1. Assign individuals and backups to specific preparation and evacuation jobs, including directing visitors and other non-staff.
- 2. Identify who in your building is responsible for shutting off power and water supplies and for other facility preparations.
- 3. Display office and building evacuation routes.
- 4. Identify perishable irreplaceable records, materials, and merchandise and prepare to safely store and waterproof them, or move them off site if appropriate.
- 5. Identify a location in the building where mobile equipment and files may be moved to protect them from wind or rain damage.
- 6. If appropriate, see that storm shutters are installed or have thick plywood cut to fit outside windows with permanent attachments for easy installation. Water damage from blown-out windows is a major source of loss.
- 7. Post shutdown and evacuation procedures in a conspicuous and easily accessible area.
- 8. Ensure all personnel are familiar with preparation and evacuation procedures. Brief new staff (paid and volunteer).
- 9. Identify a location where staff should meet following an evacuation; post the information.
- 10. Ensure that staff cooperates with authorities and complies with the community's evacuation safety requirements.

## Step 10

# Establish a Contingency Plan for Volunteer Center Operations

A vital consideration in a Volunteer Center's disaster preparedness plan is how to operate in the face of contingencies, such as loss of Center facilities, electrical power, or phone services.

Plan in advance for contingency locations for Volunteer Center operations. Estimate needs for square footage, phone lines, and other amenities. Businesses, shopping centers, and community foundations may be willing to donate space in an emergency. Local governments and the Red Cross may offer assistance in identifying suitable locations. Solidify the arrangements with a written agreement.

Advance planning should address the demand for emergency communications. A community can typically expect a three-day telephone outage after a major disaster, so the Volunteer Center needs to consult with the telephone company about priority status for re-establishing communications and other options, including establishing an emergency 800 number, call forwarding, or voice mail.

Cellular phones are increasingly popular; their popularity, however, can result in overcrowded frequencies. Pagers, too, are becoming indispensable tools for those who must respond to emergencies. If your Volunteer Center invests in one or more cellular phones and/or pagers, include the access numbers on all emergency contact lists. Some cellular companies have lent equipment to relief agencies for disaster response.

Short-wave radio clubs have a long history of supporting relief efforts by relaying important messages. Most people think of these radios as the ultimate backup system for communications—the one that will work when all others fail. Many such clubs have formal arrangements with the Red Cross and local governments to provide emergency communications. Ask the Red Cross or local government to help you link up with an amateur radio group. If possible, try to get one volunteer from the group assigned to work with your Volunteer Center in a disaster. If this is not successful, recruit in the community for an individual with a ham license to become part of your disaster team.

When telephone service is available, your Volunteer Center will probably wish to arrange a phone bank to handle volunteer calls. Phone banks already may be in place at the United Way, City Hall, or the phone company. Talk in advance to phone company representatives about how and where a phone bank could be established. Any phone bank should include one or more restricted, unpublished lines for use in contacting other agencies, other Volunteer Centers, and the media.

- 
- 1. Create a backup plan for Volunteer Center operations in the event the Center offices are destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. Establish a list of agencies that may have space available if you need to move to an alternate site; include day and night telephone numbers for contact persons at these agencies.
  - 2. Evaluate your Center's ability to function in the event of loss of electrical power. Assess whether you have access to emergency generators. Keep a supply of battery-powered light sources on hand.
  - 3. Establish an alternate means of communication should telephone services be lost. Contact your local phone company for guidance. You may want to establish access to cellular phone communications or CB/ham radio operations. Keep in mind that some telephone systems are dependent upon electricity, and if electrical power is lost, so are telephones.

## Step 11

**Develop a Public Information Plan**

Getting accurate information to the public is critical in obtaining the best support and minimizing the confusion and chaos in the wake of a disaster. Your coordinator may or may not be the public spokesperson, but someone should have that important role.

Develop a media list for newspapers, television stations, and radio stations (including the designated Emergency Broadcasting System station) in advance and keep it current. Be sure to note the name, position, and contact numbers of the person to whom media releases should be sent. Include fax numbers and e-mail addresses on your list.

Provide the media with contact names, telephone, and fax numbers at the Volunteer Center as well. Discuss with the media how best to publicize information about volunteer needs.

Explore the possibility of involving public relations professionals or staff from other agencies or businesses to help with a media plan. Request support from a local chapter of the Public Relations Society of America or a group of advertising agencies.

- 1. Identify the media outlets in your community and establish single points of contact with local newspapers, television stations, and radio stations. Communication with a single individual in any agency minimizes confusion, duplication of effort, and erroneous information. Consider using broadcast fax capability, if you have it, to send to all media contacts as a group. Another broadcast possibility is group e-mail.
- 2. Position press releases in advance with all media sources. The press releases should include statements that direct potential volunteers to call the Volunteer Center before arriving at a disaster site. The "call up, don't show up" approach will enable you to coordinate needs and resources over the phone, rather than trying to direct individuals in person. See Appendix, starting on page 63, for sample press releases.
- 3. Plan to establish a daily contact routine with media sources. This will enable the broadcast of up-to-date, accurate volunteer and service needs and minimize the convergence of helpers at inappropriate sites.
- 4. If your community has an established disaster response plan, it most likely includes a communications or public affairs component. When you become part of that emergency response plan, coordinate your public information needs with the appropriate person or department.

## Step 12

**Develop a Disaster Volunteer Mobilization Plan**

A pre-established plan for mobilizing and deploying volunteers will streamline operations and enable your Center to provide help in an expeditious manner.

- 1. Develop a list of agencies that provide relief in disasters and that may need volunteers in the disaster aftermath.
- 2. Ask these agencies to identify their anticipated needs for spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers. Pose the same question to people attending a VOAD or other interagency meeting. Create a simple chart (see sample below) to record the information.

Name of Agency	Jobs for Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteers
Food Bank	food sorters, drivers
Salvation Army	sandwich makers, food servers

- 3. Create a form to use at the time of the disaster to capture more detailed information about the agencies' volunteer needs. See Appendix, page 66, for sample form.
- 4. Establish a method of categorizing volunteers and needs for volunteers. List volunteer needs by agency, job description, location, and skills. List volunteers by the same categories.
- 5. Create a form for recording volunteers' skills, availability, and contact information at the time of the disaster. Make copies of the form and store for emergency use. See Appendix, page 67, for sample form.
- 6. Develop disaster volunteer referral guidelines for use by your staff and a method to track volunteer assignments. Sample guidelines and a form are provided on the following pages.
- 7. Make a plan to access additional phone lines. Consider installing extra phone lines in advance to handle the mass of incoming calls. Remember to keep one or two lines separate from the phone bank to allow the Center to make outgoing calls. Alternatively, you may want to set up operations at a site that already has a phone bank in place, such as city hall, the United Way, a local school, or public TV station.
- 8. For disasters where phone service is disrupted or intermittent, develop a plan to turn your Volunteer Center or alternate space into a reception center for walk-in volunteers. If the disaster covers a large or densely populated area, multiple volunteer reception centers may be necessary. See Appendix, page 68, for information on how to set up a volunteer reception center.

- 9. Establish a method to update and circulate information on agencies' volunteer needs to your staff. Here it is most critical that the Volunteer Center staff be thoroughly familiar with what the Center does and does not do as established in Step 4 (see page 17).
- 10. Not everyone who contacts you is a prospective volunteer. Anticipate calls from the media, from disaster victims, and from people wanting to donate money, goods, or services. Add a brief statement to your volunteer referral guidelines about how these and similar calls should be handled.
- 11. Establish a procedure for handling "problem" calls. There will always be people who are more a hindrance than a help: incessant callers, prank callers, and persons who may be potentially dangerous to a situation. The more prepared you are to handle these individuals, the easier your job will be in an actual disaster response situation.

If your Center will be referring volunteers to private homes and businesses, complete the additional planning tasks listed below. For more details, refer to the suggestions in "Should Your Center Make Referrals to Individuals?" on page 55 of the Appendix.

- 12. Develop a statement that clearly defines from whom you will accept requests for help and what kinds of requests you will accept. Plan to post this by every phone.
- 13. Develop a set of policies and procedures that will protect both the volunteers and the people needing help.
- 14. Create a simple risk management plan that includes a description of insurance coverage for volunteers, a plan for screening out high-risk requests, safety procedures, and what to do in case of accidents. If your Center already manages direct service programs or organizes group projects, these things may already be in place.

## Sample Guidelines Referring Volunteers in Times of Disaster

Look over the most current list of opportunities, making a mental note of jobs appropriate for people with physical limitations, such as telephone answering and reception, data entry, interviewing, and interpreting. Teens can usually do more physically taxing things but need a little more supervision. Volunteers may have to supply tools for some jobs, e.g., gas-powered chain saws for cutting fallen trees.

- Ask the caller what area he/she lives in and make referrals as close to the volunteer's neighborhood as possible. This will eliminate further traffic congestion.
- If the volunteer has an idea of what type of work he/she wants to do, give him/her no more than two referrals. Giving more than two referrals takes too much time. Tell the caller if it doesn't work out or if he/she needs further assistance to please call back.
- If the volunteer does not have an idea of what he/she wants to do, find out if he/she has any physical limitations. Some people cannot work in the sun because of medication and others cannot do heavy lifting; both can answer phones.
- Give the volunteer a person's name to report to, the address, and an idea of the type of work he/she will be doing.
- Advise volunteers to bring their own water, food, and other necessary items, such as insect repellent. They should wear appropriate clothing for the job and the location, such as heavy-soled shoes and long-sleeved shirts for work outside.
- If the caller needs volunteers, turn the call over to the Disaster Response Coordinator or Assistant Coordinator. Your Coordinator will use Volunteer Center-approved role and risk management guidelines to decide if the request for assistance is appropriate for your Center.
- Take names and phone numbers of all people who call.
- If you are using a referral sheet to tally referrals, place a mark in the appropriate column for each volunteer who calls. If the caller represents a group, write the number of volunteers that will be involved. If you are using a separate form for each volunteer or group, note on the form the agency or agencies to which you referred the caller.



