



HandsOn
NETWORK

Ready to Respond

Disaster Preparedness and Response
for HandsOn Action Centers



2009
Third Edition



HandsOn Network


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Introduction

HandsOn Action Centers can point proudly to their growing importance in the disaster volunteer arena over the last decade. HandsOn Action Centers and other volunteer connector organizations have become critical players in the field of emergency management and are designated as lead agencies for disaster volunteer coordination in many local communities and states.


If you had to pick one story headline that epitomized the last ten years in the field of disaster volunteerism, what would it be? “Unprecedented Number of Volunteer Centers Responds to Gulf Coast Needs”? Or would you choose “Tens of Thousands of Volunteers Converge on New York City”? Or perhaps you’d pick this one: “Statewide Volunteer Center Network Copes with Florida’s Long Hurricane Season.”

The events referred to in these headlines captured the nation’s attention. They also shaped our thinking about disaster volunteers and disaster volunteering. Briefly, here is some of what’s been learned:

- If we didn’t know it before, we know it now . . . they will come! And they *will* come, whether we are ready or not.
- Many people have a strong psychological need to volunteer in a disaster. They find that acting on the desire to help, in what can feel like a hopeless situation, is empowering.
- Spontaneous volunteers represent a tremendous resource for a community that’s been hit with a disaster. When volunteers are well-coordinated, everyone benefits.
- A strong pre-disaster partnership between a HandsOn Action Center and local government for spontaneous volunteer coordination translates to more effective response and recovery.
- More than ever, we have seen the importance of volunteers as a resource to serve the most vulnerable people in our communities.

Other 21st century trends have influenced the field of disaster volunteer management:

- The post 9/11 environment has focused concern on volunteer safety and security.
- The current H1N1 flu pandemic has turned our notions about disaster response and volunteer involvement upside down.
- The National Response Framework includes coordination of spontaneous volunteer resources as a government responsibility and encourages public-private partnerships.
- Use of technology tools has evolved—cell phone, text messaging and e-mail are standard; we use the web to get and share information in new ways



(Twitter, blogs, social networking sites); and online volunteer registration is a reality.

The target audiences for *Ready to Respond* are HandsOn Action Centers¹ and their local partners. Whether you're with a HandsOn Action Center, other volunteer center, 2-1-1, government agency at any level, American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, another emergency relief provider, community-based or faith-based organization, United Way, community foundation, business, or disaster volunteer group, you should find information and guidance here to make your community better prepared for emergencies and for the convergence of spontaneous volunteers.

What's new about the 2009 edition of *Ready to Respond*? Most of the guide's text is organized around eight major themes. Within Sections 3 through 8, every chapter lays out a specific objective, some background information, and a set of tasks needed to accomplish that objective. Each chapter closes with one or more "tips, tools and best practices"—a variety of resources gathered from the field, with references to attached documents and links to websites. Lessons learned from major disasters of the past decade have been included. For those faced with a disaster that's imminent or already in progress, a sample **Quick Start Guide**² has been added. The tool for assessing HandsOn Action Center readiness has been updated with new topics and questions.

Ten years ago, one might have assumed that most HandsOn Action Centers were not ready for disaster response. Since then, HandsOn involvement in disasters large and small and the phenomenal mobilization of HandsOn Action Centers to support Hurricane Katrina relief efforts have laid that concern to rest. Going forward, our belief is that HandsOn Action Centers, when challenged, will step up with conviction and creativity to address the needs of hurting communities. We hope that *Ready to Respond* will be of some help to you as you plan, prepare and respond.

¹ The term Volunteer Center, as used in this guide, is meant broadly and includes Volunteer Centers, Voluntary Action Centers, HandsOn Action Centers and other similar organizations—whether private nonprofit 501(c)(3)s or units within a United Way, local government or other type of agency. It also includes agencies and organizations, e.g., local government and 2-1-1 providers, that take on spontaneous volunteer management in communities that do not have a Volunteer Center.

² Special thanks to the Santa Clara County (CA) Emergency Managers Association and Kelle Rimmel who developed the concept for this Quick Start Guide and agreed to share the document as a sample for other organizations across the nation.



Section 1

Disaster 101

In this section:

- 1.1 Disaster 101
- 1.2 Glossary
- 1.3 Abbreviations and Acronyms

1.1 Disaster 101

Definitions of Affiliated and Spontaneous Volunteers

Volunteer—Someone who willingly provides his/her services without receiving financial compensation.

Affiliated Volunteer—Someone who is affiliated with either a governmental agency or nonprofit organization and who has been trained in advance of a disaster for a specific role or function in emergency relief or response.

Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteer—Someone who offers to assist in emergency situations and who is not already affiliated with a governmental agency or nonprofit organization. This term may also apply to those individuals and groups who self-deploy without fully coordinating their activities with the recognized coordination system. Also known as Spontaneous, Convergent and/or Emergent Volunteers.


Knowing the Disaster Landscape Benefits HandsOn Action Centers

Imagine how it feels to be in a foreign country without knowing the language—people telling you things you don't understand, not being able to ask for what you need—an exercise in frustration. That is exactly how some HandsOn Action Center staff described their initial experience with trying to understand government emergency management.

Bridging the Differences—The fact is, the respective cultures of government and nonprofits differ—in terms of language, structure, assumptions, and even values. But because government has the lead role in emergencies, HandsOn Action Centers need to learn this new language so they can communicate knowledgeably and coordinate effectively with government at the time of a disaster.

Benefits—There are numerous advantages to a HandsOn Action Center knowing the disaster landscape:

- It helps the Center be better prepared.

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- It helps open doors to new funding opportunities, not just for response but also for preparedness.
 - It helps the Center better understand who does what and why.
 - It helps the Center identify potential partners.
 - It lays the groundwork for developing partnerships.
 - It enhances the Center's credibility with government agencies and other key players.


The following topics in this section will give you a sense of what this territory looks like and the links at the end of the chapter will lead you to more details.

Phases of Emergency Management Activities³

- **Preparedness** is defined as the range of deliberate, critical tasks and activities necessary to build, sustain, and improve the operational capability to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from domestic events. It is a continual process involving efforts at all levels of government and between government and private-sector and nongovernmental organizations to identify threats, determine vulnerabilities, and identify required resources.
- **Response** begins when an emergency event is imminent or immediately after an event occurs. Response encompasses the activities that address the short-term, direct effects of an incident. Response includes the execution of Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) and of activities designed to limit the loss of life, personal injury, property damage, and unfavorable outcomes.
- **Recovery⁴** is the development, coordination, and execution of service- and site-restoration plans for impacted communities and the reconstitution of government operations and services. The goal of recovery is to return the community's systems and activities to normal. Recovery begins right after the emergency. Some recovery activities may be concurrent with response efforts.
- **Mitigation** refers to activities that are designed to reduce or eliminate risks to persons or property, or lessen the actual or potential effects or consequences

³ FEMA Independent Study Program Course IS-230, Principles of Emergency Management

⁴ A distinction is often made between short-term and long-term recovery. The following points are excerpted from the National Response Framework: *Short-term recovery* is immediate and an extension of the response phase in which basic services and functions are restored. It includes actions such as . . . restoring interrupted utility and other essential services, reestablishing transportation routes, and providing food and shelter for those displaced by the incident. Although called short-term, some of these activities may last for weeks. *Long-term recovery* may involve some of the same actions as short-term recovery but may continue for a number of months or years, depending on the severity and extent of the damage sustained. It involves restoring both the individual and the community, including the complete redevelopment of damaged areas. Some examples of long-term recovery include providing permanent disaster-resistant housing units to replace those destroyed . . . and initiating a buyout of flood-prone properties and designating them community open space.



of an incident. Mitigation measures may be implemented prior to, during, or after an incident.


- **Prevention** is defined as actions taken to avoid an incident or to intervene to stop an incident from recurring. It involves actions taken to protect lives and property and application of intelligence and other information to a range of activities.

NOTE: Prevention activities traditionally have been included in Mitigation but the federal government has separated the two concepts.

Key Players in Local Emergency Volunteer Management

HandsOn Action Centers should establish relationships with local government and other key disaster players in their community. Knowing the local players, defining roles, and building trust and credibility prior to a disaster are extremely important to HandsOn Action Centers being able to effectively operate in a response. The following key players for emergency volunteer management are found in most communities across America.


- **Local Government**—A city, a county, or a tribe is typically the lead agency within its own jurisdiction for managing the overall response to a natural disaster. The disaster mission of government is to save lives and protect property. Local government emergency management agencies prepare year-round for emergencies of all types by developing, maintaining, and improving response plans; training staff; testing plans and staff skills in drills and exercises; and promoting disaster awareness and preparedness in the community. Before and during a disaster, local government may collaborate with non-governmental organizations to address specific community needs. Governmental agencies and departments (e.g., public works, public health) may involve spontaneous volunteers in response efforts.
- **State Commissions on Service and Volunteerism**—These Commissions provide Corporation for National and Community Service funding to AmeriCorps state programs in their states through annual grant competitions. In addition, the Commissions manage, monitor and evaluate these AmeriCorps programs. State Service Commissions are also charged with encouraging volunteering in their states and they often administer special volunteer initiatives, including assistance with coordination of local disaster volunteer response efforts.
- **FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaisons (VALs)**—FEMA provides a VAL to the ten FEMA regional offices, the Pacific Area office, the Caribbean Area office, and the Emergency Management Institute. The primary purpose of the FEMA VAL is to foster a strong rapport between all of the voluntary agencies and the FEMA regional offices. The VAL shares information with voluntary agencies about FEMA and other federal disaster programs and policies and provides guidance to the FEMA offices on the role of the voluntary agencies in the



region. FEMA VALs also provide guidance and encouragement in the development of state and local VOADs.⁵ During disasters, FEMA VALs work closely with the Volunteer and Donations Coordinator in the affected state(s).


- **American Red Cross**—The American Red Cross is a national nonprofit organization that provides relief to victims of disasters and helps people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. Through its local chapters supported by the national organization, Red Cross provides a wide variety of programs during times of a disaster, such as Disaster Welfare Inquiry, Family Assistance, and Mass Care, including sheltering and feeding. Red Cross relies heavily on trained volunteers but also incorporates spontaneous volunteers in its operations, especially for larger disasters.
- **Community-based Organizations**—Community-based organizations (CBOs) run the gamut in size from large ones, such as The Salvation Army, to so-called mom-and-pop enterprises. All are nonprofit organizations that serve the community in some capacity. They typically serve a specific group, such as seniors or people with disabilities, or they address a certain issue, such as food or housing. Because they deliver critical services and are trusted providers, many of these CBOs are likely to be drawn into providing disaster relief services. In a disaster, they may be called on to provide technical expertise regarding different types of vulnerable populations. Most rely heavily on volunteer involvement to provide services.
- **Faith-based Organizations**—Historically, faith-based organizations (FBOs) have been active in disaster relief and recovery activities. Most are affiliated with National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD). Most FBOs specialize in one or more service areas, such as child care, mass feeding, or donations management. Many FBOs have locally trained teams that can be deployed wherever there is a need. These groups activate and send resources when invited to do so by a government agency, American Red Cross or other key player.
- **Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)**—National VOAD (NVOAD) is an umbrella organization of the major disaster response organizations in the United States, including most national faith-based organizations. Through its mission of fostering cooperation, coordination, communication and collaboration, NVOAD works to assure that members of the disaster response community meet and communicate before the next disaster strikes. NVOAD's 51 member organizations include the American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, Adventist Community Services, and Church World Service. NVOAD has a network of State VOADs that cover all states and most

⁵ *The Role of Voluntary Agencies in Emergency Management*, 1999



US territories. Many communities have a local VOAD and the number of local VOADs is growing.

- **Information and Referral/2-1-1 Providers**—Information and referral (I&R) services assist people in need year-round by providing them with information and contact information for agencies and organizations that may be able to help. Many I&R programs serve general needs; others specialize in particular issue areas (e.g., housing) or population served (e.g., seniors). 2-1-1 is an information and referral model that is rapidly spreading throughout the nation. Its goal is to make information about community resources accessible and available for free, 24 hours a day/7days a week/365 days a year to anyone who dials 2-1-1. 2-1-1 providers are required to provide relevant information at the time of a disaster and thus play an important role. *Note that in some communities, other information numbers may provide the same service. For example, in New York City the information number is 3-1-1.*
- **Citizen Corps Councils and Partners**—Citizen Corps brings together community and government leaders to involve community members in making communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues, and disasters of all kinds.
 - **Citizen Corps Councils:** The Citizen Corps mission is accomplished through a national network of state, local and tribal Citizen Corps Councils. Local Councils promote and strengthen Citizen Corps programs at the community level, encourage citizen participation, and conduct other activities that enhance community preparedness.
 - **Citizen Corps Program Partners:** Citizen Corps has five program partners that involve people in local emergency preparedness and response:
 - **Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT):** CERT offers training to citizens on fire safety, light search and rescue, and many other skills that will help them be better prepared to help themselves, their families and their neighbors in emergencies.
 - **Fire Corps:** Fire Corps volunteers are trained to provide fire protection education, perform administrative tasks, and conduct other activities to support fire and rescue departments.
 - **Medical Reserve Corps:** Medical Reserve Corps units train volunteers to assist the emergency medical response community during large-scale emergencies. Team members can also help meet pressing public health needs throughout the year. Volunteers include currently practicing and retired healthcare professionals and others who are interested in public health issues.
 - **Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS):** VIPS volunteers are trained to perform administrative and non-intervention policing duties in law enforcement agencies.

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- **Neighborhood Watch Program:** This program trains neighbors together to become the eyes and ears of their neighborhood for the purposes of preventing crime, increasing safety and security in the area, and being better prepared for local emergencies.

 - **National Service Programs**—People of all ages and backgrounds are involved with local affiliates of national service programs which, under the umbrella of the Corporation for National and Community Service, are designed to solve problems and strengthen communities. Local projects are sponsored by community- and faith-based organizations, schools and local agencies. Service activities vary widely but include local homeland security efforts, response to disasters, and recruitment and management of volunteers. The major national service programs with potential to respond to disasters are:
 - Senior Corps programs, including Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions and Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)
 - AmeriCorps national and state programs, including AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps*VISTA and AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)

 - **HandsOn Action Centers**—More and more, HandsOn Action Centers are becoming involved in emergency planning in their respective communities. A number of Centers across the country have experienced a disaster and stepped up to help with the response by coordinating spontaneous volunteers. State associations (notably Florida and California) have provided training and technical assistance to their members and encouraged development of local public-private partnerships. Representatives of many HandsOn Action Centers have become active in Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) and other interagency efforts.

 - **New and Emerging Players**—Since 9/11 and the growing national focus on homeland security, public health agencies have become much more visible and active participants in the disaster arena. They are planning for involving both affiliated medical volunteers and spontaneous volunteers in mass vaccinations, influenza pandemics, and other disease outbreaks.

Incident Command System (ICS)

Long used by the Fire Service, ICS is a management model for responding to emergencies. It represents an organizational “best practice” and has become the standard for incident response across the country. It is interdisciplinary, organizationally flexible, and scalable to meet the needs of all types of incidents. It can be used by all levels of government, for example, by a local fire department for fighting a fire, and in a state government emergency operations center (EOC) for coordinating state resources in response to a major earthquake.



Key components of ICS include:

- **Common terminology**—includes standard titles for facilities and positions within participating organizations, to ensure efficient, clear communications
- **Organizational resources**—identification and typing of personnel, facilities, major equipment, and supplies
- **Manageable span of control**—varies from three to seven functions or individuals with the ideal being a ratio of one supervisor to five reporting elements
- **Reliance on an Incident Action Plan (IAP)**—the IAP provides a coherent means to communicate the overall incident objectives and to cover a particular “operational period.”

The ICS organizational structure is composed of the Command Staff and the General Staff. The Command Staff consists of the Incident Commander,⁶ the Public Information Officer, Safety Officer, Liaison Officer, and Scribe. The General Staff oversees four functions, each of which is a Section in the structure: Planning & Intelligence Section, Operations Section, Logistics Section, Finance & Administration Section. Individuals who lead Sections are known as “Section Chiefs,” regardless of what title they have in their day-to-day work.

National Incident Management System (NIMS)⁷


NIMS is the federal government’s emergency management system. It incorporates ICS as well as other tools (mutual aid, etc.) for addressing a broad spectrum of disasters. All states and subdivisions thereof (including cities and counties) are required to make their response plans compliant with NIMS. NIMS provides a flexible framework that facilitates government and private entities at all levels working together through standard organizational structures.

Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs)

EOPs typically include information about hazards, planning assumptions, management structure (ICS is required), and operational checklists. They may also include hazard-specific annexes (e.g., tsunami plan); functional annexes (e.g., spontaneous volunteer coordination plan); and forms, maps, resource lists and other tools. Following are some basic assumptions of emergency response planning:

⁶ At the field level only. At the local EOC and higher levels, this position is called Command/Management.

⁷ NIMS is based on SEMS. SEMS is California’s Standardized Emergency Management System, developed after the East Bay Hills Fire of 1991. The response to that disaster, in which 25 lives were lost and nearly 3,000 homes burned down, was slowed in part because of differences in equipment and in terminology used for resources by the various responding agencies. Today, with SEMS, a common language is used throughout California and definitions of terms are standardized.

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- **All disasters are local.** This means that all disasters start at the local level and are responded to locally. When local resources are exhausted, higher levels of government provide support.
 - **Local government is in charge in a disaster.** Although higher levels of government may provide support and be actively involved, local government is still in charge.
 - **Today, emergency planners use an all-hazards approach.** Federal, state and local response plans embrace an operational model that applies generally to all disasters. Because certain types of disasters present unique challenges, annexes are developed to provide additional instructions/guidance for particular types of emergencies (e.g., dam failures).

Local (city and county) Plans—These plans describe the local government’s response structure, procedures, and roles of local government agencies. A local EOP may address coordination of volunteer resources in a functional annex.

State Operations Plans—State plans describe the state government’s response to a major disaster and the roles of state agencies. The principal disaster mission of a state is to support efforts of local (city and county) government. States also may address volunteer coordination in a plan annex.


National Response Framework (formerly the National Response Plan)—Describes the federal government’s plans for response and short-term recovery for disasters, the roles of federal agencies, and the resources the federal government will bring to bear to support states and their subdivisions. Volunteer and Donations Management is an Annex to the National Response Framework.

Activation of EOPs—How Local Government Responds

When a disaster strikes, local government responds according to pre-determined protocols. Typically, police, fire and EMS will be first on scene (hence the term “first responders”). American Red Cross is usually called in if people affected by the disaster are unable to stay in their homes.

The city and/or county EOC (Emergency Operations Center) will open. The EOC will gather information from the field response and other sources, secure additional resources needed, and facilitate coordination among all the agencies responding. It will also notify the next higher level of government of the activation. If the situation warrants, the city’s mayor or county’s governing body will proclaim a local state of emergency. In some cases, usually when more than one county is involved, a state’s governor may issue an emergency proclamation. In certain large-scale disasters, a Presidential Declaration may be issued.

EOCs have varied ways of coordinating with voluntary organizations such as HandsOn Action Centers. In some cases, the Center will have a seat in the EOC. In others, the EOC may have a liaison to voluntary organizations which will act as a go-between. In still others, the Center may be connected to the EOC through the



Personnel unit within the Logistics Section. In any case, prior relationships are critical for effective EOC-HandsOn Action Center coordination.

Once the initial response and relief phase is over, EOCs tend to demobilize (close down). Even so, the work of recovery goes on and government staff may continue to be involved.