## SECTION IV

# Enhancing Your Capacity

Once you've completed your basic advance preparations (Steps 1 – 12), you have the essential elements of a disaster response plan. What follows are some questions typically asked at this point and answers that can enhance your plan and make its implementation even more successful.

*What organized groups are likely to offer their services following a disaster?* Some groups may already have agreements with your community's office of emergency services or American Red Cross chapter but others may be looking for a way to help.

*What potential sources of funding and reimbursement are there for disaster response?* As you plan, identify as many sources as possible and their funding guidelines. Develop an expense tracking system for disaster response and, when a disaster occurs, use it to record all related expenditures from day one; it's no fun to go back and reconstruct.

*What if your building is damaged or inaccessible? What if none of your staff is available?* Neighboring Volunteer Centers may be able to provide extra personnel and other resources. Plan ahead by establishing mutual aid agreements with them.

*How will you expand your operations staff as the volume of work escalates?* If your response strategy includes involving new volunteers, you need to plan for them.



*We saw thousands of youth, volunteering day after day for many hours, working with adults who appreciated their energy and recognized their commitment to others. Our community also became connected; people cared about people and did whatever they could to help those in need.*

**—Mary Kenna, Volunteer Center, Fargo, ND**

### Step 13

## **Establish an Inventory of Professional, Corporate, and Trade Volunteer Resources**

Good disaster planning requires the Volunteer Center to make as many advance arrangements as possible since any emergency is bound to present unanticipated challenges. Advance arrangements allow you the option of setting up a computer database listing potential volunteers by their specific skills and experience: carpentry, heavy equipment operation, professional mental health training, foreign language ability, as well as their access to tools, equipment, or transportation. An important early step is to discuss your needs with groups that can provide teams of willing volunteers.

In the immediate wake of a major disaster, your Volunteer Center might be swamped with calls from thousands of prospective volunteers. Your challenge will be to channel that response as effectively as possible. But in smaller disasters, or in the recovery stage of a major disaster, you may need to recruit volunteers, especially those with special skills, such as heavy equipment operators, carpenters, and truck drivers.

Even in the immediate relief stage of a major disaster, experienced Volunteer Centers have found that pre-organized response teams—groups from unions, service clubs, congregations, and businesses, for example—work more effectively than individuals. Other organizations that may be able to provide volunteers include military units and veterans groups, professional associations, schools and universities, and national service programs. If you do not already have a list of such groups in your community, check with your municipal or county government, library, or local information and referral agency.

Maintain a list of groups and organizations that express interest in disaster volunteering, making sure to have two current contact names and phone numbers for each. Suggest to such professional associations as the National Association of Social Workers or the American Counseling Association that they consider in advance what services they could offer during an emergency. Bar associations might establish a legal hotline for disaster victims. Medical societies could help staff clinics. Local chapters of the American Institute of Architects could assist in postdisaster rebuilding efforts.

As you contact and build relationships with all of these groups, emphasize the value of their members affiliating with a disaster relief agency and receiving pre-disaster training.

### **Planning for Volunteer Needs**

As you work with other organizations to plan for disaster response, anticipate the many contingencies that arise in an emergency. While the following are not normally Volunteer Center responsibilities, other groups in your community may wish to support disaster volunteers by arranging to meet the following needs:

- *Housing for out-of-area volunteers.* Approach hotel and motel chains, military bases, college campuses, corporate and religious retreat sites, and the local chapter of Meeting Planners International.
- *Meals for volunteers.* Contact restaurants, caterers, soup kitchens, the Salvation Army, the Red Cross.
- *Transportation for volunteers.* Consult with car rental agencies, public transportation, tour bus companies, and businesses with four-wheel drive vehicles or trucks. In some circumstances, cities may provide transport.
- *Counseling for volunteers.* Utilize specially trained mental health practitioners to provide emergency counseling for disaster victims and volunteers. Cases of posttraumatic stress disorder are not uncommon.

- 1. Many corporations, such as Allstate Insurance Company, IBM, and Target, encourage their employees to volunteer through organized programs. Contact businesses in your area to determine if they are willing to provide volunteers, funds, or services. Chambers of commerce may be helpful in facilitating these contacts.
- 2. Many religious groups have organized volunteer groups to assist in disaster relief. Talk to local congregations about their availability for volunteer services.
- 3. Contact neighborhood or other groups that serve non-English-speaking populations. They may be a vital source of bilingual volunteers.
- 4. Unions
- 5. Student groups (high schools and universities)
- 6. Service clubs, such as Jaycees, Lions, Kiwanis, Elks, 4-H, etc.
- 7. Government employees
- 8. Military bases
- 9. Medical professionals
- 10. Child care providers
- 11. Agencies that provide direct services to the community in an emergency, such as food banks, emergency shelters, and soup kitchens
- 12. Others
- 13. Add these resources to your "disaster resource directory" discussed on page 3 of the manual. Obtain the name and telephone number of a primary and alternate point of contact in each organization. Update contact information annually. See sample on page 54 of the Appendix.

## Step 14

**Establish a Cost Recovery Plan  
for Disaster-Related Expenses**

More likely than not, the Volunteer Center will incur unplanned expenses during disaster response operations, e.g., a large number of long distance phone calls, additional phone lines, staff overtime. As with the development of every aspect of a disaster preparedness plan, anticipating as many contingencies as possible before a disaster strikes will lessen the confusion and chaos in the disaster aftermath. Likewise for unforeseen bills. Assign someone to design a tracking system and to manage the tracking process when it needs to be implemented.

**Note:** Keeping good records of the volunteers you mobilize will help you make your case for funding.

- 1. Be prepared to track emergency expenses separately should you activate your disaster plan, for example, by designating a line item in your accounting system.
- 2. Establish forms and procedures for recording and tracking all disaster response expenses. Be sure to cover required authorization for expenditures (either all expenditures or just those above a certain level); requirements for petty cash, rental and purchase of equipment, and use of credit cards; and expectations for timely submission of receipts.
- 3. Ask other organizations such as the following to assist in defraying the cost of Volunteer Center operations during disaster response, either with donated services, use of equipment, or monetary contributions:
  - United Way
  - Local and state government
  - Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
  - Local businesses and corporations
  - Gifts in Kind America (a component of United Way of America)
  - Foundations
  - Others
- 4. Most newspapers in disaster areas will print names of agencies needing donations for disaster relief. Ask your local media to include the Volunteer Center when they list agencies accepting financial contributions.

**Step 15****Establish Mutual Aid Agreements  
with Neighboring Volunteer Centers**

Volunteer Centers outside an impacted area can provide invaluable assistance to a Volunteer Center directly affected by disaster. For example, as the affected Volunteer Center copes with the area's most critical needs, calls from potential volunteers and requests for services from local agencies can be relayed to the neighboring Volunteer Center for handling. An outlying Volunteer Center can also help manage the rush of volunteers from its immediate area by directly referring the volunteers based on information provided from the affected Center. Neighboring Volunteer Centers may also be called upon to staff relief crews in the affected site. An agreement among partnering Volunteer Centers makes for better relations by clearly delineating each group's responsibilities.

- 1. Work with other local Volunteer Centers to determine the specific responsibilities each Center will have in the event one is affected by a disaster. Be sure to specify the responsibilities of the affected Volunteer Center, e.g., relay information on needs to neighboring Centers on a regular basis. A sample mutual aid agreement is provided in the Appendix on page 70.
- 2. Evaluate each participating Center's resources and capabilities.
- 3. If applicable, have your state or regional association of Volunteer Centers discuss state-wide mutual assistance plans.
- 4. Make sure you can communicate with neighboring Volunteer Centers and other Centers across the country via e-mail.

## Step 16

# Involve Volunteers in Your Operation

Trained volunteers can be a tremendous asset to your disaster program, particularly during disaster operations. But, like paid staff, some of these people may be prevented from or delayed in reporting for duty, just when you need them most.

In such a case, new volunteers can help bail you out (figuratively, if not literally). Drawn from the pool of spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers who have contacted your Volunteer Center, these new volunteers can be a valuable resource if a few guidelines are followed:

- Start with a description of the job, whether it's answering phones in the phone bank or entering data on the computer.
- Make sure the person is qualified before inviting them to start work.
- If initial contact is by phone, schedule a face-to-face interview.
- Orient, train, and supervise. Group orientation and training of phone bank staffers can save precious time. Be sure all workers know who is supervising them.
- Assess aptitude for the job during the volunteer's initial shift and decide whether to retain or re-assign.

In summary, practice good volunteer management skills and encourage your staff to do so also.

1. Develop a plan for involving volunteers in your disaster operation. Write job descriptions and describe how the volunteers will be oriented and trained.
2. Prepare a checklist for volunteer orientation that covers key topics, including update of disaster situation, disaster mission of Volunteer Center, and pertinent policies and procedures.
3. Set up a system for documenting the training that volunteers receive both before and in the midst of disaster operations. Keep information up to date for each person.
4. Plan to recognize the volunteers in some way when the disaster is over.

## SECTION

## V

## Training and Testing

No plan is complete without a training and testing program. These activities provide an essential bridge between developing the written plan and implementing it in a high-stress disaster situation. Practicing the correct procedures may help prevent glazed looks when it's time to activate a response plan or expressions of panic when an evacuation is required.

One of the key lessons of disaster management is to “train to the plan.” Once the response plan is complete, distribute responsibility for execution of various parts to staff and volunteers, then train them in those roles. Schedule reviews of the entire plan at least once a year and make sure everyone gets a copy.

Training staff for their roles in disaster operations should occur at least once a year, more often if the staff is large or if there is significant turnover. Make it a hands-on training with practice in processing requests from agencies, interviewing prospective volunteers, managing the flow of information, and entering data on the computer. Check to see if neighboring Volunteer Centers have some experience with this kind of training. Emergency management professionals in your area may also be able to help in designing and conducting operational training.

Employees and volunteers need advance help when preparing to cope with a changing situation and working in a tense, highly charged environment. Provide training on stress management, how to approach stressed-out coworkers, and how to deal with problem volunteers. Include tips on how to avoid burnout. Explore with mental health agencies and your local American Red Cross chapter what resources they can offer on these topics.

Another critical area for training is personal preparedness. Seek out local agencies, such as the American Red Cross, that offer materials and workshops on this topic. Be sure to cover what disaster supplies should be carried in one's car and how to be prepared in the workplace.

The training offered by other agencies may help fill in some of the gaps in your knowledge or planning. Expand your awareness of such topics as hazard mitigation, the incident command system, writing a response plan, disaster communications technology, disaster mental health, and managing volunteers in disaster. Sources for workshops and courses on these and related subjects include colleges and universities, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), state and local emergency management agencies, the American Red Cross, and The Points of Light Foundation. If you are participating in a local response network, you might plan joint training and exercises.

The overall purpose of disaster exercises is to improve your Volunteer Center's operational readiness. If planned properly, exercises can improve individual

performance, clarify roles and responsibilities, improve coordination, uncover resource gaps, and reveal planning weaknesses. There are five basic types of disaster exercises:

- Orientation—Introduces or refreshes participants to plans and procedures. Methods include lecture, panel discussion, media presentation. May include review of lessons learned from prior experience.
- Drill—Tests single emergency response function, e.g., evacuation procedure. Focuses on a single or limited portion of overall response plan in order to evaluate and improve it.
- Tabletop exercise—Roundtable discussion in response to a specific scenario plus a series of messages to role players. Provides practice in problem solving for emergency situations. Includes critique of actions taken and decisions made.
- Functional exercise—Time-pressured, realistic simulation of an emergency. Includes a scenario, timed sequence of messages, and communication between players and simulators. Includes evaluation of individual and system performance.
- Full-scale exercise—Adds a field component that interacts with a functional exercise through simulated messages. Tests the deployment of a seldom-used resource.



*When planning for or responding to any type of disaster, it is imperative that we put aside our fears, preconceived notions, and turf battles as we work side by side to assist neighbors in need.*

**—Patricia Eaker, The Volunteer Center of Chattanooga, TN**

## Step 17

# Establish a Disaster Training Program

Training is of vital importance in effective disaster response plans. Training in personal preparedness will benefit staff and their families and strengthen the Volunteer Center's ability to operate. Orientations and training for staff built around the Center's plan ensure a quicker, more effective response when the unexpected happens. Finally, becoming familiar with the community's emergency response operations and with the extraordinary situation in which the Volunteer Center will find itself in the wake of a disaster will go a long way toward reducing confusion and expediting relief to disaster victims.

- 1. Contact your local American Red Cross chapter and emergency management agency to arrange for Volunteer Center staff to participate in general disaster response management courses, including correspondence courses.
- 2. Contact the American Red Cross to discuss having a presentation for your Center's staff on personal preparedness.
- 3. Establish a schedule, for example, at regularly scheduled staff meetings, to conduct periodic reviews of the Volunteer Center disaster response plan for Volunteer Center paid and volunteer staff. Include discussions of each individual's responsibilities during disaster response operations.
- 4. Plan and conduct hands-on Volunteer Center disaster operations training for all staff. Schedule at least once a year, more often if needed.

## Step 18

**Test Your Response Plan**

Through testing, a Volunteer Center can evaluate its response plan, identifying flaws in response procedures and areas where improvement is needed. Volunteer Centers can probably create their own drills and tabletop exercises without too much effort. Since planning and executing more complicated exercises can be daunting, it makes sense to piggyback on what others are doing. If the Red Cross or a local government agency is planning a functional exercise, see if your Volunteer Center can be included. Experts from those agencies may also be able to help you plan your own activities.

- 1. Design and conduct simple drills for your staff around evacuation and other emergency procedures. Start with an orientation and end with a critique.
- 2. Contact the American Red Cross and your community's emergency services manager to discuss participation of the Volunteer Center in drills and exercises they conduct.
- 3. Plan a functional exercise to test your plan for disaster operations. Seek help from the Red Cross, local government, or an experienced neighboring Volunteer Center with exercise design and creation of disaster scenarios and messages. Offer an orientation beforehand and finish up with an evaluation of the exercise.

## SECTION

## VI

## When Disaster Strikes

When a disaster occurs, a well-developed response plan will enable your Volunteer Center to move quickly to assist the community.

- Begin your activation by alerting and assigning staff. Be sure to quickly notify your board members that, at least for a while, “it won’t be business as usual.”
- Contact other disaster response groups on your list and inform the media that the Volunteer Center will provide regular updates on volunteer issues. In the case of a major disaster, impress upon the media the importance of minimizing chaos by telling potential volunteers to “call up, don’t show up.”
- When contacting agencies, start with those with which you have a Memorandum of Understanding and any others you expect will have significant volunteer needs. Let them know that you are activated and ready to take requests. As soon as possible, expand your outreach to all agencies by whatever method possible—broadcast fax, phone calls, paging, even foot messenger. Be sure to include a message for agencies in your first media announcement.
- When you need to recruit volunteers, call those businesses and organizations with which you’ve made advance arrangements.
- If you have mutual aid agreements with other Volunteer Centers, let them know your status and needs. Additional support and resources may be available from Volunteer Centers outside your area. If your needs are great, consider sending e-mail messages to all the Centers in your state or even neighboring states.
- Establish a telephone bank as soon as possible but don’t activate more lines than you have volunteers to staff. Remember to have one or more restricted, unpublished lines for contact with the media, agencies, and other Volunteer Centers. If phone service is intermittent or disrupted, open and publicize a volunteer reception center for walk-in volunteers. When phone service resumes, make the transition to a phone bank.
- Assign most staff to take calls from potential volunteers. Assign one or a few people to stay in touch with agencies requesting volunteers. Update and post agencies’ needs on the wall or circulate them on preprinted forms. If possible, list volunteer needs by agency, job description, skill, and location. Ask the agencies to inform the Volunteer Center when sufficient volunteers have arrived at their site so that the Volunteer Center can direct other volunteers elsewhere.
- Make volunteer-job matches by skill needed, location, and type of work. Give each caller a contact name at the volunteer site. Inform the volunteer that the Volunteer Center makes every effort to keep current on volunteer needs at each

site but that the influx of volunteers may result in too many people at a particular site. If that happens, ask the volunteer to check in with the Volunteer Center for another assignment.

- It is especially important during the stress of a disaster to be sensitive to various cultures. Your staff should know the community well enough to understand different dietary needs and preferences, religious observances, customs, and languages. Be certain that your public service messages are broadcast on non-English language stations. Assign bilingual volunteers to work with people who don't speak English.
- Think about groups that may need special attention—elderly persons, people with disabilities, children, and people living in remote areas.
- Remind volunteers that they have to do the jobs that need to be done, not necessarily the jobs they want to do. If someone is reluctant to take a particular job, urge him or her to call back in a few days or a few weeks when specific needs change.
- If the influx of volunteers threatens to overwhelm the Volunteer Center, consider setting up a satellite processing or staging area near the disaster site. In the immediate aftermath, this provides a convenient place for volunteers to meet, get updated information, and find support.

As you put your plan into action, remember that it is only a guideline. Stay flexible to unexpected needs and opportunities.

### Avoiding Potential Problems

In any disaster, a small percentage of people will cause more than their share of problems. Some are attracted by the excitement of an emergency; others may have more serious personality problems.

Make sure that people who deal with potential volunteers directly or on the telephone know either how to respond to problems or to refer problems to someone who can. As with any "hotline," there will be crank calls, for example. If problems are significant, get advice from the Red Cross or a mental health professional.

Be alert for sensitive situations or unusual behavior and decide in advance how to handle them. Ensure that your staff understands and follows your Center's referral policies and procedures, for example, referring as child care volunteers only those who work with children professionally or on a regular basis. Be especially careful with anyone who arouses suspicion—again, follow established procedures.

Don't refer out-of-town volunteers to individuals offering to house volunteers in their homes. The media may offer a free or low-cost "People to People" type advertising that enables individuals to make such connections and avoids liability issues for the Volunteer Center.

Inform potential volunteers that the Volunteer Center cannot provide transportation costs to the disaster site, even for a volunteer with needed skills. Experience has

shown that people who lack resources often become “refugees,” unable to provide for their own needs and dependent on the system that is already strained to assist disaster victims.

Train your staff to be alert to profiteers. If a potential volunteer offers to cut trees, for example, make certain that no cost is involved. The referral of volunteers to individuals represents some unique liability considerations. Reread “Defining the Volunteer Center’s Role” and “Keeping Risks Under Control” in Section II; action steps 12 through 14 in Step 12; and “Should Your Volunteer Center Make Referrals to Individuals?” on page 55 of the Appendix.

In the wake of a major disaster, new assistance groups often emerge. While a new organization may legitimately respond to needs, it also risks diluting the effectiveness of established organizations. The safest course for your Volunteer Center is to work with known nonprofit, civic, and governmental organizations. A legitimate non-profit organization will have a 501(c)(3) designation from the IRS.