Links

- American Red Cross
www.redcross.org
 - Association of Information and Referral Services (AIRS) with link to 2-1-1
www.airs.org
 - CaliforniaVolunteers
www.californiavolunteers.org
 - Citizen Corps
www.citizencorps.gov
 - Corporation for National and Community Service
www.nationalservice.org
 - FEMA
www.fema.gov
 - FEMA's free online training on ICS and NIMS
training.fema.gov/IS/crslst.asp
 - FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaison, Role of
www.citizencorps.gov/doc/2007_nccp/KatheeHenning-VoluntaryAgencyLiaison.pdf
 - Incident Command System (ICS)
training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/ICSResource/index.htm
 - National Incident Management System (NIMS)
www.fema.gov/emergency/nims/
 - National Response Framework (NRF)
www.fema.gov/emergency/nrf/
 - National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster
www.nvoad.org
 - Volunteer Florida
www.volunteerflorida.org
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1.2 Glossary

Disaster

An occurrence of a natural catastrophe, technological accident, or human-caused event that has resulted in severe property damage, deaths, and/or multiple injuries.

Emergency

Any occasion or instance—such as a hurricane, tornado, storm, flood, tidal wave, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide, mudslide, snowstorm, fire, explosion, nuclear accident, or any other natural or man-made catastrophe—that warrants action to save lives and to protect property, public health, and safety.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

The protected site from which state and local civil government officials coordinate, monitor, and direct emergency response activities during an emergency.

Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)

A document that: describes how people and property will be protected in disaster and disaster threat situations; details who is responsible for carrying out specific actions; identifies the personnel, equipment, facilities, supplies, and other resources available for use in the disaster; and outlines how all actions will be coordinated.

Incident Command System (ICS)

A standardized organizational structure used to command, control, and coordinate the use of resources and personnel that have responded to the scene of an emergency. The concepts and principles for ICS include common terminology, modular organization, integrated communication, unified command structure, consolidated action plan, manageable span of control, designated incident facilities, and comprehensive resource management.

Long-term Recovery Organization (LTRO)


Interagency organization that forms following a disaster and that pools funds and other resources to assist people with unmet needs.

Mutual Aid Agreement

Written or oral agreement between and among agencies/organizations and/or jurisdictions that provides a mechanism to quickly obtain emergency assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, materials and other associated services. The primary objective is to facilitate rapid, short-term deployment of emergency support prior to, during, and/or after an incident.

National Incident Management System (NIMS)

Provides a systematic, proactive approach that guides government agencies at all levels, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work seamlessly to prepare for, prevent, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents,



regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity, in order to reduce the loss of life or property and harm to the environment.

National Response Framework (NRF)


A guide to how the nation conducts all-hazards incident management.



1.3 Abbreviations and Acronyms

Disaster

CBO	Community-based Organization
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
CISD	Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
CNCS	Corporation for National and Community Service
COAD	Community Organizations Active in Disaster
CoO	Concept of Operations
COOP	Continuity of Operations Plan
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOVIA	Directors of Volunteers in Agencies
DSW	Disaster Service Worker
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EVC	Emergency Volunteer Center (alternate term,for VRC)
FBO	Faith-based Organization
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
HRSA	Health Resources and Services Administration
HSGP	Homeland Security Grant Program
I&R	Information and Referral
IAP	Incident Action Plan
ICS	Incident Command System
LTRC	Long-term Recovery Committee
LTRO	Long-term Recovery Organization
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRC	Medical Reserve Corps



NCCC	National Civilian Community Corps
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NRF	National Response Framework
NVOAD	National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster
PIO	Public Information Officer
RSVP	Retired and Senior Volunteer Program
SEMS	Standardized Emergency Management System
VAL	Voluntary Agency Liaison
VIPS	Volunteers in Police Service
VISTA	Volunteers in Service to America
VOAD	Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster
VRC	Volunteer Reception Center



Section 2

Assessing Your Readiness

In this section:

2.1 Assess Your Readiness

2.1 Assess Your Readiness

HandsOn Action 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 level of preparedness for responding to an emergency.

Using the Survey

Use the following survey to candidly evaluate your Center's present 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.


Developing an Action Plan

Review the NO items on your checklist and use them to develop a detailed action plan with sequential tasks, target dates, and staff assignments. You may find that some of the steps will overlap and many can be addressed simultaneously. Logic and the needs of your HandsOn Action Center and community should dictate the sequencing of activities.

A word of caution: Do not try to do everything at once. If you are starting from scratch, it may take more than a year to complete all the items on the checklist.

HandsOn Action Center Readiness Survey

Yes	No	
_____	_____	1. Is a paid or volunteer staff member assigned and trained as Disaster Response Manager?
_____	_____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is an alternate manager designated? • If you have more than one site, is there a manager for each site?
_____	_____	2. Has the Board of Directors/Advisory Board adopted a resolution committing the HandsOn Action Center to disaster response?
_____	_____	3. Have you developed a relationship with your local office of emergency management?
_____	_____	4. Does your community's emergency operations plan designate the HandsOn Action Center as the responsible party for spontaneous volunteer coordination?
_____	_____	5. Do you have a signed MOU with local government?
_____	_____	6. Are cooperation agreements in place with local disaster relief organizations such as American Red Cross and The Salvation Army?
_____	_____	7. Is your HandsOn Action Center a member of a local interagency disaster planning group such as VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster)?
_____	_____	8. Does your HandsOn Action Center have a relationship with your local Citizen Corps Council and/or partner programs (CERT, Fire Corps, MRC, Neighborhood Watch, VIPS)?
_____	_____	9. Are the HandsOn Action Center's disaster role and responsibilities clearly defined and shared with all concerned?
_____	_____	10. Are appropriate risk management policies and procedures in place?
_____	_____	11. Does the HandsOn Action Center have a cost recovery plan for disaster-related expenses?
_____	_____	12. Is your HandsOn Action Center's response plan consistent with NIMS and ICS?
_____	_____	13. Is there an activation checklist for launching operations in a disaster?
_____	_____	14. Is a public information plan in place?
_____	_____	15. Do you have a plan for referring volunteers during disasters?

- 
- 16. Are staff and volunteers trained at least annually on disaster preparedness, your Center's response plan, and Volunteer Reception Center operations?
 - 17. Has your staff had NIMS/ICS training?
 - 18. Is a plan in place for testing the HandsOn Action Center's emergency operations procedures through drills and exercises?
 - 19. Does the HandsOn Action Center participate in community disaster response exercises?
 - 20. Have you identified one or more alternate sites in case your primary site is unusable or inaccessible?
 - 21. Are the HandsOn Action Center's facility and staff personally prepared?
 - 22. Is a plan in place for evacuating the HandsOn Action Center offices?
 - 23. Do you have a continuity of operations plan that protects HandsOn Action Center resources and addresses contingencies such as loss of power or telephone service?
 - 24. Do you have a strategy for increasing staffing capacity for disasters?
 - 25. Are mutual assistance plans in place with neighboring HandsOn Action Centers?
 - 26. Is there a plan for involving volunteers in HandsOn Action Center operations?
 - 27. Have you explored funding possibilities for disaster preparedness and response?

Checklist

- ✓ Complete the HandsOn Action Center Readiness Survey.
 - ✓ Review the items that are checked "NO."
 - ✓ Develop a detailed action plan with sequential tasks, target dates and staff assignments.
-



Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- To turn the HandsOn Action Center Readiness Survey into an action plan, review the items checked “NO.” For each of these items, establish a target date for completion, assign staff, and then check off items as they are completed. Organizing items sequentially by target date will make them easier to track. You may need to break some of the “NO” items into sets of smaller tasks and assign target dates to those.
 - 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 incorporate the list in your disaster resource directory (see Chapter 7.3). The directory should be updated periodically to facilitate activating operations in an actual disaster response situation.
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Section 3

Developing Partnerships

In this section:

- 3.1 Partner with Local Government
- 3.2 Partner with Relief Organizations
- 3.3 Partner with VOAD
- 3.4 Build Agreements and MOUs

3.1 Partner with Local Government


Partnerships are essential to effective planning and response efforts. This and the following chapters focus on HandsOn Action Center relationships with key players in the disaster arena—local government, major relief organizations and VOAD. Developing relationships with these important groups is part of a larger process of stakeholder development. As you build these key relationships, look for opportunities to identify other potential stakeholders—major employers in your community, funders, faith-based organizations, colleges and universities, agencies and organizations that serve the community and will need volunteers during a disaster, and so on. Keep track of them in your disaster resource directory and look for ways to help them understand the HandsOn Action Center’s role in disasters and how you can collaborate.

Developing a Relationship with Local Government

Since 9/11 and the implementation of the National Response Framework (NRF) and National Incident Management System (NIMS), voluntary organizations and the coordination of volunteer resources have become more integrated into federal, state and local government planning. In fact, the NRF encourages government coordination with HandsOn Action Centers.⁸ Increasingly, HandsOn Action Centers throughout the country are partnering with local government and often becoming their community’s lead agency for coordinating spontaneous volunteers.

Initiate a relationship with local government partners at the onset of your HandsOn Action Center’s internal planning process. Communication and coordination with your local cities and/or county are critical for helping you clearly define your Center’s role, avoid unnecessary confusion, manage expectations, and access valuable

⁸ The National Response Framework addresses volunteers in its Volunteer and Donations Support Annex. This annex describes the coordination process used to support state governments in ensuring the most effective use of unaffiliated volunteers. The annex encourages government coordination with voluntary agencies, including volunteer centers.



information and resources. This coordinated planning effort often leads to the inclusion of the HandsOn Action Center in the local EOP and opportunities for Center staff to train and exercise with local jurisdictions.


Benefits to HandsOn Centers—Partnering with local governments can help HandsOn Action Centers access scarce resources for disaster response. In times of disaster, local governments can provide updates about the disaster situation, including hazards and road closures. They may also be able to help provide facilities and equipment (particularly if the Center’s primary site has been directly impacted); staff; and technical expertise. During times of normal operations, they may invite your Center to participate in training and exercises that will enhance your staff’s understanding and expertise in the disaster area. In some areas, local government has partnered with a local HandsOn Action Center on such efforts as the Human Race, interagency meetings and conferences, and has loaned facilities, staff and equipment.

Benefits to Local Government—Partnerships are not one-way streets. Understand that your HandsOn Action Center has valuable resources to bring to the table:

- Technical expertise on volunteer management
- Access to community-based organizations that serve vulnerable populations
- In some cases, experience coordinating volunteers in a disaster
- Written materials such as this guide
- Recruitment of volunteers to participate in drills and exercises
- Recruitment of volunteers to staff phone banks and call centers for disasters that are impending
- Willingness to coordinate spontaneous volunteer resources at the time of a disaster
- The experience of other HandsOn Action Centers around the country that may be just a phone call or e-mail message away

Strategies for Building Partnerships—When you are ready to initiate a partnership with local government, consider the following:

- Identify potential local government partners. Depending on your geographical coverage, it could be a county or city, or both. Your first and primary government partner will most likely be the emergency management agency for the jurisdiction. You may want to include other county departments such as Human Resources, Public Health, etc.
- Plan a meeting or attend one of theirs. Do emergency managers from the county and the cities in it meet on a regular basis? Get to know these people and find out their take on coordinating volunteer resources. Unorganized spontaneous volunteers can often impede the efforts of first responders during the first few days following a major disaster—is that an issue they would like your help in addressing? Or have they already addressed it in their plans, and how?

- 
- Introduce the HandsOn Action Center’s expertise and the role it could play supporting emergency managers with effective coordination of spontaneous volunteers in times of disaster. Focus on the benefits:
 - Increases local response capacity
 - Assists first responders by re-directing volunteers and keeping them out of harm’s way
 - Is cost-effective, especially if a HandsOn Action Center is providing services to several jurisdictions
 - Leverages resources
 - Channels volunteer resources to where they are needed most quickly

Formalizing the Partnership⁹—When there is shared understanding of each party’s roles, resources and capacity:

- Request that the HandsOn Action Center’s agreed-upon role be written into the government’s EOP
- Jointly develop an agreement or MOU that clarifies and supports the partnership

Checklist


- ✓ Identify key players in local government in your community for disaster volunteer management
 - ✓ Emergency Management
 - ✓ Public Health
- ✓ Human Resources/Personnel
- ✓ Develop a steering committee/workgroup (including other partners)
- ✓ Designate lead agency (typically HandsOn Action Center)
- ✓ Define roles and responsibilities of partners
- ✓ Determine priorities
- ✓ Identify fiscal support and/or fiscal agent as needed
- ✓ Develop community-wide volunteer coordination plan with input from partners
- ✓ Request that HandsOn Action Center’s role be written into the jurisdiction’s emergency operations plan
- ✓ Develop agreements/MOUs
- ✓ Create education and outreach plan

⁹ See Chapter 3.4 for suggestions on building agreements and MOUs.



Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- Volunteer Center of Rhode Island is primary agency for volunteer management for Emergency Support Function 17:Volunteers and Donations, and partners with Rhode Island Dept. of Health:
www.astho.org/pubs/FinalRIEmergencyVolunteers.pdf
- Volunteer Center of Morgan County (AL) collaborates with Morgan County Emergency Management Agency to offer CERT training: www.vcomc.org/disasterprep.shtml
- The Volunteer Center of Southern Arizona and the Pima County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security are the two Primary Agencies for the Volunteer and Donations Management Annex to the Pima County EOP. See Pima County Vol Annex in the Attachments.
- The Volunteer Center of Southern Arizona is also written into (as a Support Agency) the State of Arizona's Emergency Response and Recovery Plan/Volunteer Management Support Annex. See AZ State Plan in the Attachments.
- "Maximizing Volunteers as a Resource during Disaster: A Model for Local Government and Volunteer Center Collaboration" makes the case for Volunteer Center and local government partnerships. This manual, produced by the Volunteer Center of Sonoma County and the County of Sonoma, describes the Volunteer Center's call center and walk-in VRC operations and includes numerous forms and tools. See Spontaneous Disaster Manual in the Attachments.
- "We Are Family: Dimensions of Caring in Times of Disaster" chronicles many examples of Volunteer Center-government partnerships:
www.pointsoflight.org/downloads/pdf/about/GulfCoastReportSummary.pdf
- Volunteer Center of Napa Valley (CA) has an agreement with County of Napa to coordinate spontaneous volunteers in disaster. The Center is also the convening point for CERT volunteers. (www.volunteernapa.org/Disaster.html)

- 
- The Volunteer Center Serving San Francisco and San Mateo Counties (TVC) worked closely with San Francisco's Department of Human Resources (DHR) to develop the City's Volunteer Annex. An MOU was developed between the TVC, DHR and the City's Department of Emergency Management to detail the role of each agency in the implementation of the City's Emergency Volunteer Center.
-



3.2 Partner with Relief Organizations

Coordination among the nonprofit organizations responding to disaster is essential for effective response, relief, and recovery. Linkages between the nonprofit and government sectors are also critically important. One of the chief criticisms leveled against the agencies and organizations responding to the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake was their failure to communicate and coordinate with one another. An important lesson from countless disasters but highlighted during the Florida hurricanes of 2004 is the importance of establishing interagency relationships before a disaster strikes. Volunteer Florida's hurricane season report¹⁰ indicated that coordination between HandsOn Action Centers and other organizations was smoother when the representatives knew each other prior to the disaster.

Identifying Potential Partners

It is important to identify who the key nonprofit players are in your community and who your HandsOn Action Center will be working with during disaster response and recovery. They would most likely include the following:

- 2-1-1/information and referral providers—In times of disaster, it is important that organizations giving information to the public know about the role of the HandsOn Action Center.
- American Red Cross—Discussions with your local Red Cross chapter before a disaster will help volunteer referrals go more smoothly during times of disaster. For those times when Red Cross has enough volunteers, or volunteers it can't use immediately, remind them they can send volunteers to the HandsOn Action Center to be referred to other organizations that do need assistance.
- Other major community organizations involving volunteers in disaster relief, such as The Salvation Army, food banks, and blood centers—Talking to them in advance will improve coordination of volunteers at the time of a disaster.

Value of National Agreements

Having trouble getting started with local partnerships? Become familiar with national agreements that HandsOn Network has brokered with other response organizations such as American Red Cross, Citizen Corps and VOAD. All of them acknowledge the key role that HandsOn Network plays in coordinating spontaneous volunteers. National agreements are meant to be honored at the local level and can help open otherwise closed doors.

¹⁰ *Unaffiliated Volunteer Management: Florida's Record-breaking 2004 Hurricane Season*, Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service, Volunteer Florida
<http://www.volunteerflorida.org/emergencymanagement/docs/2008/2004season.pdf>



Meeting with Potential Partners

Your HandsOn Action Center may wish to convene representatives of the organizations described above to discuss a cooperative effort that focuses on volunteer involvement in disasters. Informally survey representatives before or during such a meeting to find out the services each participating group can offer.

Developing MOUs

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 (MOU) 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 Chapter 3.4 on how to build specific MOUs and agreements with other response organizations.

Not every relationship has to be sealed with an agreement or MOU. Aim for written agreements with key groups. With other nonprofit organizations, identify ways you can enhance their understanding of your role. Consider posting information on your website and directing them to it, talking about it at interagency meetings, preparing and distributing a flyer or brochure, or conducting a workshop on disaster volunteer management.

New and Emerging Players

As a HandsOn Action Center you are likely to learn of new nonprofit organizations in your community, especially those that involve volunteers. You may also observe some organizations not previously involved in emergency planning begin to show an interest. Let them know the role your Center plays in disaster and encourage them to work with you.

Checklist

- ✓ Identify key partner agencies in your community for disaster volunteer management
 - ✓ Develop a steering committee/workgroup (including local government partners)
 - ✓ Designate a lead agency (typically HandsOn Action Center)
 - ✓ Determine roles of partner agencies
 - ✓ Develop agreements/MOUs
 - ✓ Look for other ways to inform nonprofit organizations of your role in disaster and encourage collaboration
-

Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- The Volunteer Center Serving Howard County (MD) partners with American Red Cross to train volunteers to help with bulk distribution and mass care operations.
www.volunteerhoward.org
 - The Volunteer Center of North Texas (located in Dallas and serving three counties) has an MOU with American Red Cross to handle their phone calls in emergencies and did so during Hurricane Katrina. The Center also staffed three call centers for the City of Dallas during that disaster.
www.volunteernorthtexas.org
 - When Volunteer Jacksonville was called on to respond to Katrina, they already had relationships with government and nonprofits around disaster response issues. According to a staff member, quoted in *We Are Family: Dimensions of Caring in Times of Disaster*, “The key is building relationships beforehand. . . . People know who you are, why you are calling, and that you are a recognized part of your community’s response. They know you can deliver what you’re talking about.”
www.pointsoflight.org/downloads/pdf/about/GulfCoastReportSummary.pdf
-



3.3 Partner with VOAD

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 HandsOn Action Center is new to disaster work, consider the value of maintaining steady attendance at meetings. A year's worth of regular participation can save much time and improve response capacity during a disaster.

What Is VOAD?

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 voluntary organizations that have formal disaster response plans and do become operational in a disaster. Representatives of these organizations attend regular VOAD meetings, where they share with each other information about their resources, capabilities, and special areas of expertise.

What Is National VOAD?

National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) is the national umbrella for the VOAD movement. Formed in 1970, the organization's members include the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, Lutheran Social Services, Catholic Charities, Church World Service, and The Points of Light Foundation, which joined in 1994. Among other activities, NVOAD charters state VOADS. All US states and most territories have a chartered State VOAD, and the number of local VOADS is growing.

Other Interagency Models

Some communities have formed local interagency coalitions based on models other than VOAD.¹¹ Their membership includes major response and relief agencies as well as community-based organizations. Sometimes these coalitions have funding and paid staff, whereas typically VOADS do not. Like VOADS, these groups offer HandsOn Action Centers an 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.

¹¹ Some communities have formed coalitions known as COADs (Community Organizations Active in Disaster). Some COADs are like local VOADS but cover a smaller geographical area, while others follow a different model. There does not appear to be a clear or consistent interpretation of this term.