### **Dealing with Burnout**

Extraordinary circumstances bring out extraordinary response from good-hearted people, but no one individual and no organization, no matter how dedicated, can do it all. Be alert to the fact that you and your staff may also be affected by the disaster.

Find ways to help yourself and others cope with stress and frustration. Ask your volunteer and paid staff to focus on what they are accomplishing, not what remains to be done. Humor works wonders; use it and encourage it in others.

Take time to nurture Volunteer Center workers and yourself. Remind them that pacing is important and a rested worker today will make a better contribution tomorrow. Be alert to signs of burnout and suggest that an overworked person take a rejuvenating break from responsibility. Rotate staff; the fresh ideas and renewed energy will be worth it.

In some cases, intervention may be required. The director should be prepared to remove from an assignment any disaster worker who is showing repeated poor judgment, and the staff team should be prepared to support those decisions. The director should also be open to hearing others’ concerns about his or her own burnout and be prepared to address it with serious action (take time off, leave the site, assign a replacement for a couple of days). This will model healthy and appropriate behavior and reinforce the vision of a strong, efficient, and caring staff team.

Finally, refer any worker or volunteer with signs of posttraumatic stress to a mental health professional. A postdisaster support group may be advisable.

If your operation is fairly intense for any period of time, consider having a mental health professional onsite daily to observe and to meet with anyone who is feeling stressed. If possible, try to arrange for round-the-clock coverage by getting a 24-hour contact number.

## You Are Not Alone

While disaster work can be highly stressful, you don't have to go it alone. Help is out there and it's worth pursuing. Whether you need help with staffing your operation, a critical piece of equipment, or advice and moral support, consider the following resources: other Volunteer Centers; local and state government agencies; disaster relief agencies; other agencies in your immediate area; and local businesses, corporations, congregations, and service clubs.



*The CVS Volunteer Center was the first point of entry for unaffiliated volunteers during the St. Croix River Flood of 1997 in Washington County. The Center mobilized over 2,000 volunteers to fill sandbags and build dikes, keeping the St. Croix River from flooding communities along it. We were successful; flooding was kept at a minimum.*

**—Chloette Haley, Community Volunteer Service, Stillwater, MN**

## SECTION

## VII

## Long-Term Disaster Recovery and Winding Down Operations

When the immediate crisis is over, long-term recovery and rebuilding may require volunteers with different skills and longer commitment. Determine what volunteer needs can be addressed by the Volunteer Center by consulting directly with lead relief agencies and local officials and by attending “resource coordination” committee meetings convened by VOAD or other organizations.

While national faith-based groups typically deploy their members for disaster recovery, there may also be opportunities for local chapters of organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Christmas in April, and ICARE to clean up debris and help rebuild homes. Volunteer Centers can be helpful in connecting the latter groups with disaster needs.

Recovery is a period with its own challenges. Peak volunteer interest has dissipated, the rush is over, adrenaline is down, and recruitment will be harder. This is the time to tap those sources with long-term links to the community, including religious and neighborhood groups.

Revive interest by suggesting that the local newspaper do a feature story on volunteers continuing to help. Find ways to empower local residents to lead cleanup, fixup projects in their communities, working side by side with other volunteers.

After your Volunteer Center role is completed, your computer database may be rich with new names. Some may become regular volunteers, but don't be disappointed if the vast majority participate only during crisis. They have sampled the satisfactions of volunteering and may someday return.

Find as many ways as possible to thank those who volunteered, including using personal notes, newspaper ads, billboards, and television messages. Team up with the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and other agencies for a joint recognition of volunteers' contributions.

Be sure to recognize and thank your own staff and volunteers who worked hard during disaster operations. Give traditional appreciation gifts, such as candy, flowers, potted plants, mugs, and gift certificates. For those who consistently worked extended hours and/or at an extremely intense level, time off (consistent with personnel policies and applicable laws) is recommended. Consider other ways to support staff as they return to business as usual—keep a fresh fruit basket stocked, have healthy lunches catered every day for a week, organize a picnic with leisure activities at a local park.

You may find a stack of bills on your desk for telephone costs, equipment purchases, and staff overtime. Seek reimbursement from the United Way, your local government, or another agency with which you made advance arrangements. Community foundations might also be approached with a request for funding.

Take time out to involve those who staffed your operations in a postdisaster critique. Ask and record answers to questions such as, What worked well? What could have worked better? What lessons did you learn? Encourage everyone to speak. Summarize the points made during the critique and save for future reference.

Ask for feedback from people who volunteered for the disaster. Was it a rewarding experience? What would have made it better or easier? Would they do it again? At the same time, get feedback from the agencies to which volunteers were sent. Ask them to rate the fit between their needs and the numbers and types of volunteers available. Finally, ask what would improve the referral process the next time around.

Conclude this process by capturing what you've learned in the form of a final report. It will serve you well for years to come—as a reminder of important lessons and details, as a document to proudly present to funders, the media, and disaster partners, and as a great tool to share with other Volunteer Centers

Finally, review your disaster response plan, make any appropriate adjustments, thank your staff again, and enjoy the satisfaction of a job well done.



*We were overwhelmed by the support from unaffiliated volunteers from all over the country who came to our aid during our recent disaster. If Volunteer Centers all over the country linked our disaster preparedness efforts and databases together we would truly be a “force.”*

**—Gloria Black, Seminole Community Volunteer Program, Lake Mary, FL**

## Conclusion

Planning for disaster response provides Volunteer Centers with two types of opportunities. The first is the chance to strengthen the Center internally. By stocking emergency supplies, mitigating hazards, and drilling on emergency procedures, the Volunteer Center is better equipped to survive a disaster. The Center is further aided by having each staff member and volunteer personally prepared and thus more ready to face an emergency and to take on a role in disaster operations. Finally, working together to respond to a disaster—whether actual or simulated—can be a source of great pride for all involved.

The second type of opportunity that comes with disaster response planning is external. It has to do with outside relationships and how the Volunteer Center is perceived in the community. Broad-based community disaster planning offers a chance for the Volunteer Center to make new and valuable friends among the organizations involved in disaster preparedness and response. Participation in community disaster planning also brings added visibility to the Volunteer Center and recognition as a leader or partner in convening and coordinating community resources to solve community problems.

Whether your Volunteer Center's goal is to build a disaster program from the ground up or to refine one that is already in place, here are some final tips:

- Don't go it alone—involve staff, community volunteers, and board members in the planning process
- Utilize available resources, including expertise from disaster relief agencies, training in disaster management, and publications such as this manual
- Plan systematically—assess your current capacity and readiness, develop an action plan, implement, and evaluate
- Stick to it—maintain a steady pace, keep the goals in sight, and plan rewards for completion of key steps

The hope is that, when disaster strikes, your Volunteer Center will be known as the organization that enables the helpers to help—and famous for its role in helping the community recover.



# Appendix

## Resource

### Source

Sample Disaster Resource Directory . . . . .	54
<i>The Volunteer Center of Contra Costa, CA</i>	
Should Your Center Make Referrals to Individuals? . . . . .	55
<i>Volunteer Centers of Santa Cruz County, CA</i>	
Sample Volunteer Center List of Responsibilities . . . . .	57
<i>Volunteer Center of Texas Gulf Coast, TX</i>	
Member List, National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) . . . . .	58
<i>National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster</i>	
Sample Volunteer Center Disaster Plan Outlines . . . . .	59
<i>Volunteer Center of Story County, IA</i>	
<i>The Volunteerism Project, San Francisco, CA</i>	
Sample Volunteer Center Disaster Phone Tree . . . . .	61
<i>The Volunteer Center of San Mateo County, CA</i>	
Sample Go-Kit Contents List . . . . .	62
<i>The Volunteerism Project, San Francisco, CA</i>	
Sample Press Releases . . . . .	63
<i>Volunteer Center of San Fernando Valley, CA</i>	
<i>Volunteer Center of Sonoma County, CA</i>	
<i>United Way Volunteer Center, Brevard County, FL</i>	
Sample Form for Volunteer Requests from Agencies . . . . .	66
<i>The Volunteer Center of San Mateo, CA</i>	
Sample Form for Volunteer Information . . . . .	67
<i>The Volunteer Center of San Mateo, CA</i>	
Volunteer Reception Center Description and Layout . . . . .	68
<i>Prepared by Darlene LaMont for the Volunteer Center of Sonoma County, CA</i>	
Sample Mutual Aid Agreement . . . . .	70
<i>The Volunteerism Project, San Francisco, CA</i>	
Descriptions of Key Disaster Relief Agencies . . . . .	72
<i>Organizations Listed</i>	
Internet Sites of Interest to Volunteer Centers . . . . .	75
<i>Jim Aldrich, San Francisco, CA</i>	

# Sample Disaster Resource Directory

## Disaster Resource Directory—Full Data Set Sample

<p><b>Resource</b> California Conservation Corps</p> <p><b>Type</b> Private nonprofit</p> <p><b>Dept./Contact</b></p> <p><b>Address</b> P.O. Box 2405, 900B Dorman Drive Richmond 94802</p> <p><b>Phone1</b>                      <b>Phone2</b> 237-0641                      237-6415 fax</p> <p><b>Comments</b> Provides residential and non-residential job training program for the unskilled or those lacking a high school diploma, age 18-23. Corps members work on conservation projects, flood control, fire fighting, and other public service works.</p>	<p><b>Resource</b> Contra Costa Food Bank</p> <p><b>Type</b> Private nonprofit</p> <p><b>Dept./Contact</b> Faye Mettler</p> <p><b>Address</b> 5121 Port Chicago Hwy. Concord 94520</p> <p><b>Phone1</b>                      <b>Phone2</b> 676-7543                      674-3201</p> <p><b>Comments</b> Distributes food to over 190 charitable agencies which provide food free to county residents in crisis situations, low-income child carecenters, schools for the disabled, etc.</p>
---	--

## Disaster Resource Directory—Brief Data Set Sample

Resource	Department/Contact	Type	Phone	Phone2
American Red Cross (Central County Office)	Gwen Johnson	Private nonprofit	603-7426	
American Red Cross (West County Office)	Peggy Veal	Private nonprofit	307-4400	
Assistance League		Private nonprofit	934-0901	754-5000 East County
California Conservation Corps		Private nonprofit	237-0641	237-6415 fax
Center for New Americans	Guity Kiani	Private nonprofit	798-3492	
Contra Costa Crisis and Suicide Intervention Services		Private nonprofit	939-1916	Office
Contra Costa Food Bank	Faye Mettler	Private nonprofit	676-7543	674-3201

## Should Your Center Make Referrals to Individuals?

### Should Your Center Make Referrals to Individuals?

Once the word gets out that volunteers are available to help in times of disaster, you will receive requests for assistance from people who need help at their homes or businesses. Typical requests might be an elderly person asking for help with sand-bagging or boarding up windows at their home, a flood victim who needs assistance cleaning mud out of their business, or a family released from a Red Cross shelter that needs debris removed before their home is safe for their children to re-enter.

Every Center must decide whether or not to accept requests for assistance from individuals. This is a fundamental issue that should be carefully considered by your Board and staff before a disaster strikes. While making referrals to homes and businesses will bring your Center a great deal of recognition in the community, it also requires more preparation and carries a greater risk to your Center.

Some questions to consider:

**Is any other organization ready and willing to handle these requests in your community?** Sometimes local chapters of Habitat for Humanity, Christmas in April, or the Red Cross will agree to coordinate and supervise volunteers to do the necessary clean-up work in private homes. If so, this may be preferable to your Center taking this on.

**Does your Center manage any direct service activities?** If your Center manages any volunteer direct service program already, such as Meals on Wheels, Transportation, Home Visiting, Home Repair, etc., you will probably already have volunteer risk management, supervision, and safety procedures in place that can be easily adapted to work in a disaster.

**Does your Center manage any group volunteer projects?** If your Center manages group volunteer projects, through Make a Difference Day, Day of Caring, Family Matters, or any other program where your Center is responsible for actually supervising the work of volunteers, you will probably already have volunteer risk management, supervision, and safety procedures in place that can be easily adapted to work in a disaster.

Here are some tips for making referrals to private homes and businesses work:

- Have a simple statement that clearly defines from whom you will accept requests for help and what kinds of requests you will accept. Post this by every phone. An example might be:  
*We will send volunteers to help elderly and disabled individuals with simple physical tasks related to preparing for or cleaning up from a disaster. Appropriate tasks include sand bagging; boarding up windows, moving personal belongings to higher ground, cleaning up*

(continued)

## Should Your Center Make Referrals to Individuals? (continued)

*mud, and removing debris. Volunteers may not do any tasks involving the use of power tools or ladders taller than 6 feet.*

- Always require that the property owner be there when volunteers are working. Have the property owner sign a simple agreement giving you permission to work at their property.
- Never send volunteers into a high-risk situation, such as a neighborhood under an evacuation order or a building that has been inspected and posted as unsafe to enter.
- Avoid sending volunteers out alone. It is always safer for the volunteer and easier for your record-keeping to have volunteers work in groups. You may wish to “bundle” many requests for assistance from individuals into a large group project—for example, cleaning up five homes in the same neighborhood or boarding up windows in a mobile home park for seniors. Through use of a Volunteer Reception Center, you can form volunteers into work groups in minutes.
- Have a simple risk management plan that includes what insurance covers volunteers, a plan for screening out high-risk requests, safety procedures and what to do in case of an accident. If your Center already runs direct service programs or organizes group projects, you will probably already have these things in place.

Volunteer Centers of Santa Cruz County, CA

## Sample Volunteer Center List of Responsibilities

### VOLUNTEER CENTER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. First priority for Volunteer Center staff members is to stabilize and secure their own personal situation.
2. During the hurricane "warning", an initial disaster team will be identified that will be comprised of the Disaster Response Coordinators, staff person or community volunteer. After the first 72 hours, the team will report to the American Red Cross.
3. In the recovery phase after the disaster the Volunteer Center will:
  - Be available to agencies needing volunteers
  - Maintain a phone bank of staff and volunteers to route spontaneous non-affiliated volunteers to agencies providing recovery services.
  - Match volunteers with particular skills to agencies where those skills can best be utilized, as time and volume of volunteers permits.
  - Provide updated information on volunteer needs to the media. The information will be coordinated with American Red Cross Communication Department and designated Public Information Officer.
  - Maintain a database of potential resources to recruit volunteers, i.e. union contracts, corporations, schools, etc.
  - Serve as a communications link between community needs and state/national command centers
  - Communicate with other members of staff to request relief and/or additional volunteers.
4. In the recovery phase, the Volunteer Center will not:
  - Do background checks on volunteers
  - Train volunteers referred to agencies
  - Keep an inventory list with detailed information of every individual who offers to volunteer
  - Manage donated goods. The center will, however, refer donations to agencies accepting donated goods.
  - Transport People
  - Refer volunteers to individuals in need of assistance.

## Member List, National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD)



### National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster—National Members April 1998

Adventist Community Services  
American Radio Relay League, Inc.  
The American Red Cross  
AMURT (Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team)  
Catholic Charities USA  
Christian Disaster Response  
Christian Reformed World Relief Committee  
Church of the Brethren  
Church World Service  
Council of Jewish Federations  
The Episcopal Church  
Friends Disaster Service, Inc.  
International Association Jewish Vocational Services  
International Relief Friendship Foundation  
Lutheran Disaster Response  
Mennonite Disaster Service  
National Emergency Response Teams  
National Organization for Victim Assistance  
Nazarene Disaster Response  
Northwest Medical Teams Intl.  
The Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors, Inc.  
The Points of Light Foundation  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
REACT International, Inc.  
The Salvation Army  
Second Harvest National Network of Food Banks  
Society of St. Vincent de Paul  
Southern Baptist Disaster Relief  
United Methodist Church Committee on Relief  
United States Service Command  
Volunteers in Technical Assistance  
Volunteers of America  
World Vision

For additional information, see website at <http://www.nvoad.org>

## Sample Volunteer Center Disaster Plan Outlines

### **Volunteer Center of Story County, Ames, Iowa Disaster Response Plan**

#### **Contents**

##### **Purpose**

- 1. Volunteer Center Disaster Team Members**
- 2. Activation**
- 3. Notification of Disaster**
- 4. Volunteer Center Staff/Board Member Notification**
- 5. On-Site**
  - a. Command Center**
  - b. Phone Bank**
  - c. Registration**
  - d. On-Site Coordinator**
  - e. Data Entry/Office Telephone**
- 6. Public Relations**
- 7. Forms**
  - Name Tag Sample**
  - Hotline Card Sample**
  - Radio Communication Channels**
  - Emergency Contact Numbers—Red Cross, Volunteer Center,  
County, City**
  - Equipment List**

*(continued)*

## Sample Volunteer Center Disaster Plan Outlines (continued)

### Volunteer Center of [insert name] Emergency Response Plan • [insert date]

#### Contents

##### Part One—Basic Plan

- Introduction
- Assumptions and Threats (types of emergencies)
- Concept of Operations
- Administrative Practices
- Plan Maintenance and Development
- Authorities and References

##### Part Two—Incident Command System

- The Command/Management Section
- The Operations Section
- The Planning Section
- The Logistics Section
- The Finance Section
- Command Structure Chart