Checklist

- ✓ Determine if your community or state has a VOAD. If it does, contact the chair, become a member, and attend all meetings.
 - ✓ Get contact info for VOAD chair and add to your disaster resource directory.
 - ✓ 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.
 - ✓ Get contact info for interagency chair and add to your disaster resource directory.
-
-

Tips, Tools, and Best Practices


- According to Scott Ingram of the Volunteer Center of Southern Arizona (singram@volunteersoaz.org):

“The Volunteer Center in Southern Arizona started the local VOAD in 2002 at the request of our County Emergency Management program. After 9/11, the County wanted the VOAD to do spontaneous volunteer and donations management. The Volunteer Center took on the spontaneous volunteer management, and Salvation Army is the lead in donations management.

“VOAD really helped our Center position itself in a leadership role among nonprofits, and not only during disaster. It has allowed us to promote more ordinary, day-to-day volunteering as well. We have continued to convene the VOAD, and now work with the State VOAD as well. There is now a VOAD seat in the Emergency Operations Center, which enables us to provide accurate and timely information to and from the nonprofit community.”

See also *VC of So AZ Prog Desc* in Attachments.

- The NVOAD website (www.nvoad.org) has information on national members and contacts, state members and contacts, local VOADs and contacts, publications and much more.

- 
- Following Hurricane Katrina, Volunteer Mobile, in collaboration with other agencies, established a regional warehouse for processing donated goods for relief efforts coordinated by VOAD agencies in Alabama and Mississippi. FEMA also asked Volunteer Mobile to coordinate the long-term recovery effort for ten counties and to help each county develop its own local VOAD or interfaith response team (see *We Are Family: Dimensions of Caring in Times of Disaster*).
www.pointsoflight.org/downloads/pdf/about/GulfCoastReportSummary.pdf
 - California's VOAD website (www.calvoad.org) has information about Northern CA VOAD and Southern CA VOAD, including by-laws, local VOADs in CA, etc.
 - For a local VOAD example, see Dallas County (TX) VOAD at dallascountyvoad.org/Membership/tabid/61/Default.aspx. The Volunteer Center of North Texas is a member.
-

3.4 Build Agreements and MOUs

Once verbal agreements are made with local government and disaster relief organizations regarding the HandsOn Action Center's role in response, it is important that Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) are developed and in place prior to the disaster. An MOU allows a HandsOn Action Center to determine in advance what resources it can commit at the time of a disaster and to thus protect its fiscal future.

For HandsOn Action Centers, having an MOU with local government is critical for cost recovery following a disaster.¹²

MOU Contents

A typical memorandum of understanding includes the following:

- Purpose
- Definition of disaster
- Roles and responsibilities
- Method of cooperation-preparedness and response
- Activation procedures
- Cost recovery/reimbursement of disaster-related expenses
- Date effective until

It will be up to you to manage others' expectation of your HandsOn Action Center and what it can and cannot do. Therefore focus carefully on the description of the Center's role. Make sure it is clear and that it indicates what your limits are.

Developing Contracts for Service

In addition to MOUs, other written agreements, such as contracts for services, can be explored with local government or other entities. Contracts are another way to establish what services the HandsOn Action Center will provide and the costs for those services when activated in a disaster.

Checklist

- ✓ Develop working agreements with key agencies and organizations.
 - ✓ For each agency and organization, incorporate agreements into a draft memorandum of understanding.
 - ✓ Sign when both parties agree on wording.
 - ✓ Revisit annually.
-

¹² Being written into a local government EOP may be even more critical than having an MOU and is strongly recommended. See comments and examples in Chapter 3.1 of this guide.



Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- For many years, the Volunteer Center of Sonoma County (CA) has had an MOU with the County of Sonoma's Office of Emergency Services. See *VC of Sonoma County MOU with County* in Attachments.
 - New York Cares developed an MOU with the City of New York in 2003. See *MOU NY Cares* in Attachments.
 - "Contract for Service" resource: Hands On Sacramento (CA) has a contract with Sacramento Region Citizen Corps Council for pre-disaster EVC planning and management as well as local VOAD coordination. See *09 EVOLC Contract* in Attachments.
 - For sample MOU, see The Volunteer Center Serving Howard County's MOU with Howard County, Maryland (*Signed MOU - No Names* in the Attachments).
 - Volunteer Centers of CA produced a template for developing an MOU between a Volunteer Center and an Office of Emergency Services. See *MOU with Counties Template* in the Attachments.
 - The *Sample MOU for VC Use* (see Attachments) can be adapted for use in building an agreement between a HandsOn Action Center and a local government agency or nonprofit organization.
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Section 4

Getting Started at Home

In this section:

- 4.1 Develop Leadership Team
- 4.2 Secure Executive and Board Commitment
- 4.3 Define HandsOn Action Center Role
- 4.4 Assess and Mitigate Risk
- 4.5 Explore Funding Options

4.1 Develop Leadership Team

Prior to initiating your internal planning process, be sure to sit down with your local office of emergency management to discuss your HandsOn Action Center's role in a disaster. See Section 3 of this guide, particularly Chapters 3.1 and 3.4.

Leadership for the disaster planning process is critical for its success.

Selection of Managers


Many factors may influence who is assigned as the manager and assistant manager. The size, organizational structure, and location of your HandsOn Action Center are important considerations as well as the manager's skills and position within the organization. Both positions can be filled by paid staff or board members. The assistant manager could also be a volunteer. 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.

Leadership Team Roles

The primary role of the leadership team is planning, developing the HandsOn Action Center's disaster plan and program over a period of time. But when a disaster occurs, the leadership team must play a different role, that of activating and managing the Center's response operations. In the latter role, the leadership team will coordinate a larger response team comprised of all HandsOn Action Center employees and willing volunteers.

Commitment Required

Assignment as disaster manager or team member should not be taken lightly. Because the manager 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 leadership team should plan to lead the response team and must be fully committed to act.¹³

Staff Turnover

One challenge HandsOn Action Centers face is staff turnover. Whether the manager is a board member or paid staff 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.

Checklist

- ✓ Appoint a manager and an assistant manager.
- ✓ Develop formal job descriptions for each role established to ensure clear responsibilities and lines of authority. See sample job description in Tips, Tools, and Best Practices section below.
- ✓ Add additional team members if needed or desired.
- ✓ For Centers with more than one site, appoint a manager and an assistant manager for each site.

Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- See *Position Description for Disaster Program Manager* in the Attachments.

¹³ Nevertheless, the leaders may not be present when a disaster strikes and other staff will have to take on leadership roles. For this reason, cross training of all staff is highly desirable.



4.2 Secure Executive and Board Commitment

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 planning, preparedness and response.

For what are you seeking buy-in?

The answer will differ for each HandsOn Action Center but your most likely request is for commitment of staff time and other resources for planning and program development. You might also request alterations to personnel policies (e.g., extended working hours, compensation for overtime) to cover disaster operations. Any changes or additions to existing personnel policies will require board approval. Lastly, you may need board approval for seeking funding from outside sources.

High-level Decision Makers

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. A signed copy of the resolution should be added to your HandsOn Action Center response plan.

Suggested Strategies

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

- Assess your HandsOn Action Center's disaster planning needs.
- Assess the hazards in your areas and your HandsOn Action Center's vulnerabilities.
- Evaluate the benefits of disaster planning to your Center, such as added visibility, an expanded volunteer base, and increased revenue for program development and disaster operations.
- 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.



Checklist

- ✓ Identify any buy-in issues and prepare a proposal as needed to address them.
 - ✓ Secure commitment from top-level decision makers as needed.
 - ✓ Determine if your HandsOn Action 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 non-affiliated 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.
 - ✓ Make this policy statement part of the Disaster Response Plan records.
 - ✓ 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.
-

Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- Sample Board Resolution #1:

Moved that the Board of Directors of HandsOn XXXXX hereby resolves the following:

- *HandsOn XXXX is named in the XXXXX County Emergency Operations Plan as the organization designated to refer spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers to agencies providing assistance in disaster recovery.*
- *The HandsOn XXXX Disaster Response Manager and the Assistant Manager 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 Manager and Assistant Manager are paid staff members.*

- Sample Board Resolution #2

[Note that this resolution related to approval of a mutual aid agreement]

The Board of Directors of the (insert name of your HandsOn Action Center) resolves to allocate Center resources to aid our communities in times of disaster by participating in the disaster response and recovery planning process and by recruiting and referral of volunteers in times of disaster.

The Board of Directors further recognizes the value and importance of extending mutual aid to HandsOn Action Centers whose community has been affected by a disaster incident that has created human service needs beyond the capacity of services and resources of the affected HandsOn Action Center.

We therefore resolve to empower our Executive Director and Board President to sign the Volunteer Centers of (insert your state or region) Mutual Aid Agreement.



4.3 Define HandsOn Action Center Role

It is critically important for the HandsOn Action Center's role in disasters to be clearly understood by the Center staff, the agencies and organizations the Center serves, and the community in general. Because HandsOn Action Centers function within the context of their own unique communities, each Center should take into account the community's needs as well as the Center's resources when defining its disaster role.

HandsOn Action Center's Primary Role

Most Volunteers Centers will see mobilizing volunteers to meet community needs as their primary mission in a disaster. Typically this entails taking a leadership position in coordinating a community's spontaneous unaffiliated volunteer response during a crisis and into recovery.


Taking on Additional Roles

Some HandsOn Action Centers may be asked to take on additional roles, such as:

- **Disaster information and referral:** In the unlikely absence of an information and referral or 2-1-1 provider in your community, you may be asked to take on the task of providing information about disaster services to the general public. While the HandsOn Action Center may wish to participate in pre-disaster planning on this topic, this addition to its disaster operations responsibilities may prove overwhelming.
- **Management of donated goods:** Donated goods, especially unwanted items, are often a major issue in disasters—the HandsOn Action Center may be seen as a good candidate for managing this project. Unless you have prior experience and ample staff, caution is advised. This responsibility could be a major distraction from your primary role of coordinating spontaneous volunteers.
- **Sending volunteers to help community residents in their homes or businesses:** Consider carefully, preferably in advance, how your Center will respond to these requests. While many HandsOn Action 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 willing to take it on.

Clarifying Your Role with Customers

When communicating with agencies and organizations regarding the HandsOn Action Center's role, clarify with them what you will and won't do in terms of referring volunteers. HandsOn Action Centers typically do not screen, check credentials, or conduct background checks on volunteers referred; those tasks are the responsibility of the agency or organization receiving the volunteers. When memoranda of understanding are being established with other agencies, always include a disclaimer releasing the HandsOn Action Center from such responsibilities. This may seem superfluous but having the statement in writing helps ensure that



customer agencies and organizations are aware of the HandsOn Action Center's function. Example: *The HandsOn Action Center is not responsible for screening, verifying credentials of, training, or recognizing volunteers being referred to the American Red Cross.*

Focusing on Your Primary Mission

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 primary mission. It is critical to ensure that all concerned parties are aware of the HandsOn Action Center's role in disaster response. Stay in the business you are in. Don't try to be all things to all people.

Checklist

- ✓ Decide what your HandsOn Action Center will and will not do in disaster response.
 - ✓ Create a written summary of your role statement and distribute copies to Center staff (paid and unpaid) and all concerned agencies and organizations.
 - ✓ Determine whether your Center will take on additional roles beyond coordination of spontaneous volunteers.
 - ✓ Always include in memoranda of understanding with other agencies a disclaimer that releases the HandsOn Action Center from responsibilities for screening, checking credentials on, and conducting background checks on referred volunteers.
-



Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- For suggested guidelines from a HandsOn Action Center (Volunteer Centers of Santa Cruz County, CA) that does refer volunteers to individuals, see *Should Your Center Make Referrals to Individuals?* in the Attachments.
 - The Volunteer Center of Southern Arizona has taken on a number of roles in terms of disaster preparedness, response and recovery. These roles are clearly spelled out in a two-page document (see *VC of AZ Prog Desc* in Attachments).
 - HandsOn Action Centers may be asked to coordinate and convene organizations active in disaster (e.g., local VOADs, Citizen Corps Councils, disaster volunteer coordinating committees). In fact, many HandsOn Action Centers around the country provide a “home base” for local VOADs and other interagency groups. When a disaster strikes, one of the Center’s responsibilities would be to make sure the group is convened to share information and address gaps and overlaps in service.
 - See the “Sticking to our knitting” section of Volunteer San Diego’s *Lessons Learned from the 2007 Wildfires* (in Attachments) for comments on maintaining the Volunteer Center during a disaster.
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4.4 Assess and Mitigate Risk

Consideration of the HandsOn Action Center's role in disaster leads directly to concerns about liability. The best approach is to determine the risk management components that exist, how they will apply during a disaster, and whether additional steps need to be taken. Consult with a risk management expert as you modify an existing plan or create a new one.

What's Already in Place

Assuming your HandsOn Action 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.


Risks Associated with Your Own Volunteers

There are two types of risk associated with your HandsOn Action Center's volunteers: liability for harm caused by your volunteers and liability for injuries that your volunteers suffer while helping staff your operations. This applies whether they are pre-trained or drawn from the pool of spontaneous volunteers responding. To minimize risk, your Center should follow three simple steps: *plan, train, and document*.

- By developing a detailed disaster response plan to guide your HandsOn Action Center's efforts during the next emergency, you will go a long way toward avoiding future problems. For guidance on developing such a plan, see Section 5—Building Your Operations Plan.
- Keep records of training your HandsOn Action Center provides for its own 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, remember also 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. Having readily accessible documentation on every aspect of your operation can help keep your defense costs down should a suit arise.

Risks of Referring Volunteers

Thankfully, the risks of referring spontaneous volunteers to other agencies and organizations are very low—*providing you follow established policies and procedures for referring volunteers*. Another protection will be ensuring that agencies and organizations to which you do refer volunteers clearly understand your policies,



particularly those about what you will and won't do in terms of identity/license/credential checking, background checks, etc. (see Chapter 5.4 for more on this topic).

Volunteer Protection Laws

In addition, you will want to determine how your state regards the liability of volunteers in emergency situations. Some volunteer protection laws are designed specifically for volunteers in their ordinary activities, while others apply to volunteers in emergencies. Note that while a volunteer may be exempt from liability, a claim can still be brought against your HandsOn Action Center.

Insuring for What You Can't Prevent or Mitigate

For the risks that can't be eliminated or mitigated, explore insurance solutions. HandsOn Action Centers typically carry liability insurance—but does it cover volunteers? Your Center may also want to provide accident and injury protection for volunteers, and/or excess automobile liability coverage for volunteers who transport goods or people in their volunteer service. You may need to add volunteers as a covered category in existing policies, and in some cases add a rider that covers times of disaster. Consult with your insurance carrier on what is needed for your particular situation.

Checklist

- ✓ Identify and assess risks.
 - ✓ Adopt appropriate risk management policies and procedures, with guidance from a risk management expert.
 - ✓ For reference, obtain a book that addresses risk management for nonprofits (see Tips, Tools and Best Practices).
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Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- *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 (www.nonprofitrisk.org/).
 - *State Liability Laws for Charitable Organizations and Volunteers - 4th Edition*. State by state review of the evolving landscape of charitable immunity and volunteer protection laws. Available through the Nonprofit Risk Management Center (see contact information above)
 - Linda Graff (Linda Graff & Associates, Canada) has a number of publications on volunteer management and risk management at www.lindagraff.ca
 - Jayne Mathews of the Brunswick County (NC) Volunteer Center has offered to be a resource to other HandsOn Action Centers for this chapter's topic. Her contact information follows:
Jayne W. Mathews
Brunswick County Volunteer Center
Brunswick County Emergency Management Department
jmathews@brunswickes.com
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4.5 Explore Funding Options

There are a number of funding streams for disaster preparedness and response programs from which HandsOn Action Centers might benefit. Since 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and the development of NIMS and the National Response Framework, there has been a growing national recognition of the importance of effectively integrating volunteer coordination into local disaster response planning.

Fundability of Volunteer Coordination

Volunteer coordination has increasingly been included as a fundable program in Department of Homeland Security grant guidelines. Some states, through grants funded by Citizen Corps, Homeland Security, HRSA, and other federal programs, are requiring local government to build volunteer coordination into their emergency operations plans. Building relationships with local government and helping them understand the technical expertise and other benefits your HandsOn Action Center can bring to the volunteer planning process can net critical dollars for you.

Funding Response Planning and Preparedness


As with any HandsOn Action Center program, it is important to inform constituents and potential funders about the role of the Center and the services it can provide in a disaster. There are many creative options for funding response planning. Here are several suggestions:

- Local government is an ideal funder for response planning because the HandsOn Action Center provides critical services to local government. Many local grants flow from federal programs such as the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI), the Homeland Security Grant program (HSGP), Citizen Corps, HRSA, and CDC.
- Another option for funding response planning is to partner with private businesses. Business sectors familiar with preparedness may fund local programs. Consider insurance providers, utility companies, water companies, and others that already recognize the value of preparedness.
- Large local corporations, Chambers of Commerce, and private foundations are other potential funders of planning and preparedness programs. When approaching funders, cite lessons from recent disasters to help them understand the impact a well-coordinated volunteer effort can make in an impacted community.

Funding Response Operations/Cost Recovery

HandsOn Action Center response operations are typically funded in two ways:

- Through application for reimbursement for operational costs from FEMA and state government through local government (see checklist for more details). For HandsOn Action Centers, being written into your local government's EOP could be critical for cost recovery following a disaster. Your Center will also need an MOU that spells out each organization's roles and responsibilities, as well as any cost recovery policies and procedures.

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- Establish forms and procedures consistent with FEMA's tracking requirements for recording and tracking all disaster response expenses. Cover required authorization for expenditures (either all expenditures or just those above a certain level); requirements for petty cash, rental and purchase of equipment; use of credit cards; and expectations for timely submission of receipts.
 - Be prepared, should you activate your disaster plan, to track emergency expenses separately, for example, by creating a new cost center in your accounting system.
- Through application to private funders (businesses, corporations, foundations) for operational costs. See Tips, Tools, and Best Practices for a report on the 1994 Northridge earthquake response. Ask other organizations, such as the following, to assist in defraying the cost of HandsOn Action Center operations during disaster response, either with donated services, use of equipment, or monetary contributions:
 - Local businesses and corporations
 - United Way
 - Foundations
 - HandsOn Network
 - State Association of Volunteer Centers

Checklist

- ✓ Educate your regular funders of your disaster role in your community.
 - ✓ Explore funding opportunities with local government, particularly regarding state and federal funding programs.
 - ✓ Explore funding opportunities with businesses and corporations, Chambers of Commerce, and local foundations.
 - ✓ Work with local government prior to disaster to get written into the jurisdiction's EOP, and develop an MOU that spells out the details of your relationship.
 - ✓ Develop a plan, including forms, administrative procedures, and accounting procedures for tracking disaster-related expenses that are consistent with FEMA's tracking requirements.
 - ✓ When disaster strikes, coordinate with local government on a FEMA application for cost recovery.
 - ✓ At time of disaster, ask local businesses, foundations and others to help defray expenses.
-



Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- Keeping good records of the volunteers you mobilize will help you make your case for funding. See one-page flyer produced by The Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service, Volunteer Florida, summarizing volunteer hours and value of their service for the 2004-05 hurricane season.
www.volunteerflorida.org/emergencymanagement/docs/2006/200405HurricaneVols_000.pdf
- Most newspapers in disaster areas will print names of organizations needing donations for disaster relief. Ask your local media to include the HandsOn Action Center when they list organizations accepting financial contributions.
- Hands On Sacramento (CA) has a contract with Sacramento Region Citizen Corps Council for pre-disaster EVC planning and management as well as local VOAD coordination. See *09 EVOLC Contract* in Attachments.
- In 2002, Volunteer Florida applied to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) for a Special Volunteer Program. The grant funded the development of Volunteer Florida's Operation Step Up program and sub-grants to 15 Volunteer Centers over a three-year period to build the Centers' roles in emergency management. See *Unaffiliated Volunteer Management: Florida's Record-breaking 2004 Hurricane Season*.
Additionally, this document demonstrates how, through a grant from the Florida Department of Elder Affairs after Hurricane Charley, Volunteer Florida was able to make limited funding available to the VRCs that provided documentation of services provided to seniors.
www.volunteerflorida.org/emergencymanagement/docs/2008/2004season.pdf
- Following the Northridge earthquake, the Los Angeles Volunteer Centers received funding from several community foundations, Points of Light Foundation and the local United Way to support their response efforts. The early support of one foundation gave them confidence their work would be supported. Source: 1994 Earthquake Report, Los Angeles Volunteerism Project



Section 5

Building Your Operations Plan

In this section:

- 5.1 Develop a Written Plan
- 5.2 Plan for Activation
- 5.3 Plan for Mobilizing Volunteers
- 5.4 Plan for Referring Volunteers and Train Agencies
- 5.5 Develop Forms
- 5.6 Plan for Tracking Volunteer Data
- 5.7 Develop a Public Information Plan
- 5.8 Train Your Staff
- 5.9 Test Your Plan

5.1 Develop a Written Plan

A disaster may someday challenge your HandsOn Action Center to the full extent of its capacity. Your geographical region may have a greater or lesser degree of vulnerability to certain types of disaster, but no location can be considered immune. 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.