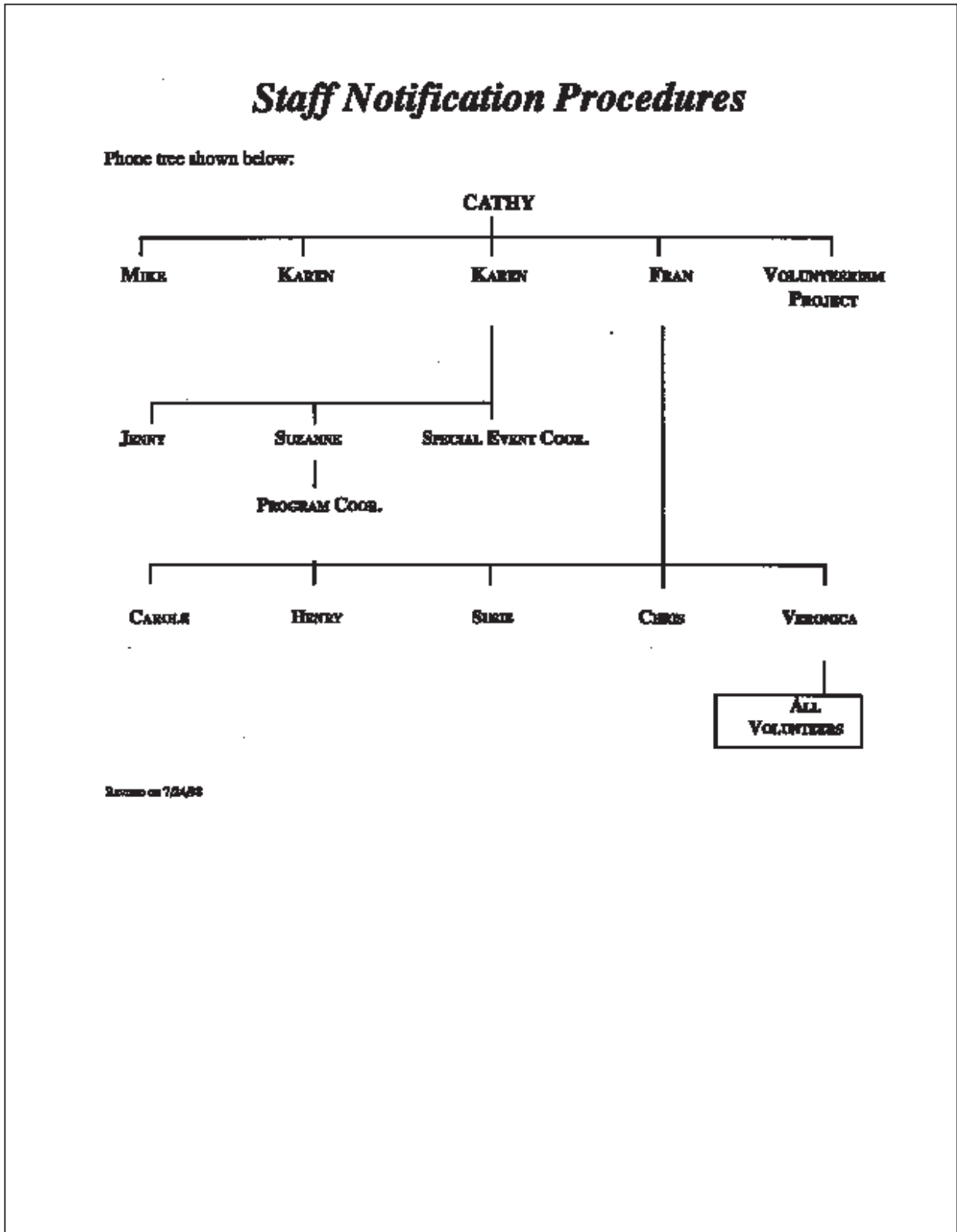
##### Part Three—Position Checklists

- Command/Management Section
  - Section Chief
  - Safety Officer
  - Liaison Officer
  - Public Information Officer
- Operations Section
  - Section Chief
  - Phone Bank Manager
  - Volunteer Reception Center Manager
- Planning Section
  - Section Chief
- Logistics Section
  - Section Chief
- Finance/Administration Section
  - Section Chief
- Attachments
  - Staff Notes Log
  - Maps
  - Forms
  - Layouts and Floor Plans
  - Contact Lists
  - Equipment Lists
  - Disaster Resource Directory

##### Part Four—Appendices

- Staffing Policies and Procedures
- Mutual Aid Agreement
- List of Disaster Supplies

## Sample Volunteer Center Disaster Phone Tree



## Sample Go-Kit Contents List

### 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 flip chart pad, folded
- 3x5 cards (pack of 100) & file box
- 1 dozen file folders & box of labels
- 3 hanging file folders & labels
- Push pins (pack of 25)
- 1 clipboard
- Stapler, staples
- Masking & 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 & county maps
- Coins (for pay phones)

#### EQUIPMENT (optional)

- Battery-operated clock
- Battery-operated radio

## Sample Press Releases

### MEDIA RELEASE

**COPY**

**For Immediate Release  
January 19, 1994**

**Contact: Sandy Doerschlag  
(818) 908-5066  
(818) 908-5067  
(818) 908-5147 fax**

#### **VOLUNTEER RECEPTION CENTER CREATED IN RESPONSE TO EARTHQUAKE**

**PANORAMA CITY --** A new Volunteer Reception Center was inaugurated at noon today in the offices of the Volunteer Center of San Fernando Valley located at 8134 Van Nuys Boulevard, Suite 200, in Panorama City, California. Sponsored by the Los Angeles Volunteerism Project, the new Center is coordinating the deployment of all volunteers throughout greater Los Angeles.

"The Reception Center will screen applicants and assign them to the agency with the greatest needs according to their skills," explains Sandy Doerschlag, Executive Director of the Volunteer Center of San Fernando Valley. "Our offices are situated less than three miles from the epicenter of the earthquake. So we're in a good position to coordinate assistance."

Working in conjunction with the Volunteer Center of Los Angeles, the Volunteer Center, South Bay-Harbor-Long Beach in Torrance; and hundreds of nonprofit and governmental agencies, the new Reception Center is a one-stop shop for those who want to volunteer. A phone bank staffed by Volunteer Center employees and volunteers will match up callers with community based organizations that need volunteer help to carry on their services.

"If individuals want to volunteer, they're encouraged to come into our office for an interview," says Doerschlag. "If that's not possible, we can do intake over the telephone."

Community-based agencies wanting volunteer assistance are asked to call (818) 908-5066 or fax a written request detailing their needs as soon as possible to the Center at (818) 908-5147.

\*\*\*

(continued)

**Sample Press Releases (continued)****Volunteer Center of Sonoma County**

153 Stony Circle, Ste 100, Santa Rosa, CA 95401

(707)573-3399 • FAX: (707)573-3380

---

**From: Disaster Response Center**  
**For Immediate Release!****Date/Time:** Feb. 7, 1998 at noon**Contact:** Phyllis or Doris**Message:**

County emergency personnel ask that volunteers who have these skills call the Volunteer Center to sign up for emergency shifts.

**Needed:**

- Mental health professionals
- Nurses
- Shelter workers
- Drivers with proof of DMV Clearance
- Cooks/people with kitchen skills
- Bi-lingual volunteers for phone banks
- Masseurs/ses with sitting massage tables
- Clerical help

The Volunteer Center's Disaster Response Center will be open from 10- a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday.

Please call the Volunteer Center of Sonoma County. Phone lines are open now. Call 568-2565.

## Sample Press Releases (continued)


**United Way  
of Brevard County**

807 Dixon Boulevard  
Cocoa, Florida 32922-8806

Phone (407) 631-2740  
Fax (407) 631-2007  
Email uw@brevco@palnet.net

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Executive Committee**  
Dr. James A. Decker  
Chairman of the Board/Child Volunteer Officer  
Michael G. Manning  
Vice Chair/Community Development  
SME Marketing Chair  
Madelyn Finney  
Vice Chair/Community Building  
Stephen R. Barber  
Vice Chair/Financial Distribution  
Ernest M. Driel  
Vice Chair/Program Operations  
Andrea Grant King  
Vice Chair/Marketing & Administration  
Stephane M. Collier  
Treasurer  
William R. Ellis  
Past Chairman of the Board  
Rozanne Johnson-Gleibin, M.D.  
Member at Large  
Michael J. Callahan  
Member at Large  
Robert R. Rains  
President/Child Protection Officer

**Directors**

Rich D. Abramson  
Jerry W. Alexander  
John J. Anderson  
Fren L. Baur  
Paul L. Blair  
John A. Berlin  
William T. Brennan  
David C. Brock  
Nash Buchanan  
Robert G. Carron  
Peggy A. Clemens, M.D.  
Andy Dunn  
Rusell B. Fischer  
Carol E. Harwood  
Mark E. Haskin  
William R. Johnson  
James O. Hohn  
Thomas C. Hodge  
Dr. A. T. Hollingsworth  
Catherine Hunt  
Law Jamieson  
Tom M. Jenkins  
James L. Jennings  
Dr. Richard H. Jolley  
Bert Foley Keith  
Col. Ronald L. Larivee  
Dana, James McClain, Jr.  
William G. Mullins  
Byron B. Nairn  
Jeff A. Nasso  
Edward B. Newell  
William P. Parley  
Philip S. Powers  
Donald K. Pined  
Mark B. Reine  
James VE. Rudolph  
Lawrence E. Sarason, Jr.  
Dr. David B. Sawyer  
Dr. Joe Lee Smith  
Linda H. South  
Judy D. Spindler  
William T. Taylor  
James B. Tharion  
David S. Vanneman  
Madelyn J. Weiss  
Sherry Phil Williams

**Legal Counsel**  
William G. Potter  
Partner

*Thank You*  
**FOR HELPING**

**NEWS RELEASE**


**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**                      **July 1, 1998**  
**Contact: Suzanne Spurling**

**United Way Supports Fire Relief Efforts**

United Way's Volunteer Center has now been brought in to help coordinate fire relief efforts in North Brevard in collaboration with Brevard County Emergency Management, The American Red Cross and The Salvation Army. To further assist these valiant efforts, United Way of Brevard County has also committed up to \$10,000 in support to those agencies which have been determined by United Way to be directly providing services to help in the disaster relief efforts for fire victims in North Brevard County. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Doris Davidson at 631-2740.