Tackling a Written Plan

Once you have evaluated your HandsOn Action Center's strengths and resources and determined the best role for the Center in a disaster, for which you have stakeholder buy-in, you should be ready to tackle a written plan. By following the steps in this chapter and capturing the results on paper, you will have completed the essential elements of your HandsOn Action Center's response plan.

Components of a Written Plan

Although your plan can be brief and simple, it should have three components—a Basic Plan, Position Checklists, and Attachments. Your Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) plan will be the heart of your plan. It will be summarized in your Basic Plan (see Operational Strategies below). Procedures will be captured in your Position Checklists, and layouts, forms, resource lists, and other tools included in your Attachments.



Writing Your Basic Plan

Best practices in emergency planning dictate the need for a basic plan that addresses response to all types of disasters¹⁴, rather than separate plans for hurricanes, fires, etc. This approach makes it easier to train staff and more likely that they will retain the information. (For those situations that demand a specialized approach, this information can be captured in a hazard-specific appendix.) Following are key topics for the Basic Plan:

- **Purpose**—Brief statement about how this plan will be used. Example: “This plan establishes the organizational structure and process for mobilizing spontaneous volunteers for community-wide disaster response, relief and recovery.”
- **Concept of Operations**—An overarching description of how the response will be activated, planned and managed. Recommended sub-topics include:
 - **Key Players/Roles and Responsibilities:** Are there other agencies and organizations that are integral to this plan? Do you have a partnership agreement with your local emergency management agency? With your local 2-1-1 provider? List each and briefly describe its role.
 - **Activation:** Answers the following questions: When and how will the HandsOn Action 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 non-working hours?
 - **Operational Strategies:** What methods will your HandsOn Action Center plan to undertake to mobilize spontaneous volunteers? A call center? A walk-in Volunteer Reception Center? An online process? List those you are prepared to use and under what circumstances you might use each (see Chapters 5.3 and 5.4).
 - **Command Structure:** Use the Incident Command System (ICS) to organize your staff (see sections on ICS in Chapters 1.1 and 8.3). This is the management model used by all levels of government during emergency response.
 - **Communications:** List the key methods of communication your HandsOn Action Center has at its disposal during emergency situations.
 - **Mutual Aid:** Mutual aid is a useful tool for backing up a Center in danger of depleting its own resources (see Chapter 7.2). Do you have a mutual

¹⁴ Typically referred to as an all-hazards plan.



aid agreement with one or more neighboring HandsOn Action Centers?
With an out-of-state Center?

- **Risk Management:** Discuss the risk issues and safety concerns your HandsOn Action Center faces when involved in disaster operations. Describe policies and procedures your Center will employ to manage those risks. (See Chapter 4.4).
 - **Public Information:** Getting information out to the public near the onset of a disaster is essential (see Chapter 5.7). Prepare draft press releases, media contact list and other tools to include in the Attachments of your plan, and refer to them here.
 - **Demobilization:** Describe the key steps for closing down operations (see Chapter 8.6). These include addressing any outstanding issues; announcing date/time of demobilization; capturing lessons learned and preparing an after-action report; and recognizing community volunteers.
- **Administrative Procedures**—This section is reserved for summarizing policies and practices for “behind the scenes” topics such as finance, technology, and strategies for enhancing staffing resources.
 - **Authorization**—Refer to the Board decision authorizing the HandsOn Action Center’s involvement in disaster work. Insert a copy of the authorization.

Creating Position Checklists

When your plan is activated, position checklists transform abstract concepts into a set of operating instructions. Every position on your ICS organizational chart should have a checklist—a series of tasks or actions that need to be followed, usually sequentially. For a sample, see the Quick Start Guide.


Creating Attachments

This component of your plan is a compendium of all the forms, lists, charts, maps, and other tools that might be needed in a disaster. Ideally, all of them will be referenced somewhere in your plan.

Special Situations

Some types of disasters have special implications for volunteer involvement. While these situations should not cause changes to your basic all-hazards plan, you may want to incorporate information about any that might occur in your community, such as:

- **Terrorist events**—From 9/11 we learned that disaster sites can also be crime scenes. There are several implications for spontaneous volunteers: first, the



opportunities for them to help will be limited, perhaps extremely so; second, security will be tight; and third, the nature of the work may pose physical and mental health hazards which must be mitigated.

- **Influenza pandemics**—This type of public health emergency presents formidable challenges for volunteer involvement. In a major outbreak, while community needs skyrocket, health care providers will be short-staffed. Yet volunteers need to be protected. Developing models identify possible roles for trained and spontaneous volunteers in prophylaxis distribution centers, influenza care centers, community information centers, and family assistance centers.
- **Oil spills**—As in terrorist events, opportunities for spontaneous volunteers are generally very limited, primarily because of the toxic nature of the substance spilled. Clean-up crew members and those who rescue and/or clean oiled wildlife (paid and volunteer) are required to have extensive training. Spontaneous volunteers with some training, administered just-in-time, can help with non-contact support functions.¹⁵

Checklist

- ✓ Create an outline for your emergency operations plan.
 - ✓ Request information from your local emergency management agency on local hazards.
 - ✓ Draft the plan and submit for review by HandsOn Action Center executive staff, emergency management agency, and possibly other stakeholders.
 - ✓ Edit and re-submit for review.
 - ✓ Finalize and submit to Board for approval as needed.
 - ✓ Copy and distribute to HandsOn Action Center staff, Board chair, and emergency management agency.
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¹⁵ In the San Francisco Bay Area's 2008 oil spill, potential volunteers from one county who were turned away complained to the media. Eventually a 4-hour training session was offered to qualify them to engage in clean-up activities and many took advantage.



Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- 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 and to share resources and best practices.
 - If you're not sure what hazards exist in your area, check out your community's EOP. These can often be found on a city or county website, or contact your local emergency management agency.
 - The Volunteer Management Plan Template for local government and their Volunteer Center partners, developed by CaliforniaVolunteers, can be downloaded at www.csc.ca.gov/cc/res_man.asp. It is intended for use as an annex to a local government's EOP. Note that there are three documents – the plan template, the plan guidance and the plan attachments.
 - For a brief overview and references to several useful documents, see How to Start a Disaster Program: www.pointsoflight.org/programs/disaster/resources.cfm.
 - For a sample ICS organizational chart used by a Volunteer Center, see Volunteer Center of Sonoma County's document, ICS Structure, in the Attachments. Note that the VRC and Phone Bank (call center) comprise the Operations Section in the ICS structure.
 - The *Spontaneous Disaster Manual* (see Attachments) submitted by Volunteer Center of Sonoma County covers the ICS organization and roles for both local government and the Volunteer Center, with written descriptions and graphics. The VRC is integrated into the Volunteer Center ICS structure.
-



5.2 Plan for Activation

The Activation section is a key part of the HandsOn Action Center's emergency operations plan (EOP). Structurally it is part of the Concept of Operations in the Basic Plan. There are several concerns that should be addressed under this topic:

Activation Triggers

What would trigger a decision to activate your EOP? There are a number of possibilities:

- A local disaster serious enough to cause damage.
- The threat of a disaster.
- The proclamation of a local emergency by your city or county. Such decisions are conveyed through the media, although you may receive notification from another source.
- A request from your local emergency management agency, especially if you are written into the jurisdiction's EOP and/or have an agreement with the agency.
- A request from your local American Red Cross chapter or other disaster relief organization.
- A disaster in a neighboring community, in case you are needed for backup.

Decision to Act

Is the decision to activate automatic? Generally, no. Someone should be empowered to make the decision, most likely your HandsOn Action Center's executive director. At least two backup decision-makers should be appointed, in case the executive director is not available. Typically these would be the most senior-ranking staff member present and the Board president or chair. When a HandsOn Action Center chooses to activate prior to a request from a local government agency with which it has an agreement, it risks not being eligible for cost recovery through the government agency, at least until an official request has been made. There may be times when a Center proceeds anyway and either bears the operating costs or seeks funding from other sources.


Levels of Activation

Not all disasters call for full activation with all staff responding. Some situations might call for partial activation, where only one or a few staff are involved, such as when a Center activates to support another affected HandsOn Action Center. There may be times when a disaster is either threatened or evolving (e.g., hurricanes, flooding) when standby or alert mode is most appropriate. List and clarify such levels in your plan.

Notification

Determine who needs to be notified of a full or partial activation and list them by category in your plan. Consider the following:

- HandsOn Action Center paid staff
- HandsOn Action Center volunteer staff

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- HandsOn Action Center Board members
 - Key partners (e.g., emergency management agency, 2-1-1, American Red Cross)
 - Agencies and organizations most likely to need volunteers
 - Media

Include names and contact information (including cell numbers, home phones, and any alternate e-mail addresses) in the Attachments of your plan.

Consider what communication methods will work best for each group above. If phones are not working, it will be difficult to reach staff and Board members. Email is a possibility but ask staff and other key addressees to email back indicating they received the message. For extreme cases, establish a backup activation plan such as the following:

If disaster occurs during working hours, all personnel who are not on-site should report to the Center immediately or as soon as possible, providing it is safe to do so, once they have secured the safety of their family and home. All personnel already on-site should remain there, providing they have secured the safety of their family and home. If disaster occurs during non-working hours, personnel should report to the Center at 8:00 am the following day.

Broadcast faxing or email could be used to notify agencies, organizations and the media.

Checklist

- ✓ Determine what actions or situations might trigger the need for the HandsOn Action Center to activate its plan.
 - ✓ Determine who will make the decision to activate. Go three deep.
 - ✓ List and describe possible levels of activation.
 - ✓ Determine who needs to be notified of plan activation. Secure names and contact information.
 - ✓ Create a policy and procedure for how to activate staff if phone service is widely disrupted.
 - ✓ Include all of the above in written EOP.
-



Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- When notifying Board members of plan activation, tell them that, at least for a while, “It will not be business as usual.”
 - For quick notification of staff, create a “phone tree.” The person initiating the notification calls one or two people and asks them to call several others, until all staff have been notified. If you are making a call and one of your contacts doesn’t answer, you call their contacts as well. Diagram the tree and put in your EOP Attachments. Give everyone a copy and practice in a drill.
 - It should be apparent to staff that they are expected to be on duty at the HandsOn Action Center when a disaster occurs. Failure to be personally prepared at home and not having a family plan can be significant barriers to staff availability. Stress to them the importance of addressing these in advance of a disaster and provide them with information, tools and incentives to do so.
 - Define roles for Board members and encourage them to act with you.
 - For an activation checklist sample, see Volunteer Center of Sonoma County’s *Spontaneous Disaster Manual* in the Attachments. The checklist is in the document’s Appendices.
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5.3 Plan for Mobilizing Volunteers

This will be the heart of your Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). You will need to describe each of your response strategies (call center, walk-in center, online process) and how they will be organized and staffed. When activating, you may utilize more than one operational strategy simultaneously. You may also use them sequentially, depending on the disaster. For example, in a major earthquake, since phone service would be affected, you might want to start with a walk-in center, transition to a call center when service is restored, and use an online intake process during the slower recovery period.

Planning for a Walk-in Volunteer Reception Center (VRC)

A Walk-in VRC is a large space devoted to receiving, interviewing, and referring spontaneous volunteers.

- **Space**—Depending on the disaster and the level of volunteer interest, it could be as small as a conference room and as big as a large auditorium. Consider your needs—for space, equipment (e.g., tables, chairs), and amenities (e.g., parking, bathrooms).
- **Signs**—You will need to make signs in advance for use inside the VRC, as well as outside for directing people to your location. Place in your Supply Kit.
- **Layout**—See the sample layouts in Tips, Tools, and Best Practices. Allow space for volunteers to fill out forms and wait to be interviewed; for interviewers to talk face to face with volunteers while being able to see the posted volunteer opportunities; and for some support functions.
- **Stations**—There are two principal stations that volunteers will visit. The first is the Reception Station, where volunteers are greeted and handed a Volunteer Intake and Referral Form to fill out. The second is the Intake and Referral Station, staffed by Interviewers. In some VRC operations, there may be a need for additional stations for volunteers, such as Orientation, Volunteer Badging, and Safety Training.
- **Support Functions**—These include VRC Management, Communications, Volunteer Opportunities, and Data Coordination. Each function has a designated desk and staff.
- **Staff Positions**—At a minimum the following positions will be needed: VRC Manager, Communications Coordinator, Volunteer Opportunities



Coordinator¹⁶, Data Coordinator, Receptionist, and Interviewer. Other staff positions, such as Runner, could be included.

- **Supplies**—A VRC Supply Kit (also called a Go Kit) is essential. It should contain standard office supplies as well as forms, checklists, and a copy of the HandsOn Action Center's EOP. See Tips, Tools, and Best Practices for lists of suggested items.

Planning for a Call Center

With a few modifications, your walk-in VRC plan can easily become a call center plan. There are several considerations:

- **Space**—A large enough space to accommodate up to 30 phone lines and some support functions.
- **Equipment**—Decide how many phone lines you will need; it's best to start with no fewer than 10.
- **Layout**—Tables and chairs for Interviewers may fill most of the space. Post volunteer opportunities so they can be seen. Desks for support functions can be in the back or off to the side.
- **Stations**—A Reception Station may not be needed.
- **Support Functions**—If phones are working, the Communications Desk may not be needed.
- **Staff**—Communications Coordinator may not be needed. Interviewers will need a phone script.
- **Messaging**—Plan to record outgoing messages on your phone system for a) when the call center is closed and b) when phones are busy and people are on hold.

Planning for an Online Process

If your HandsOn Action Center already recruits and refers volunteers online, there should be minimal change.

- Consider appointing someone to be in charge of the online process. Alternatively, have your Volunteer Opportunities Coordinator and Data Coordinator share the responsibility.
- Plan to post new disaster opportunities as they become known.

¹⁶ If your community is large, consider designating a specific coordinator to work with groups, separate from individual volunteers. Unaffiliated groups present some unique challenges and may need a slightly different type of management in order to deploy them.

- If referrals are automatic, especially when the online system is active at the same time as a call center or walk-in VRC, you will want to know when a volunteer opportunity is filled, so you can stop referring people to it. Control the number of volunteers that can be referred to each opportunity and monitor closely.
- If the online process is for volunteer intake only, and Interviewers call volunteers back to make a referral, develop a system for tracking the data and incorporating into your overall tracking system.

Checklist

- ✓ Briefly describe your plan for a walk-in VRC and include in your EOP.
- ✓ Briefly describe your plan for a call center and include in your EOP.
- ✓ Briefly describe your plan for online referral of volunteers and include in your EOP.

Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- Examples of a VRC layout are included in the Quick Start Guide and also in *Seminole County Florida VRC Floor Plan* in the Attachments.
- For another VRC layout example (and other operational planning topics), see the “Volunteer Mobilization Centers” slide presentation submitted by The Volunteer Center Serving Howard County (MD).
www.slideshare.net/VolunteerHoward/disaster-volunteer-management
- There are several different models for VRC supply kits. For a large kit stocked with office supplies, forms, staff identification and other tools, see list of contents in the Quick Start Guide in this guide. For a smaller version, see a Go Kit Contents list in Volunteer Center of Sonoma County’s *Spontaneous Disaster Manual* in the Attachments.

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- The Volunteer Management Plan Template developed by California Volunteers has many useful tools for this level of planning – position checklists, sample layout, Go Kit list, etc. It can be downloaded at www.csc.ca.gov/cc/res_man.asp.
 - See the *Spontaneous Disaster Manual* shared by Volunteer Center of Sonoma County in the Attachments for descriptions of call center and walk-in VRC models, plus Appendices that include information on disaster supply kits, call center set-up and operations, and VRC set-up and operations.
 - For an overview of New York City’s spontaneous volunteer plan with some operational details, see *DVTF Presentation* in the Attachments. DVTF is the City’s Disaster Volunteer Task Force, a stakeholders group. Slides show a walk-in VRC layout and how the online process works.
 - For HandsOn Action Centers planning to use an online process for referring volunteers, the *Internet Tips* (see Attachments) submitted by Volunteer San Diego contain a number of useful ideas that can be implemented in advance.
 - According to Meghan Moloney with New York Cares (Meghan_Moloney@nycares.org):

“New York Cares has a formal agreement with the City government to manage spontaneous volunteers in the event of disaster. We would use our website to post opportunities. If the internet were not available, we would open a volunteer reception center. For NY, the awful events of 9/11 shined a spotlight on the need to have a central coordinator to handle the enormous task of mobilizing and managing volunteers. Being able to give the City reliable statistics in terms of volunteer response was really valuable to them.

“We used customized software because it handles all our programming needs. Regardless of which software a center uses, the key to success of online matching is the emphasis on content – the bottom line is technology won’t be used if it doesn’t give the people the information they need, and the information needs to be useable and accurate. For example, we give detailed directions on how to get to volunteer projects: can you get there by subway or do you need a car?”



5.4 Plan for Referring Volunteers and Train Agencies

Planning Ahead

There are a number of steps to be taken in advance of a disaster to make sure you have a good plan for referring volunteers. These include the following:

- **Volunteer Requests:** Identify in advance government agencies and nonprofit organizations that provide services that might be needed in a disaster and that are likely to need volunteers. The list will include those your HandsOn Action Center already works with as well as others that are less familiar to you. Ask these agencies to identify their anticipated needs for spontaneous volunteers. Pose the same question to people attending a VOAD or other interagency meeting. Use Volunteer Request Forms to capture the information. Collect these in advance and then update final details at the time of a disaster.
- **Posting Volunteer Opportunities:** Mock up a chart that can be fixed to the wall and used to post information on volunteer opportunities for Interviewers. Create spaces to list volunteer opportunity number (number sequentially in order received), agency or organization name, volunteer opportunity title, number of volunteers needed, and how to contact agency or organization. Test your mocked-up version and revise. Keep the revised version as a model for use in a disaster.
- **Volunteer Referral Guidelines:** Develop disaster volunteer referral guidelines for use by your Interviewers and a method to track volunteer assignments. See sample in Tips, Tools, and Best Practices.

Training Agencies and Organizations in Advance Pays Dividends

The HandsOn Action Center can play a valuable pre-disaster role by offering a workshop for the staff of community agencies and organizations that may need guidance in how to involve volunteers, especially spontaneous volunteers, in an emergency. Help them anticipate the effect of a disaster on their program, how volunteers might help, and what volunteer skills would be needed. Provide them with information on how to connect with the HandsOn Action Center both pre-disaster and during a disaster. At the same time, encourage them to complete and submit Volunteer Request Forms; keep these on file until a disaster occurs. The good news is you will have some idea of what kinds of volunteers will be needed and agencies and organizations will know to contact you to activate their requests when a disaster strikes.



Should Your Center Make Referrals to Individuals and Private Businesses?

This question should be addressed in advance as part of your discussion on referral guidelines. It is definitely a policy issue and many HandsOn Action Centers have a policy that forbids this practice. However, in times of disaster, you may be faced with requests to help individuals or businesses that are difficult to turn down. Read the document entitled “Should Your Center Make Referrals to Individuals?” (see Tips, Tools, and Best Practices) before making a decision.

Checklist

- ✓ Orient/train CBOs and disaster response/relief agencies on HandsOn Action Center’s role and disaster management of spontaneous volunteers.
- ✓ Encourage agencies to develop job descriptions and submit completed Volunteer Request Forms pre-disaster, to enable quick revision and activation at the time of a disaster.
- ✓ Mock up a chart for use during disaster to inform Interviewers on current volunteer opportunities.
- ✓ Develop disaster volunteer referral guidelines.
- ✓ Decide whether your HandsOn Action Center will refer volunteers to help people in their homes or businesses.

Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- *Sample Guidelines—Referring Volunteers in Times of Disaster* (see Attachments) contains examples of questions that can be asked of volunteers during the interviewing process.
- Review *Should Your Center Make Referrals to Individuals?* by Karen Delaney, Volunteer Centers of Santa Cruz County (see Attachments). This document provides guidelines for making this all-important policy decision.
- The Volunteer Center for Anne Arundel County (MD) has an agency checklist for use by agencies before they request volunteers following a disaster. It clarifies the Volunteer Center expectations of agencies that are requesting disaster volunteers and tells agencies how to submit requests for volunteers:



www.chesapeake.edu/volunteer/agencychecklistbeforecontactingVMC.pdf

- The Volunteer Center Serving Howard County (MD) provides a checklist for use by agencies before they request volunteers following a disaster (see *Checklist before Contacting VMC* in Attachments). It clarifies the Volunteer Center expectations of agencies that are requesting disaster volunteers and tells agencies how to submit requests for volunteers.
- HandsOn Network’s training tool was developed by Faye Stone. This PowerPoint presentation and PDF guidebook include information on disasters, basics of disaster volunteer management and a section on donations management. See *Managing Spontaneous Volunteers* in the Attachments.
- The Volunteer Center Serving Howard County (MD) also has a chart (see *Volunteer Matrix* in Attachments) that agencies can use to identify how volunteers can be involved with respect to a wide range of disasters – before, during/immediately after, and for the long term.
- For an example of an agency training tool, see the Powerpoint document, *DVTF Presentation* (in Attachments) submitted by New York Cares. It provides an overview of how New York City’s spontaneous volunteer plan works and how agencies and organizations can connect with and benefit from it.
- The Volunteer Center Serving Howard County (MD) has a slide presentation on “Volunteer Mobilization Centers” targeted to governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations. It describes the Volunteer Center’s operational plans for Volunteer Mobilization Centers (like VRCs) and how agencies and organizations can benefit.
www.slideshare.net/VolunteerHoward/disaster-volunteer-management
- See the sample volunteer opportunities chart (*EVC Form 04* in Attachments) from Volunteer Center of Silicon Valley (CA). This one was designed to be enlarged and posted on the wall but could also be printed out and copied for use of call center staff at their desks. It was produced for a project developed by the Santa Clara County Emergency Managers Association in partnership with the Volunteer Center.



5.5 Develop Forms

Forms developed for a variety of purposes are key tools for disaster operations. At a minimum, you will need a Disaster Volunteer Intake Form and a Disaster Volunteer Request Form. Other recommended forms are:

- Volunteer Time Sheet
- Staff Time Sheet
- Phone/Activity Log Form
- Daily Report Form

Disaster Volunteer Intake Form

This form will require careful thought, so allow time for its development. Think about the essential information you will need about a volunteer *in order to make a good referral*. It is tempting to collect a lot of data but since time is of the essence in interviewing and referring volunteers, less is more. The key information usually needed includes volunteer name and contact information, occupation, skills, availability (when and for how long), and geographical preferences (e.g., wish to work close to home, will go anywhere). Space is also needed for noting where the volunteer is being referred and any additional information shared by the volunteer.

Also consider what questions you may legally ask someone who wants to volunteer. A good rule of thumb is to ask nothing that you would not be able to ask an employment applicant.

This form can be used in a walk-in VRC, call center or online process. In a walk-in VRC, the volunteer will typically complete the form themselves before being seen by an Interviewer. In a call center, the Interviewer will be filling in the form based on information given by the volunteer over the phone. For use online, the form may look a little different but the information captured about the volunteer should be the same.

Disaster Volunteer Request Form

Approach this from the point of view of what you might need to tell a prospective volunteer. Include basic information about the agency, the volunteer position, number and type of volunteers needed, when and how long the volunteers will be needed, and any special considerations, e.g., challenging working conditions, special clothing or gear needed.

Volunteer Time Sheet

Use this to track volunteer staff's in and out times, daily hours total, and daily activities. Some HandsOn Action Centers have the volunteer's supervisor sign off at the end of the day.



Staff Time Sheet

Employed staff should also sign in and out. In tallying hours worked on the response, it will be important to distinguish between regular hours worked and overtime hours worked.

Phone/Activity Log Sheet

This tool is a way to track information and requests coming in as well as actions taken. If each VRC staff person uses the form, collectively the forms become a record of the developing and unfolding event and a history of the HandsOn Action Center's operation. VRC Interviewers are already using the Disaster Volunteer Intake Form to record most of the information on the volunteers they interview. However, they may wish to use the log to note sensitive information about volunteers they prefer not to write on the Volunteer Intake and Referral Form.

Daily Report Form

It is recommended that during operations a report be prepared at the end of each day, capturing the following information:

- Number of volunteers interviewed
- Number of volunteers referred (if different)
- Names of agencies/organizations to which volunteers referred
- How many volunteers referred to each agency/organization

If data on volunteer intake and referrals is being entered on a computer as it comes in, it should be fairly simple to summarize it at the end of each day. The information can be used for a number of purposes:

- To inform employees and volunteer staff on the results of their efforts
- As a motivational tool for employees and volunteer staff
- To aid in compilation of a final report/after-action report
- To respond to media inquiries
- To use in media releases
- To inform the HandsOn Action Center board


Checklist

- ✓ Consider what forms will be needed for your HandsOn Action Center's response operations.
- ✓ Using samples provided here as well as from other sources, create drafts of the forms you need.
- ✓ Test drafts for ease of use, clarity, etc., in drills or exercises with HandsOn Action Center paid staff and volunteers.
- ✓ Finalize forms, print sufficient copies and add to your VRC supply kit.



Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- There are two schools of thought regarding whether to print the Volunteer Intake Form on NCR paper (duplicate or triplicate) or to make it a single copy form. Advantages of NCR forms are that one copy can be handed to the volunteer, so they have a record of where they have been referred, while another copy can be set aside for data input. Use of color on forms makes them easier to track. Because printing on NCR paper is costly, the temptation is to print in fairly large quantities. If key information on the form changes, the old forms have to be recycled and new ones printed. Having single-copy forms generally precludes data getting recorded, tracked and counted more than once. They are also less expensive.
- During the 2007 wildfires in Southern California, the responding Volunteer Centers submitted daily reports on volunteer numbers to their state association, Volunteer Centers of California, which in turn prepared and disseminated combined reports.
- Volunteers responding to a disaster who come through a walk-in VRC and are then referred to an agency such as the American Red Cross sometimes complain about having to fill out another form. It is recommended that the VRC Interviewers explain why the VRC needs the information it asks for (to make a good referral) and to tell the volunteers that in most cases there will be more paperwork when they get to the agency to which they are being referred.
- When there is a high volume of activity in the VRC, staff should consider using an abbreviated version of the Disaster Volunteer Intake Form. In a walk-in VRC, volunteers can be instructed to fill out only certain portions of the form. In a call center, Interviewers can eliminate some of the questions. This works particularly well when there are only a few volunteer positions available—in this case, it is much easier to match a volunteer to an available position.
- The Volunteer Center Serving Howard County (MD) has assembled all of its forms into a single document (see *Manager Forms Booklet DRAFT* in the Attachments). The booklet contains sixteen forms including an equipment and supply issue/return log, an incident report, and a VMC performance form.

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- The Seminole Community Volunteer Program (FL) has submitted several forms for use in VRC management (see *Request for Volunteers from VRC; Disaster Volunteer Referral Form; VRC Volunteers Sign in Record; Worksite Sign in Record; and Daily VRC Processing Log* in the Attachments).
 - The Volunteer Center of Sonoma County (CA) has developed a number of forms (see *Spontaneous Disaster Manual* in Attachments) for use during VRC operations:
 - Volunteer Center registration form
 - Request from agencies for volunteers form
 - Disaster communications log*
 - Daily volunteer sign-in sheet*
 - VRC phone bank daily log*
 - Fax log to agencies* (used to fax to an agency the names and phone numbers of volunteers referred to a particular volunteer opportunity at that agency)

The asterisked forms above can also be found as separate documents in the Attachments

- The *Volunteer Management Plan Template* developed by CaliforniaVolunteers includes a number of forms, as well as other tools. It can be downloaded at www.csc.ca.gov/cc/res_man.asp. Note that there are three documents - the plan template, the plan guidance and the plan attachments. The forms and tools are in the attachments document.
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5.6 Plan for Tracking Volunteer Data

Why track volunteer data?

Tracking volunteer data may seem like a thankless task but it actually is a very important part of disaster operations. There are two sets of reasons for that. The first is that it helps during response operations, for example:

- There may be an urgent need for volunteers with particular skills; a good tracking system, whether manual or computerized, will make it easier to identify them.
- The media will be interested in what you are doing; having data will spark up your story.
- Telling your story, with data to back it up, will enhance your visibility and help attract funding.
- Information on volunteers and agencies served can be inspirational to staff and keep them going during the tough times.
- The agencies and organizations that you serve will be grateful for information on the numbers of volunteers you have sent them.

Tracking and compiling volunteer data is also useful over the long-term. It becomes part of the historical record of how you responded. Your staff, volunteers and Board members can speak with pride about your successes. Sharing the information with other stakeholders and the community allows you to take credit for your hard work and results. Lastly, your data may help you access funds—whether through a FEMA reimbursement process or a corporate or foundation grant.

What should you track?


At a minimum, you should count on a daily basis the number of volunteers who contacted you and the number you were able to refer. On an ongoing basis, you should log the number and names of agencies requesting volunteers, as well as the number of actual requests made (numbering requests sequentially in order received is essential). Therefore, on any given day, you should be able to state the number of agencies to date requesting volunteers, and the number of requests received to date.

You may also want to track other requests for service and the services provided. These might include requests for information, technical assistance, media interviews, etc.

Where are you recording data?

There are a number of places where information will be recorded during a disaster:

- **Volunteer Intake Form** - This is your main source for numbers of volunteers (each form represents one volunteer or organized group of volunteers) and the number of volunteers referred (information on where volunteers are referred should be noted by the Interviewers at the bottom of each form).

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- **Volunteer Request Form** – This is your source for number of agencies and number of requests for volunteers (each form represents one request). Forms should be numbered sequentially as received.
 - **Staff Logs** – These can also be a source of data, especially on non-volunteer services, for example, on requests for information, technical assistance by agencies and organizations, media interviews, and so forth.

How will you track volunteer data?

You can use either a manual system or computerized system. The latter is more efficient but you may end up entering more information in the computer than you will ever use, whereas with a manual system the data is there and you just look for what you need.

How will you track volunteers and referrals in a manual system?

In a manual system, capture the number of volunteers interviewed, the number of volunteers referred, and to which opportunities they were referred from the Volunteer Intake Form. Once the information has been counted, initial each form so it won't get counted again.

Note: If completed Volunteer Intake Forms are being divided between those volunteers who have been referred and those who are waiting for a referral, take great care to keep them separated.

How will you track volunteers and referrals with a computerized system?

Plan to transfer information from the Volunteer Intake Forms into a database, ideally one which is developed and tested in advance. Decide which information is essential. Since computerized information may be used for purposes other than daily reports, e.g., callbacks to people with special skills, it may be necessary to enter most of the data from the forms. Once you have data entered, it should be a simple matter to tally the numbers of volunteers referred and where they were sent.

How will you track agency requests?

For the number of agencies and requests, it is best to keep a log (manually in a notebook or on a computerized database). Use the log to number the request and enter the request number on the Volunteer Request Form. Enter the agency name, the number of the request, the title of the volunteer position, and the date of the request. Keep the Volunteer Request Forms in a folder.

How will you compile data?

Your aim should be to compile a daily report using a Daily Report Form (see Chapter 5.5). Fill in the number of volunteers interviewed and number of volunteers referred for the day. Also enter the number of agencies making requests that day. You may also add data on non-volunteer requests and services rendered.




Checklist

- ✓ Ensure that Interviewers are noting referrals on the Volunteer Intake Form.
 - ✓ Create manual or computer system for daily compilation of number of volunteers and number of volunteers referred.
 - ✓ Create manual or computer log of each volunteer request, numbered in order received, with name of agency requesting.
 - ✓ Prepare daily report.
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Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- Consensus of Florida Volunteer Centers following the 2004-05 hurricanes was that simpler is better when it comes to volunteer data software. “Familiarity with the disaster volunteer management system prior to a disaster is critical to successfully managing unaffiliated volunteers and alleviating stress associated with that responsibility.” *Unaffiliated Volunteer Management: Florida’s Record-breaking 2004 Hurricane Season*, p. 21
www.volunteerflorida.org/emergencymanagement/docs/2008/2004season.pdf
- Some HandsOn Action Centers track not only intake and referral data on volunteers but also the hours the volunteer worked, where and when. While often challenging to get, it’s valuable information. After the August 2007 floods, the Volunteer Connection of Northwest Ohio coordinated VRCs in three counties. Following are excerpts from an e-mail message sent by Executive Director Bobby Olashuk during that time: A volunteer created a database that they were using to enter “the spontaneous volunteers who have come through the VRC giving us a great call back list to use 6 weeks from now. . . . It will also provide a great recruiting tool for CERT and MRC. . . . [Later] we will go back and start entering the hours each volunteer provided, at which affected location, and on what date. This information will be available for our EMA by the end of the weekend.”

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- A simple form, such as one submitted by Seminole Community Volunteer Program (FL), could be used to track the time and effort of referred volunteers at a worksite. See *Worksite Sign in Record* in the Attachments.

 - For examples of daily report forms, see the following documents in the Attachments:
 - *Daily VRC Processing Log*, submitted by Seminole Community Volunteer Program (FL)
 - *VRC Phone Bank Daily Log*, submitted by Volunteer Center of Sonoma County (CA)
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5.7 Develop a Public Information Plan

Getting accurate information to the public is critical for minimizing confusion and chaos in the wake of a disaster. During emergency situations, the public should receive correct and consistent information about where and how to volunteer.

Ahead of Time


Planning ahead is essential; here are some key steps:

- Develop a media list for newspapers, television and radio stations (including the designated Emergency Broadcasting System station) in advance, add it to your response plan, 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/fax numbers, and email addresses at the HandsOn Action Center as well. Discuss with the media how best to publicize information about volunteer needs.
- Prepare and send to the media a press release that explains how the public can volunteer in a disaster and what the HandsOn Action Center's role is.
- To avoid conflicting messages, only one person from each agency should talk to the media. Communication with a single individual in any agency minimizes confusion, duplication of effort, and erroneous information. Appoint someone in advance to be the spokesperson (Public Information Officer, or PIO) for your HandsOn Action Center during a disaster.
- Coordinate with local government PIOs to ensure consistent messaging to the public.
- 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.
- In developing agreements with other agencies and organizations, discuss and determine how to work with the media. Your HandsOn Action Center could be a single point of contact for all agencies about volunteer needs and issues. You could also consider having such announcements come from your emergency management agency's Public Information Officer (PIO), as typically they will have direct and immediate access.

When a Disaster Strikes

At the time of a disaster, use your media plan and consider the following:

- First, make sure your HandsOn Action Center is set up and ready to go before issuing a press release.

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- Use broadcast fax or group e-mail to send press releases to all media contacts.
 - The releases should include statements that direct potential volunteers to contact the HandsOn Action Center before going to a disaster site. This approach will enable the broadcast of up-to-date, accurate volunteer and service needs and minimize the convergence of helpers at inappropriate locations.
 - At the same time, be sure to update your outgoing telephone messages and information on your Center's website. That way, when people contact you, they'll get the most current information on the situation and needs for volunteers.

Checklist

- ✓ Identify the media outlets in your community and identify single points of contact at local newspapers, television stations, and radio stations.
 - ✓ Provide media with contact names and info at your HandsOn Action Center.
 - ✓ Pre-position press releases with all media sources.
 - ✓ Appoint a single spokesperson for your HandsOn Action Center.
 - ✓ Coordinate your public information needs, pre- and post-disaster, with your local emergency management agency's Public Information Officer (PIO).
 - ✓ At the time of a disaster, establish a daily contact routine with media sources.
 - ✓ At the time of a disaster, update outgoing phone messages and posted information on your Center's website.
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Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- *Unaffiliated Volunteer Management: Florida's Record-breaking 2004 Hurricane Season*, published by the Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service, Volunteer Florida, has some useful observations on the importance of public information and the need for consistent public messages to potential volunteers.
www.volunteerflorida.org/emergencymanagement/docs/2008/2004season.pdf
 - For sample press releases from Volunteer San Diego for mobilizing volunteers in a disaster, see *Press Release10.27* and *Press Release10.30* in the Attachments.
 - For a sample public service announcement, see Volunteer Center of Silicon Valley's *VCSV Cold Weather Volunteer Recruitment PSA* in the Attachments.
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5.8 Train Your Staff

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. Training will greatly enhance staff readiness, ensure a quicker, more effective response when the unexpected happens, and go a long way toward reducing confusion and expediting relief to people affected by the disaster.

Response Plan Training

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. Make sure everyone gets a copy, and schedule reviews of the entire plan at least once a year.

Training for Operational Roles

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 HandsOn Action 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.

Stress Mitigation


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 co-workers, 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.

Personal Preparedness

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. Stress importance of being prepared at home and having a family plan, so that staff can be free to work.

Emergency Management

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, ICS and NIMS, 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 Points of Light Institute & HandsOn Network. If you are participating in a local response network, you might plan joint training and exercises.

Checklist

- ✓ Arrange for your staff to attend a session on personal preparedness.
 - ✓ Arrange for staff to take part in emergency response management courses on a variety of subjects, including stress mitigation.
 - ✓ Conduct periodic scheduled reviews of your Center's disaster response plan for paid and volunteer staff.
 - ✓ Conduct periodic reviews of individual staff responsibilities during disaster response operations.
 - ✓ Plan and conduct hands-on disaster operations training for all staff. Schedule at least once a year, more often if needed.
 - ✓ Invite local emergency managers to join you. They can offer expertise as guest trainers and learn more about VC operations.
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Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- Volunteer San Diego uses humor in its approach to training staff on ICS. See *ICS Training* in the Attachments.
 - Volunteer Centers of CA conducted a two-day workshop on disaster planning and response. See *General Slides and Context and EVC-VRC Training* in the Attachments. *CBO Training*, was also presented at the workshop, as a tool for Centers for working with CBOs.
 - CaliforniaVolunteers has a curriculum for training staff of Emergency Volunteer Centers. It includes background information on volunteers in disaster, key players and ICS, as well as information on how to set up, manage and staff an EVC. See *EVC Workshop 07* in Attachments.
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5.9 Test Your Plan

Why Have Disaster Exercises?

The overall purpose of disaster exercises is to improve your HandsOn Action 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. Through testing, a HandsOn Action Center can evaluate its response plan, identify flaws in response procedures, and pinpoint areas where improvement is needed.

Types of Disaster Exercises

There are five basic types:

- **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. Begins with an orientation and concludes with an evaluation by participants and observers.
- **Full-scale exercise**—Adds a field component that interacts with a functional exercise through simulated messages. Tests the deployment of a seldom-used resource.

Seeking Help with Exercises

HandsOn Action 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 Red Cross or a local government agency is planning a functional exercise, see if your HandsOn Action Center can be included. When it comes to planning a functional exercise for your Center, seek expert help from your local emergency management agency, Red Cross or an experienced neighboring HandsOn Action Center.