**-END-**

## Sample Form for Volunteer Requests from Agencies

	<p>THE VOLUNTEER CENTER OF SAN MATEO COUNTY          800 SOUTH CLAREMONT, SUITE 108          SAN MATEO, CA 94402          TEL: 415.342.0801          FAX: 415.342.1399</p>	<p>DISASTER RESPONSE VOLUNTEER REQUEST</p>
<p>PLEASE PRINT <span style="float: right;">Date _____ Time _____</span></p>		
Agency _____		
Agency Contact _____		
Phone: Day _____ Evening _____ FAX _____		
Address _____		
City/Zip _____		
JOB TITLE _____		
JOB DESCRIPTION _____		
JOB CATEGORY:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Interpreter (specify languages, including sign) _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Animal care <span style="margin-left: 150px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Driving</span>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Animal rescue <span style="margin-left: 150px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Food service</span>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Child care <span style="margin-left: 150px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Health care</span>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Clean-up <span style="margin-left: 150px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Heavy equipment</span>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer <span style="margin-left: 150px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Information &amp; referral</span>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications (ham radio, cellular) <span style="margin-left: 150px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Office</span>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Construction <span style="margin-left: 150px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Phones</span>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling <span style="margin-left: 150px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Shelter services</span>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Data entry <span style="margin-left: 150px;"><input type="checkbox"/> Special populations (seniors, disabled)</span>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____		
HOURS/DAYS NEEDED _____		
EXPECTED DURATION _____		
JOB LOCATION _____		
Is site handicapped accessible? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Work site contact _____ Work site phone _____		
How should volunteer make contact (phone site, phone office, go to site, etc.) _____		
Special instructions, clothing, equipment or other necessities _____		
NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS NEEDED _____		
MINIMUM AGE _____		
VOLUNTEER CENTER USE ONLY:		
INFORMATION TAKEN BY _____		JOB NUMBER _____
		DATA ENTRY DATE _____



## Volunteer Reception Center Description and Layout

### SETTING UP the VRC

Checklist for the VRC Manager

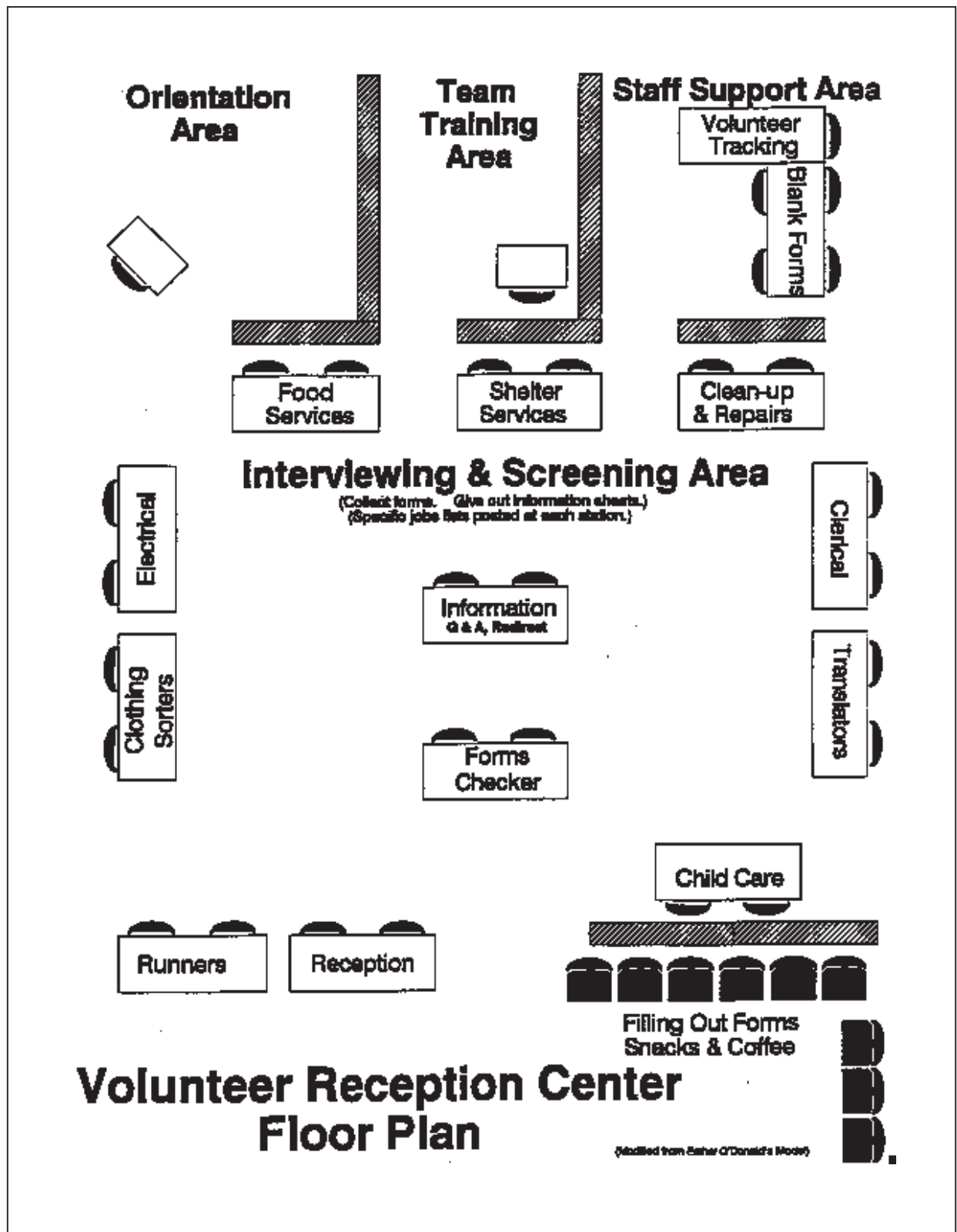


- Walk-through:** Be calm! Walk through the entire area. Locate:
  - Main entrance       Parking       Bathrooms
  - Electrical outlets       Kitchen       Phones / phone jacks
- Preplan the Physical Layout:** Before moving (or requesting) furniture think about:
  - Traffic patterns       Wall space       Visibility       Supplies
  - # of staff available       Security       Access, Keys       Emergency Exits
- Floor Plan:** Make a quick sketch of the areas you can use. Choose where to put:
  - Reception       Coffee & Snacks       Staff Support and Record keeping
  - Orientation       Filling out Forms       Interviewing Area:

Separate sections will be needed for each major class of work, such as:

  - Communications       Clerical       Health Related
  - Transportation       Construction       Care & Shelter
  - Clean Up Teams       Translators       Outreach Workers
- Delegate Responsibilities Immediately.**
  - Recruit volunteers to set up and staff the VRC itself.
  - Use checklists to assign the major tasks at the VRC:
    - Registration       Interviewing and screening
    - Communications       Record keeping
  - Request staff to report when their major tasks are completed.
  - Assign staff to supervise each of the major tasks. (Maybe the same people.)
- Security / Liability:**
  - Do a safety inspection. Identify or correct all hazards.
  - Have the rooms you can't use locked or marked clearly.
  - Inventory equipment and supplies on hand.
  - Get permission to use facility staff, equipment and/or supplies if necessary.
  - Mark borrowed equipment clearly: Owner, condition etc.
  - Is there emergency lighting and power?
  - Be sure that activities are documented. You will need to make reports.
- Supplies & Paperwork:** (Managers should have a Grab & Go Kit prepared.)
  - Clock / Watch       Flip Charts       Masking & Duct Tape
  - Essential Forms       Push Pins, tacks       Pens, Pencils, Sharpener
  - Felt Pens       City, County Maps       Battery operated radio
  - First Aid Kit       Clipboards       File Box, Folders, Labels
  - Pads of Paper       Stapler, staples       Emergency Phone List
  - Job Checklists       Chairs, tables       Copy machine access / paper
  - Flashlight       Phones, phone book       Coffee maker, supplies
  - Personal Items       Battery Radio       Name Tags / ID Cards
  - 3x5 cards       In / Out Trays       Carbon / Carbonless paper

### Volunteer Reception Center Description and Layout (continued)



## Sample Mutual Aid Agreement

### BAY AREA VOLUNTEER CENTERS MUTUAL AID AGREEMENT FOR DISASTER RESPONSE

This agreement made and entered into by and between Volunteer Centers serving the Bay Area counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco and San Mateo.

#### **Purpose of Agreement**

Because the scope and effects of a given disaster such as flood, fire, or earthquake may exceed the capacity of a Volunteer Center to respond; and because it is desirable that each of the parties hereto should voluntarily aid and assist each other in the event that a disaster should occur, by the interchange of services and facilities, to carry out operations for disaster response, we, the undersigned, agree to the following:

#### **Agreements**

1. Each Volunteer Center has a plan for the effective mobilization of all its resources and facilities to cope with any disaster, including
  - a. a checklist or other mechanism for activating operations following a disaster;
  - b. established forms and procedures, consistent with those of other parties to this agreement, for dealing with both disaster volunteers and emergency response agencies;
  - c. a management structure that is consistent with the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) adopted by the State of California;
  - d. trained staff assigned to disaster plan roles; and
  - e. a communications contingency plan.
2. Each Volunteer Center maintains the readiness of its personnel, resources, and facilities by the following means:
  - a. semi-annual review and discussion of staff (including volunteers) readiness;
  - b. annual inservice training and exercise for employees and volunteers on Volunteer Center procedures for managing volunteer referrals in disaster;
  - c. participation by staff in Volunteer Centers' regional disaster training and exercises; and
  - d. maintenance of disaster equipment and supplies including food and water, and annual recycling of items with limited shelf-life.
3. Each Volunteer Center maintains close working relationships with its county Red Cross office and county office of emergency services and conducts annual reviews of existing agreements with those organizations.
4. Each Volunteer Center demonstrates commitment to its disaster response role through
  - a. a Board resolution indicating such commitment;
  - b. personnel policies and job descriptions that support the board resolution regarding the Volunteer Center's disaster response role;

## Sample Mutual Aid Agreement (continued)

- c. the assignment of at least three (3) staff (may include volunteers) to a staff disaster team, with one (1) team member designated as Disaster Coordinator; and
  - d. participation in regional disaster coordination meetings among Volunteer Centers.
5. Each Volunteer Center agrees to furnish resources and facilities and to render services to each and every other party to this agreement to respond to disaster in accordance with duly adopted mutual aid operational plans, whether heretofore or hereafter adopted, detailing the method and manner by which such resources, facilities, and services are to be made available and furnished; provided, however, that no party shall be required to deplete unreasonably its own resources, facilities, and services in furnishing such mutual aid.
  6. The Volunteer Center requiring mutual aid shall remain in charge including the direction of such personnel and equipment provided that center through the operation of this mutual aid plan.
  7. When a Volunteer Center requiring mutual aid is in a position to recover costs from any source for its disaster response operation, the Volunteer Center will submit requests for reimbursement on behalf of any other party supplying mutual aid (including employed staff time, travel, and meals); and further, should such mutual aid costs be recovered, will transfer same to the parties supplying mutual aid.
  8. Each Volunteer Center will participate in a written and face-to-face annual review to ensure that all parties are in compliance with the provisions of this agreement. As part of that annual review, each Volunteer Center will provide all other parties to this agreement with an updated contact list, including home and work telephone numbers.
  9. Termination of participation in this agreement by any party shall be effected by a resolution of its governing body and submission of such resolution to the other parties, and this agreement shall be terminated as to such party sixty (60) days after the submission of such resolution.