Including Volunteers and Partners

When planning exercises for your HandsOn Action Center staff, remember to invite the participation of any volunteers or partner organizations you've recruited to help you with your disaster operations. You may also want to invite all of your Board members, even those who have not shown interest. It's a good way to build their awareness and support.

Checklist

- ✓ Plan and conduct simple drills for your staff around evacuation and other emergency procedures. Start with an orientation and end with a critique.
- ✓ Plan and conduct a tabletop exercise for your staff, to test understanding of various roles and practice problem-solving.
- ✓ Contact the American Red Cross and your community's emergency management agency to discuss participation of the HandsOn Action Center in drills and exercises they conduct.
- ✓ Plan a functional exercise to test your plan for disaster operations. Include volunteers and groups you've recruited to help you.
- ✓ Practice various forms of communications (e.g., call center, cell phones, ham radios) during exercises.

Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- For a VRC exercise model, see *CaliforniaVolunteers' EVC Exercise Packet* (in Attachments). It provides brief facilitator instructions, a scenario and role descriptions for those playing the parts of potential volunteers, agencies needing volunteers, media, elected officials and others.
 - For another example, see the *VOAD Green Slime 04 Exercise Plan* (in Attachments) submitted by Volunteer Center of Sonoma County. This was developed for both the local VOAD and the Disaster Volunteer Coordinating Committee (DVCC), a stakeholders group convened by the Volunteer Center.
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Section 6

Planning for Continuity of Operations

In this section:

- 6.1 Prepare for Utility Disruptions and Alternate Sites
- 6.2 Prepare for Communications Disruptions
- 6.3 Develop Evacuation Plan
- 6.4 Develop a Shelter-in-place Plan
- 6.4 Prepare Your Staff
- 6.4 Prepare Action Center Facility and Stock Supplies

6.1 Prepare for Utility Disruptions and Alternate Sites

Disruptions to gas and power utilities will be a big headache for a HandsOn Action Centers trying to activate or maintain emergency operations. Planning ahead is essential.

Power

Can you activate without power? Without power to operate phone systems, you won't have a call center. But you can still open a walk-in reception center. Lack of power will also limit hours of operation to daylight. Consider what you would do without power for your computer printer or copier. Prepare generic press releases and signs in advance (add blanks for filling in disaster-specific information). Be sure to stock plenty of alternate light sources, including lightsticks and battery-operated lanterns and flashlights.

Gas


If your heating or A/C system is gas-powered, a disruption could affect your ability to operate. Learn how and when to turn off gas. If you do turn it off, have a professional turn it back on; do not do it yourself.

Generator

Explore this option for powering lighting and critical equipment. Generators vary widely in terms of power generated and cost. The generator must be used outside. If you make this investment, make sure more than one person knows how to operate the generator, and conduct periodic tests.

Computers and Printers

While you can operate for a while without a computer, eventually you will need one for entering data on disaster volunteers and volunteer opportunities, as well as for writing and printing press releases and other materials. Laptops have two



advantages: they are portable and can run on rechargeable batteries. Prepare for power outages by having battery backups for at least one laptop computer and printer.

Alternate Sites


When utilities are disrupted, you may need to move to an alternate site. By identifying alternate locations in advance, you will be well ahead. Identify your basic requirements and look for sites that meet them. Consider co-locating with other emergency providers. Secure written agreements in advance, as well as procedures for accessing site(s) during an emergency.

Checklist

- ✓ Evaluate your Center's ability to function in the event electrical power is lost.
- ✓ Prepare generic fill-in-the-blanks press releases and signs.
- ✓ Stock alternate light sources (lanterns, flashlights, lightsticks).
- ✓ Learn when and how to turn off gas, if applicable.
- ✓ Consider acquiring a generator for power backup.
- ✓ Have battery backups for at least one computer and printer.
- ✓ Plan for alternate sites and secure written agreements.

Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- Volunteer Florida's website has publications on COOP planning for community-based organizations. Go to www.volunteerflorida.org, click on Emergency Management and then click on Publications.
- Another resource for COOP planning is *Continuity of Operation Plan (COOP) for Nonprofit Human Services Providers* (see Attachments). The document covers numerous topics and serves as both a guide and a plan template.
- Go to Ready.gov (www.ready.gov/business/index.html) for information about various aspects of planning for business continuity and a sample plan. The information at this website will be useful as you work through many of the challenges posed in this and the other chapters in this section.

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- Volunteer San Diego has developed several tools to aid in the selection of alternate sites. First is a *Facilities Checklist* that can be used to describe key information about an alternate site. The second is a *Facility Use Agreement* template. Both are in the Attachments.
 - Volunteer Centers should discuss with county emergency management the identification of one or more county facilities suitable for a VRC operation, because of the facilities' priority status for utility reconnection." This was one of the recommendations in *Unaffiliated Volunteer Management: Florida's Record-breaking 2004 Hurricane Season*.
www.volunteerflorida.org/emergencymanagement/docs/2008/2004season.pdf
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6.2 Plan for Communications Disruptions

We live in a connected world. More and more, our daily business depends on a broad range of communication technologies. As you plan, consider with whom you need to communicate during a disaster and what your options are. Develop a communications plan with checklists and tools and include in your emergency operations plan.

With whom do you need to communicate?

Employees, agencies and organizations that need volunteers, organized volunteer groups, the media, the general public, suppliers.

Phones

If power is out, your phone system probably won't work. Even with power, phone service can be intermittent. Consult with the phone company in advance regarding priority restoration of service. In the event you need to work from an alternate location, use call forwarding to route calls to your new number. Listen to the recorded outgoing message on your phone system—you may want to change the message temporarily to instruct callers during the disaster. Create a checklist and tools for addressing telephone issues.

Cell Phones

While generally a good resource, cell phones have limitations. They work for a limited time, need to be recharged periodically, and may not work everywhere. During a disaster, cell systems get overloaded very quickly. Staff may want to reserve personal cell phones for family calls and not use them for business calls.

SMS Texting

Even if your cell phone signal is low, texting can be a reliable method of getting an immediate response.

Fax Phone


Fax phones usually work, even during a power outage. If your fax machine has a telephone handset that's connected to a landline, you can use it as a regular phone.

Faxing

This is a great tool for contacting the media as well as agencies and organizations that may need volunteers. Pre-program the fax numbers so you can send out broadcast announcements.

Short-wave Radio Clubs

These groups have a long history of supporting relief efforts by relaying important messages. These "ham" radios are often thought of as the ultimate backup system for communications—the one that will work when all others fail. Many such clubs have formal arrangements with local government to provide emergency communication. Work with your local emergency management agency to get a



volunteer ham radio operator assigned to your HandsOn Action Center in a disaster. Include the operator in your emergency operations plan training and exercises.

Internet and Email

With today's technology, more and more can be done with Internet and web-based resources. They will be useful tools in a disaster, just as they are on a day-to-day basis. Plan for what you will do if your Internet access is temporarily down or if your computers are damaged or destroyed. Can you get backup computers quickly? Is there a HandsOn Action Center in another part of your state or a neighboring state that could check your email or web matching system and even manage them for you until you are up and running again? What help can you expect from your service provider? Would they be capable of posting disaster updates and volunteer opportunities for you until you could take over? How quickly can you get equipment repaired or replaced? Ask your local EOC for assistance. Know your suppliers.

Runners/Couriers

When the going gets tough, recruit volunteers to deliver messages on foot, by bicycle, or by car. Consider this option for getting out press releases, connecting with your local EOC, or contacting the American Red Cross and other agencies and organizations.

Other Options

There are still other technologies that could be used in a pinch. Walkie-talkies work in a limited geographical area but could be handy in certain situations. Satellite phones are another possibility. Blackberries are fairly common and provide both mobile phone service and email access. PDAs can be used at least temporarily for volunteer data entry. As soon as possible, transfer data to your computer.



Checklist

- ✓ Complete
 - ✓ Ask phone company and/or cable company for priority restoration of service.
 - ✓ Develop checklist for additional telephone issues and use of alternatives (cell phones, fax phone) when a disaster strikes.
 - ✓ Find out whom to contact at your volunteer matching software vendor during a disaster. Know what services they will provide.
 - ✓ Pre-program your fax machine with media contacts and agencies/organizations contacts for sending out broadcast faxes.
 - ✓ Ask your local emergency management agency to assist you in getting a volunteer ham operator assigned your Center for emergency operations.
 - ✓ Work with another HandsOn Action Center that is willing to be your Internet backup.
 - ✓ Find out whom to contact at your Internet volunteer matching software provider during a disaster. Know what services they will provide.
 - ✓ Add computer repair/sales vendors to the Disaster Resources List in your emergency operations plan.
 - ✓ Create a Runner/Courier volunteer position and add it to your emergency operations plan.
-

Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- Many HandsOn Action Centers utilize 1-800-VOLUNTEER to register volunteers and volunteer opportunities year-round. The HelpInDisaster enhancement (www.helpindisaster.org), powered by 1-800, allows online matching of both pre-registered and spontaneous volunteers for disaster response and recovery.
 - “Volunteer Centers should contact local amateur radio clubs to develop a pre-disaster plan for using volunteer radio operators for backup communications at VRCs.” *Unaffiliated Volunteer Management: Florida’s Record-breaking 2004 Hurricane Season*, p. 14.
www.volunteerflorida.org/emergencymanagement/docs/2008/2004season.pdf
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6.3 Develop Evacuation Plan

Deciding to Stay or Go

Depending on your circumstances and the nature of the disaster, the first important decision after an incident occurs is whether to shelter-in-place or evacuate. Understand and plan for both possibilities in advance by developing clear, well thought out plans. TV and radio news reports often announce important information and official instructions. Use common sense and available information to determine if there is immediate danger and follow any orders given by emergency officials.

The Evacuation Plan

While the checklist below identifies a number of areas to address in planning for evacuations, it is by no means all-inclusive. Additional steps may be needed depending on what hazards are faced in your part of the country, 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.

Special Concerns in Evacuation Planning

As you plan, use the checklist as a guide but pay particular attention to the following concerns:

- When appointing people to areas of responsibility for evacuations, create a chain of command for each, in case the designated person is not available.
- In all circumstances, people and their safety come first. Protection of property may be addressed in your plan but should be the very last consideration in the event an evacuation is needed.
- As you plan, consider the needs of people with disabilities and others with special needs. For example, people with impaired hearing and those who do not speak English may not hear or understand a warning or order to evacuate. People who are physically or mentally disabled may need assistance in leaving the premises.
- In an emergency situation, always follow the instructions of emergency personnel. If they give the order to evacuate, act immediately and quickly.



Checklist

- ✓ Decide in advance who has the authority to order an evacuation and to give the all-clear notification.
 - ✓ Establish a warning system and assign someone to ensure that everyone receives the order to evacuate, including clients and visitors.
 - ✓ Identify who in your building is responsible for turning off lights, locking doors, and other close-down steps.
 - ✓ Display maps with office and building evacuation routes and emergency exits clearly marked.
 - ✓ Assign someone to protect furniture, equipment and important records prior to leaving and to move records off-site if needed
 - ✓ Identify a safe and easy-to-reach location where staff should meet following an evacuation; post the information.
 - ✓ Post shut-down and evacuation procedures in a conspicuous and easily accessible area.
 - ✓ Ensure all personnel are familiar with evacuation procedures-- brief new staff (paid and volunteer) and conduct annual drill.
-

Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- Identify a location in the building where mobile equipment and files may be moved to protect them from wind or rain damage.
 - 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.
 - Store critical information on flash drive or CD and store offsite so you can set up at an alternate site.
 - For more information on the subject of “whether to stay or go,” go to www.ready.gov/business/plan/, then click on Deciding to Stay or Go. From this page you can access a guide to develop an evacuation plan and other related resources.
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6.4 Develop a Shelter-in-place Plan

Deciding to Stay or Go

Depending on your circumstances and the nature of the disaster, the first important decision after an incident occurs is whether to shelter-in-place or evacuate. Understand and plan for both possibilities in advance by developing clear, well thought out plans. TV and radio news reports often announce information and official instructions. Use common sense and available information to determine if there is immediate danger and follow any orders given by emergency officials.

The Shelter-in-place Plan

In some disasters or emergency situations, there may be uncertainty about what lies outside. In such cases, it may be best to stay inside. During certain types of emergencies, such as a chemical release or a tornado, how and where you take shelter is a matter of survival.

If emergency authorities instruct you to take shelter, do so immediately.

The Shelter-in-place Checklist

Use the checklist below to structure your shelter-in-place plan and add other information that is pertinent to your geographical location, local threats, and other circumstances. As with evacuation planning, address needs of people with disabilities and any others; and identify backups for staff assigned to specific responsibilities.

Checklist

- ✓ Develop a warning system and assign someone to ensure that everyone is notified, including clients and visitors.
 - ✓ Prepare emergency supply kits and keep on hand.
 - ✓ Assign duties to employees in advance and create checklists for each responsibility.
 - ✓ Practice the shelter-in-place plan at least once annually.
 - ✓ In the case of a need to take shelter, keep track of those who are sheltering—employees and visitors alike.
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Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- Determine where in advance you will take shelter in case of a tornado warning.
 - Determine specific steps you would use to seal a room in case of contaminated air outside.
 - For more information on the subject of “whether to stay or go,” go to www.ready.gov/business/plan/, then click on Deciding to Stay or Go. From this page you can access a guide for developing a shelter-in-place plan and other related resources.
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6.5 Prepare Your Staff

HandsOn Action 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.

Family Disaster Plan

Each employee and key volunteer should have a family disaster plan that includes a cache of emergency supplies, a home evacuation plan that includes 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.

Training on Preparedness

Provide preparedness training annually and share the preparedness message frequently between presentations. Check with your American Red Cross chapter and other local disaster preparedness agencies for community disaster education materials. There are many excellent publications and videos available on personal and family preparedness.

Portable Kits

In addition to their family disaster plan and supplies, staff members should have a smaller, portable disaster kit in their car or alternate location. 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, important medications, moist towelettes, a toothbrush, and other personal care items.

Checklist

- ✓ Ask each staff member to develop a family response plan (American Red Cross has information on how to do this).
 - ✓ Ask each staff member to assemble and maintain a portable kit for the car or other accessible location.
-



Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- 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. For example, one HandsOn Action Center conducted surprise “car checks” during randomly selected staff meetings.
 - For a list of personal supply kit items for staff, see Ready.gov’s recommendation at www.ready.gov/business/plan/emersupply.html.
 - See www.redcross.org for American Red Cross resources on personal and family preparedness.
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6.6 Prepare Action Center Facility and Stock Supplies

In planning for continuity of operations, preparation of your facility is a primary concern. Key issues to address include safety, equipment, emergency supplies, important documents storage, and alternate locations.

Safety

In addition to other standard safety measures, post building and site maps with emergency routes highlighted.

Equipment

What equipment (computers, copier, etc.) is considered essential for your business functioning? Identify companies that can repair or replace equipment that is damaged or destroyed.

Secure Equipment

Determine what equipment and furnishings need to be secured. Heavy or breakable items should be placed on low shelves for safety.

Emergency Supplies

Consider employee comfort and safety. Stock water, food, radio, flashlights and other items for cases where employees are prevented from leaving. Recommend that each employee prepare their own portable kit containing food, medications, and other items of a personal nature.

Important Records

What are the key documents you will need to stay in business or to speed recovery? Insurance policies, employee contact lists, computer backup media, bank account records, contact information for suppliers, list of contacts for agencies and organizations? If possible, store them in a container that is fireproof and waterproof. Store a second set of records off-site.

Alternate Location

If remaining in your present facility is not possible, can you operate from another location? Having prior agreements and portable supply kits will expedite the transition to another location.

Checklist

- ✓ Post site maps, with emergency routes clearly marked.
- ✓ Make a list of businesses that can repair or replace needed equipment.

- ✓ Secure heavy equipment and furnishings.
 - ✓ Stock survival supplies—water, food, radio, flashlights, etc.
 - ✓ Ask staff to assemble personal supply kits for storage at office.
 - ✓ Store important documents onsite in fireproof, waterproof container and store second set off-site.
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Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- For a list of emergency supplies for the entire office, see Volunteer Center of Sonoma County's *Spontaneous Disaster Manual* in the Attachments.
 - For a list of personal supply kit items for staff, see Ready.gov's recommendation at www.ready.gov/business/plan/emersupply.html.
 - Remember to store batteries separately from flashlights.
 - At a previous location, the Center for Volunteer and Nonprofit Leadership (Marin County, CA) used a power strip on a wall to plug in rechargeable batteries and flashlights. In case of emergency, the flashlights were always ready to go.
 - Keep a supply of large heavy duty plastic bags and waterproof tape on hand to protect equipment such as computers and filing cabinets from water damage.
 - Develop and maintain a routine for refreshing preparedness items that have a shelf life—certain medical supplies, water, batteries, etc.
 - A resource for COOP planning is *Continuity of Operation Plan (COOP) for Nonprofit Human Services Providers* (see Attachments). The document covers, among other topics, facility preparation, and it serves as both a guide and a plan template.
 - Go to Ready.gov (www.ready.gov/business/index.html) for information about various aspects of planning for business continuity and a sample plan.
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Section 7

Enhancing Your Capacity

In this section:

- 7.1 Increase Your Staffing Capacity
- 7.2 Establish Mutual Aid
- 7.3 Create a Disaster Resource Directory
- 7.4 Enlist Community Volunteers Pre-disaster

7.1 Increase Your Staffing Capacity

One of the greatest challenges facing HandsOn Action Centers in disasters is increasing staffing capacity to meet the needs of a large-scale operation. HandsOn Action Centers should anticipate and address this issue prior to a disaster. Here are four primary strategies for increasing staffing capacity for disasters:

Partner with other organizations in your community.


Seek agreements to have their staff or members trained on VRC operations and released to work side by side with your staff in a disaster. Such organizations might include:

- Local government, focusing on staff who do not have other disaster assignments
- Local businesses or corporations
- CERT teams, whose members may want to help once they have completed their CERT duties
- AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps*VISTA, RSVP, and other national service programs¹⁷
- Local United Way
- Local service clubs such as Rotary, Kiwanis
- Local DOVIA (Directors of Volunteers in Agencies) or Association of Volunteer Administrators (members already have many of the core skills needed)
- Local congregations and other faith-based organizations

Pre-train a cadre of volunteers to work with you.

There are many benefits to having pre-trained affiliated volunteers who will help staff your VRC when a disaster strikes. Ideally you will include them in your staff training and exercises. But like any group of volunteers, it will take extra effort to keep them connected. Where will these volunteers come from? Consider those closest to you, such as:

¹⁷ Volunteer management is a component of training for AmeriCorps members; some have received training in VRC operations.

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- HandsOn Action Center board members, perhaps not all, but some who express particular interest in disaster response
 - Other HandsOn volunteers, such as those who help with phone answering, information and referral, or clerical tasks
 - Volunteers you recruit during the year who express interest in disaster-related volunteering

Establish mutual aid agreements with neighboring HandsOn Action Centers.

Increasingly, HandsOn Action Centers are providing mutual aid to one another in times of disaster. Mutual aid provides greatly needed relief staffing and technical expertise to Volunteers Centers in the impacted area, and it provides hands-on training and learning opportunities for Centers providing support. To explore mutual aid options:


- Discuss establishing an agreement with neighboring HandsOn Action Centers
- Work with your state association to develop statewide planning and protocols for providing mutual aid
- If neither of these options is available, contact Points of Light Institute & HandsOn Network to explore mutual aid resources for your VC

When you have identified additional staffing resources for enhancing your capacity, train and prepare for operations together. Conduct annual training and exercises with your partner organization(s) or volunteer cadre to enhance operational effectiveness when a disaster strikes. Once staffing partnerships have been identified and agreements made, document and put agreements in writing in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Codify agreements with other HandsOn Action Centers by establishing a mutual aid agreement (see Chapter 7.2).

Prepare to involve spontaneous volunteers at the time of a disaster.

Draw new volunteers from the pool of spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers who have contacted your HandsOn Action Center. They 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 call center 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.
- Prepare a checklist for volunteer orientation that covers key topics, including update of disaster situation, disaster mission of HandsOn Action Center, and pertinent policies and procedures.
- Document the training that volunteers receive. Keep information up-to-date for each person.
- Group orientation and training of call center staffers can save precious time.
- Pairing new volunteers with trained staff is a great way to provide on the job training.

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- 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.

Develop just-in-time training protocols for your first spontaneous volunteers who come through the door (pair them up with trained staff, develop easy to read checklists).

Checklist

- ✓ Decide which strategy or strategies you will employ for enhancing staff capacity.
 - ✓ Develop agreements as needed with outside groups.
 - ✓ Include volunteers in your staff training and exercises.
 - ✓ Develop a plan for involving spontaneous volunteers in your disaster operation. Write job descriptions and describe how the volunteers will be oriented and trained.
 - ✓ Document the training that volunteers receive, both before and during disaster operations.
 - ✓ Plan to recognize the volunteers in some way when the disaster is over.
-



Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- According to Carolyn Kincaid of Volunteer Center of the Virginia Peninsula (ckincaid@volunteerpeninsula.org):

“Our staff has been able to build a bridge between the faith-based community and local government in order to engage this group of volunteers in the event of a disaster. The Center has provided Volunteer Reception Center Training and Basic Disaster Training to approximately 500 people from the faith community to assist in staffing VRCs to receive, train and connect spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers in the event of a disaster. We also respect the fact that the faith-based groups have their own specific areas of interest – to serve the needs of their congregations and those in their surrounding communities.”

- Consult the Quick Start Guide in this guide for tools for training new staff/volunteers in times of disaster.
 - See the Quick Start Guide for sample EVC staff position checklists.
-



7.2 Establish Mutual Aid

As a result of a disaster, your HandsOn Action Center may have its own problems— not enough staff, lack of skilled or experienced staff, staff suffering from burnout, loss of equipment or supplies, even premises that have been damaged or destroyed.

Value of Mutual Aid

Through mutual aid, HandsOn Action Centers outside an impacted area can provide invaluable assistance to your Center when it faces such issues. For example, the assisting HandsOn Action Centers could provide you with relief staffing, technical expertise, or needed equipment and supplies. In certain circumstances you could even relay incoming calls to another HandsOn Action Center, which would then temporarily handle inquiries from potential volunteers and agencies needing volunteers. A mutual aid agreement helps solidify such understandings and relationships.

What Is Mutual Aid?

Mutual aid is a reciprocity system involving like organizations. A longstanding tradition in police and fire services, mutual aid is an agreement by each signing party to provide assistance, when called upon, to another party to the agreement and to expect that the favor will be returned when you are in need.

Elements of a Mutual Aid Agreement

Whether a mutual aid agreement is between two HandsOn Action Centers or among all of a state's Centers, there are certain key elements:

- List of parties to the agreement
- Purpose of the agreement
- What the agreements are. These may include but are not limited to the following:
 - the types and range of services to be provided when requested
 - any limits on services to be provided (e.g., a statement that no party shall completely deplete its own resources to render mutual aid services)
 - the preparedness level and standards each party will maintain
 - understandings about who bears the cost of mutual aid (usually the party that renders it) and ability to recover costs
 - by what means mutual aid will be activated
 - policy on termination of the agreement
- Signature and date of signing by all parties



Checklist

- ✓ Invite neighboring HandsOn Action Centers to participate in a regional mutual aid agreement. If applicable, have your state association discuss a statewide mutual assistance plan.
 - ✓ Work with other HandsOn Action Centers to determine the specific responsibilities each will have in the event any are affected by a disaster.
 - ✓ Clearly define what preparedness standards and level of readiness must be maintained by those signing the agreement.
 - ✓ Determine how you will communicate with other HandsOn Action Centers or partner agencies, particularly if phone communications are down, to request or respond to a request for mutual aid.
 - ✓ Clarify who will bear the cost of mutual aid rendered and how cost recovery will be addressed.
 - ✓ Draft the agreement, have each party review the agreement, finalize and sign.
-

Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- Volunteer San Diego included several points about mutual aid in their *Lessons Learned from the 2007 Wildfires* (see Attachments). Among them were the recommendation to ask those lending mutual aid for longer term commitments (5 days at least) and to be very specific about lengths of shifts, especially if they are longer than usual.
- The Florida Association of Volunteer Centers' mutual assistance plan for disaster response includes pre-disaster expectations and post-disaster protocols. See *Florida Association of VCs Mutual Aid Agreement* in Attachments.
- The Volunteer Centers of California have a statewide mutual aid agreement that was activated for the Southern CA wildfires (see *Volunteer Centers of California Mutual Aid Agreement* in Attachments).

- The following text is offered as a sample board resolution in support of a regional or state mutual aid agreement:

The Board of Directors of (insert name of your HandsOn Action Center) resolves to allocate Center resources to aid our communities in times of disaster by participating in the disaster response and recovery planning process and by recruiting and referral of volunteers in times of disaster.

The Board of Directors further recognizes the value and importance of extending mutual aid to HandsOn Action Centers whose community has been affected by a disaster incident that has created human service needs beyond the capacity of services and resources of the affected Center.

We therefore resolve to empower our Executive Director and Board President to sign the HandsOn Action Centers of (insert your state or region) Mutual Aid Agreement.

- Perhaps the greatest example of mutual aid among HandsOn Action Centers was the unprecedented support from across the country provided to those Centers most affected by and responding to Hurricane Katrina. *We Are Family: Dimensions of Caring in Times of Disaster* tells the story in compelling detail. www.pointsoflight.org/downloads/pdf/about/GulfCoastReportSummary.pdf
- *Down by the Bayou* (see Attachments) is a reflection by Phyllis Onstad (then with Volunteer Center of Sonoma County, CA) written at Monroe, LA, where she was supporting the local United Way/2-1-1/Volunteer Center after Hurricane Katrina. Included in her list of “lessons learned” is the great importance of collaboration.
- After the Northridge Earthquake, the Volunteer Centers of the San Francisco Bay Area sent two staff to assist the six Volunteer Centers serving Los Angeles County. Their role was to provide technical assistance. They helped the Centers fine-tune their call center operation; helped build key relationships with other responding agencies and organizations; and provided a sounding board for unprepared and stressed staff.



7.3 Create a Disaster Resource Directory

One of the greatest lessons from Hurricane Katrina is recognition of the need to rely on local resources for an indefinite period of time until outside help can arrive. Preparing for events such as an influenza pandemic paints a similar picture—outside resources may be very limited because our entire nation could be affected. Whatever the disaster, local resources are essential and having a directory will save precious time when a disaster strikes.

What kinds of resources should be in your directory?

On what kinds of resources would you depend in a disaster? Are there some you might call on frequently, others you may never? Whom would you need to communicate with for effective functioning of your VRC? How far do you want to extend your list geographically? Only you can determine how wide you want your inventory to go. Consider including at least some of the categories listed below:

- Emergency management agencies—county and city
- Police and fire—county and city
- Hospitals
- Key relief agencies (American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, etc.)
- Information and referral/2-1-1 providers
- Agencies likely to need volunteers (could be a separate list)
- Organized groups willing to volunteer for disasters
- HandsOn Action Center staff and volunteers (may be separate list)
- Groups that have promised to help staff your operations
- Other HandsOn Action Centers/state association
- Key faith-based organizations and/or interfaiths
- Colleges and universities
- Major employers in your community
- Funders
- Vendors/suppliers

What information should you capture in your directory?

There are some basic items that most HandsOn Action Centers will want to include, as follows:

- Category/type of resource (e.g., Police, Fire, Volunteer Group)
- Name of organization
- Contact name
- Address
- 24-hour phone numbers
- Fax number
- Email addresses
- Website URL
- Brief description of role/function/services provided



Where do you store your directory?

Use a database to create your list. Print it out and keep copies in your Go Kits and other key locations. Also put it on a flash drive or CD and store that in your Go Kits as well.

Checklist

- ✓ Determine what types of agencies/organizations/companies/individuals you want to include in your disaster resource directory.
- ✓ Explore whether your HandsOn Action Center already has some of these resources in a database—don't reinvent the wheel!
- ✓ Design your database format.
- ✓ Pull contact and other information from various sources and enter data. Remember to add information from key contacts you make in your disaster response planning process.
- ✓ Proof and print final version.
- ✓ Copy file onto flash drive or CD and place in Go Kits with printed copies.
- ✓ Schedule periodic updates.

Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- 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 add these with their contact information to your disaster resource directory, which should be kept in an easily accessible area.
 - Your directory should be updated periodically to facilitate activating operations in an actual disaster response situation.
-



7.4 Enlist Community Volunteers Pre-disaster

Pre-disaster Enlistment of Volunteer Groups

Benefits—Some experienced HandsOn Action Centers have found it beneficial to work with pre-organized response teams—groups from unions, service clubs, congregations, and businesses, for example—at the time of a disaster. It's more efficient than working with individuals who want to volunteer because only the leader of the group needs to be interviewed, and it's more effective because requests for volunteers can be filled more rapidly. For these reasons, it makes sense to identify some of these volunteer group resources pre-disaster.


Identifying Volunteer Groups—Corporations are great resources for this purpose. Many, such as Target, Cisco and Google, encourage their employees to volunteer. Other organizations that may be able to provide volunteers at the time of a disaster 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.

Contact Information—Maintain a list of organizations that express interest in disaster volunteering, making sure to have two current contact names and phone numbers for each, and add to your disaster resource directory. 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.

Pre-disaster Enlistment of Individuals

Enlisting for Special Skills—There are certain skills that are frequently needed in disaster but often in short supply. At the top of this list would be people who are multilingual. They are especially needed for interpreting in shelters and other settings, for answering phones, and sometimes for translating materials. There may be other skills that are highly needed in your particular area or for the types of disasters you anticipate. Consider what these special skills are and make an effort to develop a list of people who have them.

General Volunteer Enlistment—Seasoned disaster response managers often advise against pre-enlisting individual volunteers, except for people with special skills as noted above. The main arguments against it are practical: At the time of a disaster, you will probably be so busy with your VRC operations, you will not have time to contact, let alone think about, volunteers who signed up in advance. Even if you wanted to, and even if you could contact signed-up volunteers, you would find that many, if not most, are not available, are no longer interested, have moved away, have out-of date contact information, or otherwise cannot be reached. The effort that



goes into developing and maintaining a database of people who state they are “interested in” or “willing to” volunteer for a disaster might be better spent planning and preparing for those who will show up.

If you do want to pre-enlist volunteers who want to help in a disaster, make sure their e-mail address (and other contact information) is captured in your database. Then, periodically test your system with a special message to these volunteers, asking them to re-confirm their interest and their contact information.

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 HandsOn Action 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 post-traumatic stress disorder are not uncommon.

Checklist

- ✓ If you decide to recruit volunteer groups prior to disaster, start with those your HandsOn Action Center already has relationships with.
 - ✓ Expand your search to include other groups.
 - ✓ In each case, request the name and contact information for a primary and alternate point of contact. Update annually.
 - ✓ Decide whether or not you will recruit individual volunteers pre-disaster, for which skills, and by what means.
 - ✓ Database the names and contact information and update annually.
 - ✓ Add these new contacts to your “disaster resource directory” (see Chapter 7.3).
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Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- If you do pre-disaster recruiting of volunteer groups, you may want to involve some of them as partners or invite them to join your local VOAD or other disaster planning committee.
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Section 8

When Disaster Strikes

In this section:

- 8.1 Activate Your Plan
- 8.2 Set Up for Response Operations
- 8.3 Execute and Manage Response Operations
- 8.4 Swing into Recovery
- 8.5 Capture Lessons Learned
- 8.6 Demobilize Operations
- 8.7 Avoid Burnout

8.1 Activate Your Plan

There are several main considerations in activating an emergency operations plan (EOP). They include the decision to activate—who makes it and why, the level of activation, and the notification of the decision.

- **Decision to activate**—The EOP should state clearly what would trigger the decision to activate and who makes the decision. Possible triggers might include a 6.7 or greater magnitude earthquake, warning of a Category 3 or greater hurricane for your area, or a request to activate from your local emergency management agency. The decision-maker will most likely be your HandsOn Action Center’s executive director.
- **The level of activation**—Your EOP may designate differing levels of activation depending on the type and scope of the disaster, from standby/alert mode to partial to full activation. Consult your EOP for an explanation.
- **Notification of activation decision**—As soon as possible and by whatever means possible, the notification needs to go out. Who should be notified? Any individual, agency, or organization tasked with implementing the plan. At a minimum, this should include your staff, board members, possibly key volunteers, and your local emergency management agency. It might also include your state association and HandsOn Network.

Selection of Operational Strategy

Closely related to plan activation is your choice of initial operational strategy. A decision should be made as soon as feasible about what method or methods you will employ to connect community volunteers with disaster-related opportunities. Your options are a call center, a walk-in center, and/or an online process. Assuming there is sufficient information to make the best choice, this decision can be part of the activation process.



Checklist

- ✓ Make decision to activate. Refer to your plan for information on what can trigger a decision to activate and who is authorized to make the decision.
 - ✓ Notify the people, agencies and organizations tasked with implementing the plan.
 - ✓ Begin by alerting staff. Remind them to take care of their family and home before reporting in.
 - ✓ Be sure to quickly notify your Board members and remind them that, at least for a while, “It won’t be business as usual.”
 - ✓ If feasible at this time, determine your initial operational strategy—volunteer call center, walk-in center, and/or online process.
-

Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- For an Activation Checklist sample, see the *Spontaneous Disaster Manual* submitted by the Volunteer Center of Sonoma County in the Attachments. The checklist can be found in the document’s Appendices.
 - Refer back to Chapter 5.2, which focuses on preparation and planning for activation.
-



8.2 Set Up for Response Operations

When a disaster occurs, a well-developed response plan will enable your HandsOn Action Center to move quickly to assist the community. Using your plan as a guide, you will need to address a number of concerns as you prepare for operations—selection of operational strategy, site safety, space set-up, supplies, staffing, hours of operation, communications, development of volunteer opportunities, and public information.

Selection of Operational Strategy

If phones are working well at your site and in the community, a call center is usually your best option. If phone service is down or spotty, or if volunteers are massing, consider a walk-in Volunteer Reception Center. Your third option, online referrals, will depend on how well Internet access is working. You can operate using just one of these strategies or a blend of two or even all three.

Site Safety

Before setting up, you must determine if your proposed site is safe. In the event of damage to your building, you will need an inspection by a qualified professional; ask your EOC for assistance. For other disasters, consider whether your building is in harm's way and find an alternate site if necessary.

Space Set-up

Once you have established your operational strategy and determined the site's safety, you are ready to set it up for implementation. This may mean figuring out traffic flow, moving furniture, and even installing telephone lines. See suggested layouts in Tips, Tools, and Best Practices.

Supplies

Your response operations can be launched with just a few basic office supplies but having the right stuff will make it much easier. Supply kits should have been pre-staged—consult your EOP for more information. See Tips, Tools and Best Practices for sample supply lists.

Staffing

Your staff, whether paid or volunteer, will form the backbone of your operation. Determine the appropriate staffing level for your chosen level of activation and operational strategy. As staff arrive, make assignments and hand out appropriate checklists from your plan. If more staff are needed, request assistance from your county's or city's EOC as well as neighboring HandsOn Action Centers. Consult your plan for suggestions on other sources.



Hours of Operation

If power is out, even temporarily, you probably will be limited to daylight hours. If the level of volunteer interest appears to be high, consider extended hours, such as 7 am to 7 pm, that allow volunteers to call or come in before or after work. The start date and time of your operation should be determined as soon as possible.

Communications

How you will communicate with the “outside” world is of extreme importance. The range of possibilities in this age of technology is enormous. If phone service is disrupted, you may have to rely on ham radio operators and runners.

Development of Volunteer Opportunities

Before you go public, and as long as you are in business, one of your big tasks will be gathering information on disaster volunteer opportunities. *Be proactive—don’t hesitate to initiate this process.* When contacting agencies and organizations, start with those with which you have an MOU 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 means possible—broadcast fax, phone calls, even foot messenger. Be sure to include a message for agencies in your first media announcement.

Public Information

When everything is in place, and only then, you need to announce that you are ready and open for business. The best way is through a media release to your local broadcast and print media. Refer to your EOP for a list of media contacts. Inform the media that the HandsOn Action 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 avoid disaster sites and contact the VRC instead.

Checklist

- ✓ Determine if selected site is safe; if not, find alternate side.
- ✓ Use pre-staged supply kits, if available.
- ✓ Determine staffing needs for first operational period.
- ✓ Assign staff as they arrive.
- ✓ If short-staffed, request assistance from local EOC or other HandsOn Action Centers.
- ✓ Determine initial hours of operation and start date and time.
- ✓ Determine what communication tools and methods are available.

- ✓ Begin identifying volunteer opportunities through contacts with key agencies and organizations.
 - ✓ Prepare a media release and send to broadcast and print media.
-
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Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- Form a mutual aid agreement with other HandsOn Action Centers in your state or your region. Designate a state association or one Center in the region as the point of contact for arranging mutual aid. Then, if your Center needs assistance (extra staffing or other resources) during an emergency, contact the designated point of contact.
 - If you have mutual aid agreements with other HandsOn Action Centers, let them know your status and needs through the designated contact. Additional support and resources may be available from HandsOn Action Centers outside your area.
 - In response to Hurricane Charley, a team from Volunteer Manatee (FL) set up a VRC in a hard-hit community in a neighboring county that did not have a Volunteer Center. They brought prepackaged Go Kits which included volunteer registration forms, ID bracelets, liability release forms and community assessment forms (the latter to help in identification of local needs). Read the story in *Extraordinary Need, Extraordinary Response* (pp. 10-11).
www.pointsoflight.org/downloads/pdf/programs/disaster/FL_Report.pdf
 - See the Quick Start Guide for tools for setting up your VRC (EVC in this California model). Included are a layout, descriptions of stations and desks, a supplies kit list and a set of staff position checklists.
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8.3 Execute and Manage Response Operations

Once you've activated your plan and completed the set-up tasks, you are ready to start operations. Your efforts to contact agencies and organizations should bring in information about volunteer opportunities. Your public service announcements should bring in the volunteers. Let the matching begin!

General Topics on Operations Management

Managing Staff—The key to good customer service is good staff organization and management. If you created staff positions and checklists when you developed your plan, you are ahead of the game. If not, you may want to consult the Quick Start Guide in this guide. As staff arrive and are assigned, their names should be entered on a posted organizational chart.

Implementing ICS—If you are using ICS, remember that all positions need to be covered. If few staff are available, some will have to take multiple assignments. Within the ICS structure, most staff will be in the Operations Section; within Operations, most staff will be Interviewers. It is even possible to have one staff person take on all the main ICS roles and everyone else work in Operations.


Volunteer Ebb and Flow—The rhythm of volunteer response tends to start out slowly, grow quickly to a peak where it stays for a while, then gradually die down. During the earliest time period, the number of volunteers will likely be greater than the number of opportunities available. As information on needs for volunteers grows, the balance tends to even out. As volunteer interest wanes, there may be another period of imbalance, when there are not enough volunteers.

Recruiting Volunteers—When there are simply not enough volunteers to fill all requests for volunteers or, more likely, when volunteers with particular skills are in short supply, recruitment may be needed. In either case, use some of the following ideas to get more volunteers:

- If you haven't already, contact businesses and organizations with which you have a relationship.
- Issue media releases. If appropriate, highlight need for special skills.
- Post special skills needed at entrance of a walk-in VRC.