_____	for Volunteer Center of Alameda County	_____	Date
_____	for Volunteer Center of Contra Costa County	_____	
_____	for Volunteer Center of Marin	_____	
_____	for Volunteer Center of San Francisco	_____	
_____	for Volunteer Center of San Mateo County	_____	

February 26, 1993  
 Revised August 30, 1996  
 Revised November 26, 1997

## Descriptions of Key Disaster Relief Agencies

### AMERICAN RED CROSS

For over 100 years the American Red Cross has been assisting people affected by disasters. The successful work of the Red Cross is made possible by thousands of volunteers and the generous financial contributions of the American people. As a voluntary organization, the American Red Cross depends on the generosity of people for both their time and money to provide disaster relief. The Red Cross is an independent organization, not a government agency. All disaster relief given by the Red Cross is free of charge as a gift from the American people.

When a disaster strikes, the American Red Cross responds immediately. It does not need a government request to move into action. It works in cooperation with the government and other organizations to provide assistance. Red Cross is prepared to respond to hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, fires, hazardous materials incidents, and other disasters, and responds to more than 60,000 disasters every year.

The most well known Red Cross disaster relief activities are providing shelter and meals to those seeking refuge from a hurricane or flood or in the wake of a tornado, earthquake, or other incident. In addition to these services, the core of Red Cross disaster relief activities is the assistance given to individuals and families affected by disaster. This assistance is geared toward meeting immediate emergency needs. The Red Cross assists victims of disaster in resuming independent living by providing the means for them to pay for what they need most, from groceries, new clothing, and rent, to emergency home repairs, transportation, household items, medicines, and tools to return to work.

The American Red Cross is chartered by the U.S. Congress (Act of Congress of January 5, 1905, as amended, 36 U.S.C. Sections 109) to undertake relief activities to mitigate the suffering caused by disasters. It is a community based, voluntary organization. There are over 1300 Red Cross chapters throughout all 50 states, U.S. possessions, and dependencies.

### FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the central agency within the Federal government for emergency planning, preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery. Working closely with state and local governments, FEMA funds emergency programs and offers technical guidance and training. FEMA stands ready to deploy any Federal resource in a catastrophic disaster. These coordinated activities ensure a broad based program to protect life and property and provide recovery assistance after a disaster.

FEMA's programs include response to and recovery from major natural disasters and man-caused emergencies, emergency management planning, flood plain management, hazardous materials planning, dam safety, and multi-hazard response planning. Other activities include offsite planning for emergencies at commercial nuclear power plants and the Army's chemical stockpile sites, emergency food and shelter funding for the homeless, plans to ensure the continuity of the Federal government during national security emergencies and the Federal response to the consequences of major terrorist incidents.

The agency, with its 2,700 employees in Washington and ten regional offices, reports directly to the White House. FEMA manages the President's Disaster Relief Fund, the source of most Federal funding assistance after major disaster. Program and budget oversight comes from 24 Congressional committees and subcommittees. FEMA's operating budget for FY 1999 is \$838.

The agency was formed in 1979 by Presidential Executive Order 12127 consolidating the nations' emergency-related programs.

### NATIONAL VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTER

National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster is an umbrella organization of

## Descriptions of Key Disaster Relief Agencies (continued)

the major disaster response organizations in the United States. Through its mission of fostering cooperation, coordination, communication and collaboration, NVOAD works to assure that members of the disaster response community meet and work together before the next disaster strikes.

Founded in 1970 by seven response organizations which had experienced first-hand the unnecessary duplication of services and roles during the devastation of Hurricane Camille, National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster had grown by 1998 to include 31 national members. Additionally, the NVOAD network had broadened from its original concept through an understanding of the importance of more local structures. By 1998, 49 State VOADs had been organized.

These state organizations bring together disaster response leaders within the various states to prepare and practice and, most importantly, to get acquainted individually and organizationally so that when crisis times arise they can act efficiently and effectively. Since 1998, NVOAD has also been experiencing a trend towards more local units, with dozens of county and metropolitan VOADs being formed. Just as the state VOADs sign cooperative agreements with NVOAD, these "substate" VOADs sign cooperative agreements with their state VOAD.

NVOAD maintains excellent relations with FEMA, the State Emergency Management Administrations and other important partners in assuring seamless disaster response.

Members are served in a variety of ways. NVOAD hosts an annual membership meeting in March in Washington, DC, an annual VOAD Leadership Conference in the fall and encourages member participation in its four Standing Committees: Donations, Recovery, Mass Care and Communications. Additionally, it provides a quarterly newsletter for VOAD members and its other disaster partners. Detailed information on the organization is available on its website at <http://www.nvoad.org>

### THE POINTS OF LIGHT FOUNDATION

Volunteer community service is a cherished and traditional American quality. Yet, perhaps at no time in our nation's history has the need for people to engage in community service been more urgent. That is the reason why a group of prominent Americans, with very diverse political views, established the nonpartisan, nonprofit Points of Light Foundation in May 1990.

Hunger, hopelessness, illiteracy, disconnected young people are serious issues facing all of us. They are our problems, to be found regardless of where we live, anywhere there is a hungry child, a family calling their car "home," an adult who can't read, a young person falling in school.

The Points of Light Foundation is the umbrella organization for the nation's 501 Volunteer Centers. It provides conferences, technical assistance, and management tools designed to strengthen volunteer leadership in communities. It also works with 250 corporate members and 75 corporate volunteer councils around the country to encourage and support employee volunteer programs. The Foundation believes that the Volunteer Centers can fill an essential role during disaster response by coordinating the services of spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers.

The mission of The Points of Light Foundation is to engage more people more effectively in community service that addresses serious social problems. A nonpartisan, national nonprofit organization created in 1990, the Foundation works in close partnership with some 500 local Volunteer Centers, more than 3,000 businesses, the media, and agencies of local, state, and federal government including the Corporation for National Service. Financial support for the Foundation comes from the Congress of the United States, private foundations, corporations and individuals. The board of directors of the Foundation represents a broad cross-section of leaders from throughout America.

(continued)

## Descriptions of Key Disaster Relief Agencies (continued)

### THE SALVATION ARMY

The Salvation Army is an international religious and charitable movement and an evangelical part of the universal Christian church. Its members work to provide basic human necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter to those in need.

With its national headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, the Salvation Army is composed of four territorial (regional) headquarters; 39 divisional (state) headquarters; 1,100 Corps Community Centers (cities); and 11,000 centers of operation.

The Salvation Army disaster program includes:

- Spiritual counseling—comforting the bereaved, consoling the injured and distressed
- Family counseling and casework services
- Registration and identification of victims; missing persons services that locate individuals and answer inquiries from concerned relatives and families outside the disaster area
- Medical assistance
- Temporary shelter in Salvation Army institutions or Salvation Army-operated facilities
- Mass feeding in existing Salvation Army institutions or temporary facilities assigned for that purpose
- Mobile feeding—hot meals or snacks for disaster victims and emergency workers at the disaster scene.
- Collection of donated goods for victims, according to predetermined needs—food, clothing, furniture, medical supplies, building materials, bedding, utensils, tools, etc.
- Clothing distribution
- Food and commodities distribution
- Furniture distribution
- Bedding distribution

### UNITED WAY OF AMERICA

United Way of America is the national service and training center, supporting member United Ways with national services that include advertising, training,

corporate relations, research, networks and government relations.

United Way of America's mission is to respond to, support, and serve local United Way member organizations to help increase the capacity of people to care for one another.

Through a vast network of volunteers and local charities, local United Way organizations throughout America help meet the health and human care needs of millions of people every day. United Way's 106 year history is built on the proven effectiveness of local organizations helping people in their own communities.

The United Way system includes more than 2,100 community-based United Way organizations. Each is independent, separately incorporated, and governed by local volunteers.

Through a single community-wide campaign, local United Way volunteers raise funds to support local agency service providers. In total, voluntary contributions to United Ways support approximately 47,000 agencies and chapters, helping millions of people from all walks of life and income groups. Apart from government, United ways support the greatest variety of health and human services in the country.

## Internet Sites of Interest to Volunteer Centers

### Internet Sites of Interest to Volunteer Centers

Amateur Radio Emergency Communication  
[www.arrl.org/pio/emergen1.html](http://www.arrl.org/pio/emergen1.html)

The Community Preparedness Website Project  
[www.preparesnow.org](http://www.preparesnow.org)

Corporation for National Service  
[www.cns.gov](http://www.cns.gov)

Disaster Relief  
[www.disasterrelief.org](http://www.disasterrelief.org)

Disaster Research Center  
[www.udel.edu/DRC](http://www.udel.edu/DRC)

Emergency Information Infrastructure Partnership  
[www.emforum.org](http://www.emforum.org)

Federal Emergency Management Agency  
[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado, Boulder  
[www.Colorado.EDU/hazards](http://www.Colorado.EDU/hazards)

Nonprofit Risk Management Center  
[www.nonprofitrisk.org](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org)

Points of Light Foundation  
[www.pointsoflight.org](http://www.pointsoflight.org)

Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster  
[www.nvoad.org](http://www.nvoad.org)

List compiled by Jim Aldrich