Managing a Walk-in Volunteer Reception Center

Reception Station—The priorities at the Reception Station are to greet visitors, find out why they are there, and point them in the right direction. This is the first stop for people who want to volunteer. The Receptionist will give them a form to fill out and direct them to the waiting area, where they will stay until an Interviewer is available to meet with them. Visitors may also be reporters, people who want to donate something, agencies seeking volunteers, people affected by the disaster, or those who are simply curious. The Reception Station should have a list of agencies




providing help to people affected by the disaster as well as agencies accepting different types of donations.

Volunteer Intake and Referral—This is where volunteers are interviewed and referred to an appropriate volunteer position based on the volunteer’s skills, availability, and location. Following are some tried and true principles of the process:

- Ideally, volunteers should be referred at the first contact. Doing so eliminates the need for further contact and is the most efficient use of everyone’s time.
- For volunteers who can’t immediately be referred, ask them to check in again at a later time or date, when there is likely to be a wider range of opportunities. Avoid having to re-contact volunteers yourself as it takes time and resources away from more critical activities.
- In order to make the best referral, the Interviewer will want to learn as much as possible about the volunteer in a very short time and will ask appropriate follow-up questions.
- The Interviewer then provides information about suitable volunteer opportunities and asks the volunteer which one he or she prefers. The volunteer should be referred to only one opportunity and the information should be noted on the intake form, which is retained by the Interviewer (if using NCR forms, a copy may be given to the volunteer).
- 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 VRC 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 VRC for another assignment.
- 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 come back at a later time.

Volunteer Opportunities Desk—This desk has two main responsibilities

- **Identifying opportunities:** To some extent, the success of the VRC depends on the ability to identify volunteer opportunities. Without them, there is no place to send the volunteers. Those staffing the Volunteer Opportunities Desk must be not only proactive in contacting agencies and organizations, they must be ingenious in their methods of gathering data. For example, how would they do it without phones? They could send runners to some key agencies to collect and bring back data. They could send a runner (or message via ham) to the EOC to see if the latter was receiving requests. They could monitor the newspaper and radio for announcements of needs for volunteers and then follow up.
- **Posting volunteer opportunities:** 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 Reception Center when sufficient volunteers have arrived at their site so that additional volunteers can be directed elsewhere.

Data Coordination Desk—The Data Coordinator keeps track of the number of volunteers referred to specific positions and notifies the Volunteer Opportunities Coordinator when a position has been filled.

Managing a Call Center

A Call Center is very similar to a Walk-in VRC but easier to manage because volunteers do not come in person. Following are a few tips on managing call centers.

- Don't activate more lines than you can staff.
- Remember to have one or more restricted, unpublished lines for contact with the media, agencies, and other HandsOn Action Centers.
- Have excess calls placed on hold until an Interviewer is available; do not let them go into voicemail because then you have to call those people back.
- When a volunteer calls, the call usually goes immediately to a call center Interviewer whose first task is to ascertain why the person is calling. Some people may have to be referred to a different station or desk. In some call center systems, a receptionist fields all incoming calls and routes them to the appropriate place. In others, callers can select from a menu to reach the right person.

Managing an Online Process

The use of technology can save time and precious staff resources but the process needs to be well managed. Appoint someone to be in charge of the online site (with a second person as backup). Make sure volunteer opportunity postings and any other messages to volunteers are accurate and up-to-date. Control the number of people who can be referred to each volunteer opportunity and monitor registration closely. Be aware that not everyone who accepts a referral will actually go. Stay in touch with agencies and organizations you are referring volunteers to, to make sure that an appropriate number of people are being sent and actually arrive.



Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- *Extraordinary Need, Extraordinary Response* describes how Volunteer Centers, individual volunteers and corporations rose to the occasion of Florida's 2004-05 hurricane season. It includes stories of operational challenges and the resourcefulness of Volunteer Centers in meeting them.
www.pointsoflight.org/downloads/pdf/programs/disaster/FL_Report.pdf
- *We Are Family: Dimensions of Caring in Times of Disaster*, also a publication of Points of Light Foundation and Volunteer Center National Network, tells the story of Volunteer Center involvement with Hurricane Katrina relief and recovery efforts. Volunteer Centers and the communities they served faced unprecedented challenges and were literally flooded with volunteer response.
www.pointsoflight.org/downloads/pdf/about/GulfCoastReportSummary.pdf
- Following Florida's 2004 hurricane season, Volunteer Florida and the Florida Association of Volunteer Centers collaborated on a study of Volunteer Center response. The report, *Unaffiliated Volunteer Management: Florida's Record-breaking 2004 Hurricane Season*, documents the experiences of Volunteer Centers around a number of operational topics and makes valuable recommendations for future planning and preparedness.
www.volunteerflorida.org/emergencymanagement/docs/2008/2004season.pdf
- For tips on managing an online process, based on experience responding to the 2007 wildfires, see Volunteer San Diego's *Internet Tips* in the Attachments.
- For a very simple VRC staff organization chart, see California Volunteers' *EVC Workshop 07* (slide 26) in the Attachments.

- According to Meghan Moloney with New York Cares (Meghan.moloney@nycares.org):

“Regardless of which software a center uses, the key to success of online matching is the emphasis on content - the bottom line is technology won’t be used if it doesn’t give the people the information they need, and the information needs to be useable and accurate. For example, we give detailed directions on how to get to volunteer projects: can you get there by subway or do you need a car?”

- An illustration of volunteer ebb and flow in the VRC was shared in an e-mail message from Bobby Olashuk (Volunteer Connection of Northwest Ohio) during the response to the 2007 floods. After a difficult first day, with volunteers having to wait because entry to the flood zone was not possible until late afternoon, he wrote: “Sunday was different, we had a steady ebb and flow. At times, we’d have fifteen to twenty volunteer opportunities with no volunteers to send. Fifteen minutes later, we’d have all of those filled and 10 folks waiting for an assignment. The ebb and flow lasted all day. It was great to see our center working like a well oiled machine. We learned, adapted, and everything worked well.”
 - Some VRCs offer a safety orientation to volunteers before the latter leave for their assignments. The content will vary from place to place and disaster to disaster. For a sample, see the Seminole Community Volunteer Program’s *VRC Safety Briefing for Volunteers* in the Attachments.
 - For a sample ICS organizational chart used by a Volunteer Center, see Volunteer Center of Sonoma County’s document, *ICS Structure*, in the Attachments. Note that the VRC and Phone Bank (call center) comprise the Operations Section in the ICS structure.
 - The *Spontaneous Disaster Manual* (see Attachments) submitted by Volunteer Center of Sonoma County covers the ICS organization and roles for both local government and the Volunteer Center, with written descriptions and graphics. The VRC is integrated into the Volunteer Center ICS structure.
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8.4 Swing into Recovery

When the immediate crisis is over, long-term recovery and rebuilding may require volunteers with different skills and longer commitment.

Identifying Needs

Determine what volunteer needs can be addressed by the HandsOn Action Center by consulting directly with lead relief agencies and local officials and by attending long-term recovery committee meetings convened by Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) or other organizations.

Connecting Groups

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

Tapping Local Resources

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 which have long-term links to the community, including faith-based and neighborhood groups.

Media Coverage

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, fix-up projects in their communities, working side by side with other volunteers.

Staffing for Recovery

As you move into recovery, adjust staffing to your current level of activity. If you have experienced volunteer staff who are willing to stay on and help, perhaps they can manage operations with just one paid staff to supervise. Other staff may then be able to return to their normal duties.



Checklist

- ✓ Contact relief agencies to identify recovery volunteer opportunities.
 - ✓ Recruit local chapters of Habitat for Humanity and other organizations to help.
 - ✓ Reach out to faith-based, neighborhood and other groups.
 - ✓ Seek media coverage for recovery needs and opportunities.
 - ✓ Scale back staffing levels to meet existing need.
-

Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- NVOAD has information on long-term recovery on its website (www.nvoad.org).
 - Volunteer Mobile received a grant from the Ralph Lauren Foundation to build two houses for residents whose homes were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. Volunteer Mobile partnered with Mennonite Disaster Services and with Polo outlets and corporate leadership on the projects.
 - Following the 2007 flood, Volunteer Connection of Northwest Ohio worked with and served as the fiscal agent for the Putnam County Long-term Recovery Task Force. Through its VRC, Volunteer Connection continued to coordinate volunteers during the recovery period. See LTR flyer (*LTR Putnam Co Ohio*) in the Attachments.
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8.5 Capture Lessons Learned

Post-disaster Critique

Take time out to involve those who staffed your operations in a post-disaster 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.

Feedback from Spontaneous Volunteers

If you have the resources, 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.

Final Report

Conclude this process by capturing what you've learned in the form of a final report. Include data on volunteers, referrals, agencies served, challenges, what you learned, and recommendations for the future. 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 HandsOn Action Centers.

Updating Response Plan

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

Checklist

- ✓ Conduct a post-disaster critique with VRC staff.
 - ✓ If possible, survey the people from the community who volunteered.
 - ✓ Solicit feedback from the agencies where volunteers were sent.
 - ✓ Prepare a final report.
 - ✓ Review disaster response plan and make adjustments as needed.
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Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- *Unaffiliated Volunteer Management: Florida's Record-breaking 2004 Hurricane Season*, published by Volunteer Florida, (URL) provides a statewide summary of Volunteer Center activities, successes and challenges.
www.volunteerflorida.org/emergencymanagement/docs/2008/2004season.pdf
 - *We Are Family: Dimensions of Caring in Times of Disaster* (published by Points of Light Institute) is the stirring story of how Volunteer Centers around the country rallied to support relief efforts for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.
www.pointsoflight.org/downloads/pdf/about/GulfCoastReportSummary.pdf
 - *Extraordinary Need, Extraordinary Response* provides another slant on the 2004-05 Florida hurricane season.
www.pointsoflight.org/downloads/pdf/programs/disaster/FL_Report.pdf
 - Volunteer San Diego's *Lessons Learned from the 2007 Wildfires* (see Attachments) covers a wide variety of topics and provides an insider's view of what went right and what areas need work.
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8.6 Demobilize Operations

Setting a Time

Planning for demobilization starts as soon as your operation commences. Anticipate that at some point you will officially close down operations. When that time comes, pinpoint the day and time and share the information with the media and all of your stakeholders, including staff and volunteers.

Unfilled Volunteer Opportunities

If you have disaster volunteer opportunities that remain unfilled, add them to your regular volunteer opportunity listings. That way volunteers can still be referred, even after your VRC has closed down.

Being Realistic

After your HandsOn Action 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.

Thanking Volunteers

Find as many ways as possible to thank those who volunteered, including use of 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.

Thanking Donors

Chances are your HandsOn Action Center was the beneficiary of gifts of resources, financial and otherwise. Be sure to acknowledge your donors and let them know what a difference their contributions made.

Appreciating Staff

Be sure to recognize and thank your own staff and volunteers who worked hard during disaster operations. Consider traditional appreciation gifts, such as candy, flowers, potted plants, mugs or 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. Remember to make critical incident stress debriefing available to staff (see Chapter 8.7).

Recovering Costs

You may find a stack of bills on your desk for telephone costs, equipment purchases, and staff overtime. Seek reimbursement from 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.



Checklist

- ✓ Start planning for demobilization from Day One of operations.
 - ✓ Set a time for demobilization and announce to staff, volunteers and board.
 - ✓ Announce demobilization to media, agencies and organizations that requested volunteers, and other stakeholders.
 - ✓ Add unfilled disaster volunteer opportunities to listing of regular/ongoing opportunities.
 - ✓ Thank those from the community who volunteered.
 - ✓ Invite demobilized VRC volunteers to become regular volunteers.
 - ✓ Thank HandsOn Action Center staff and volunteers with gifts, time off and other support.
 - ✓ If needed provide critical incident stress debriefing.
 - ✓ Seek funding/reimbursement for staff overtime and out-of-pocket expenses.
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Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- Find ways to support staff as they return to business as usual—consider keeping a fresh fruit basket stocked, having healthy lunches catered every day for a week, or organizing a picnic with leisure activities at a local park.
 - Make sure that all staff (and volunteers, if appropriate) who incurred reimbursable out-of-pocket expenses turn in their receipts. You will need these for an accurate accounting of all costs of your response.
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8.7 Avoid 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.

Coping with Stress

Disaster work can be stressful. Find ways to help yourself and others cope with stress and frustration. Here are some suggestions:

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

Interventions with Staff

In some cases, intervention may be required. The VRC Manager or HandsOn Action Center executive 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. Refer any worker or volunteer with signs of post-traumatic stress to a mental health professional. A post-disaster support group may be advisable.


The VRC Manager should also be open to hearing others' concerns about his or her own burn-out 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.

Mental Health Resources

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. Ideally, your mental health professional will be well-trained in critical incident stress (CIS) and able to administer a critical incident stress debriefing to any staff who need it.

Getting Help

While disaster work can be highly stressful, you don't have to go it alone. Ask for help. Whether you need help with staffing your operation, a critical piece of



equipment, or advice and moral support, consider the following resources: other HandsOn Action Centers; local and state government agencies; disaster relief agencies; other agencies in your immediate area; and local businesses, corporations, congregations, and service clubs.

Checklist

- ✓ Assess need for and implement ways to reduce stress.
 - ✓ Monitor staff behavior and intervene when necessary.
 - ✓ Ensure that the VRC Manager takes appropriate action in regard to personal burnout.
 - ✓ Pre-arrange to have mental health professional onsite or on call.
 - ✓ When you need it, ask for help.
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Tips, Tools, and Best Practices

- A finding from the study of Volunteer Center response to Florida's 2004 hurricane season was that "disaster responders, whether they are providing assistance directly to survivors or assisting agencies, need an opportunity to talk about their experiences, share their feelings and process some of the sights, sounds and pain associated with their disaster work." The report goes on to recommend that Volunteer Centers "add further clarification to aspects of their VRC plans that deal with training on safety and risk management issues, as well as mental health issues for both staff and volunteers." *Unaffiliated Volunteer Management: Florida's Record-breaking 2004 Hurricane Season*, p. 20.
www.volunteerflorida.org/emergencymanagement/docs/2008/2004season.pdf
- Volunteer San Diego also offers tips on managing stress in the VRC. See *Lessons Learned from the 2007 Wildfires* in the Attachments.

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- According to Patricia Davis with Volunteer San Diego (pdavis@volunteersandiego.org):

“**What steps can you take to avoid burnout?** We have all seen our co-workers push themselves too far while under stress. You need to make sure that you, your staff, and your volunteers get adequate rest. It is so important to self-monitor and invite someone you trust to remind you - or if need be, order you - to take a break. Otherwise, you can become mentally stale or exhaust the wellsprings of clear thinking you need to manage the crisis. Many emergency response agencies include in their planning the engagement of mental health professionals. It is vitally important that crisis counseling be available during a catastrophic event, especially one with a significant loss of life. Get those resources on tap ahead of time.”

- “Once we began the de-briefing process with staff, we realized we needed to address staff mental health not just after the response, but build supports into our system ahead of time. We plan to expand the safety officer function to include a staff mental health component, such as watching for burn-out, initiating stress reduction and crisis management support during the activation period. . . . **Pro-actively plan for staff mental health needs and build support into your plan.**”
Source: 1998 El Nino Winter Storm Response, Volunteer Center of San Mateo County
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Conclusion

The field of disaster volunteerism has experienced tremendous growth and change over the past decade. Because of the good work of HandsOn Action Centers in communities across the nation, spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers are finally being perceived not as a problem but as a valuable resource. New doors have opened and local government-HandsOn Action Center partnerships are blooming. Stories abound of HandsOn Action Center response to disasters – San Diego wildfires, Ohio floods, and hurricanes in Florida and the Gulf Coast, to name a few – and highlight amazing results with limited resources. HandsOn Action Center disaster operations models and training curricula have been developed in several states and shared with other parts of the country. These are all very good things.

And yet there is more to be done. We look forward to a time when:

- Terminology, training, tools and resources are consistent throughout the country, enhancing the ability of HandsOn Action Centers to communicate with, coordinate with, and support one another
- Consistent messaging and education about spontaneous volunteers is disseminated by all stakeholders
- A national mutual aid system ensures that a HandsOn Action Center responding to a local disaster receives support from a network of experienced Centers
- Resource typing for spontaneous volunteers is in place, helping HandsOn Action Centers and government agencies more easily communicate and deploy volunteer resources
- HandsOn Action Centers, in partnership with local government, are more fully tapping technology resources to strengthen their planning and response capabilities
- Best practices are easily and widely shared among HandsOn Action Centers, so that the field continues to respond creatively and wisely to new challenges

While there is more to do, their spirit of collaboration and ability to learn from the past positions HandsOn Action Centers to continue making significant and lasting contributions to the field of emergency management and especially to their communities in times of disaster.



List of Attachments

The following attachments are shared by HandsOn Network, HandsOn Action Centers, and other partners:

California Volunteers

- Emergency Volunteer Center Exercise
- When Disaster Strikes: Getting Volunteer Resources to the Right Place at the Right Time (PPT)

HandsOn Network

- Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disaster (PDF)
- Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disaster (PPT)

New York Cares

- Overview of New York City's Spontaneous Volunteer Plan (PPT)
- MOU between New York Cares and City of New York

Seminole Community Volunteer Program

- Florida Association of Volunteer Centers Mutual Aid agreement
- Seminole County Florida VRC Floor Plan
- Request for Volunteers from VRC
- VRC Safety Briefing for Volunteers Sample
- Disaster Volunteer Referral Form
- Daily VRC Procession Log
- Work Site Sign In Record
- VRC Volunteers Sign In Record

Volunteer Center Of Northwest Ohio

- Putnam County FLOOD of 2007

The Volunteer Center Serving Howard County

- Agency Checklist before Contacting the Volunteer Center
- Volunteer Mobilization Center Manager Forms
- Agreement between Howard County and the Volunteer Center
- Volunteer Matrix

Volunteer Center of Silicon Valley

- Volunteer Opportunities form
- Sample PSA for Volunteer Outreach Workers to Homeless Needed



Volunteer Center of Sonoma County

- Down by the Bayou
- Communication Log
- Daily Volunteer Sign In Sheet
- VRC/Phone Bank Daily Log
- Volunteers Referred Fax Log
- ICS Command Structure
- Maximizing Volunteers as a Resource During Disaster (manual)
- Volunteer Center of Sonoma County Emergency Response Plan (MOU)
- VOAD Green Slime Exercise

Volunteer Center of Southern Arizona

- State of Arizona Emergency Response and Recovery Plan - Volunteer Management Support Annex
- Pima County - Volunteer and Donations Management Annex
- Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Roles (program description)

Volunteer San Diego

- Facilities Checklist for VRC
- Facility Use agreement for VRC (draft)
- Incident Command System (PPT)
- Internet Tips for VRCs
- Lessons Learned from the 2007 Wildfires
- Press Release Sandbagging
- Press Release Volunteers Needed

Volunteer Centers of California

- How to Manage a Good Thing—Spontaneous Volunteers in Disaster (PPT)
- Emergency Volunteer Centers (PPT)
- Management of Spontaneous Volunteers (PPT)
- MOU with Counties Template
- Volunteer Centers of California Mutual Aid Agreement

Other Sources

- Contract for Consulting Services (Emergency Volunteer Coordinator)
- COOP for Nonprofit Human Service Providers (PPT)
- Position Description for Disaster Program Manager (sample)
- Guidelines Referring Volunteers in Times of Disaster (sample)
- Memorandum of Understanding for Volunteer Center (sample)
- Quick Start Guide for Set Up and Operation of Emergency Volunteer Center
- Should Your Center Make Referrals to Individuals

About HandsOn Network

POINTS OF LIGHT INSTITUTE



Points of Light Institute was created by the merger of the Points of Light Foundation and Hands On Network in August 2007. The result is a powerful, integrated national organization with a global focus to

redefine volunteerism and civic engagement for the 21st century, putting people at the center of community problem solving. Our vision is that one day every person will discover their power to make a difference, creating healthy communities in vibrant democracies around the world. To realize this vision, Points of Light Institute operates three dynamic business units that share a mission to equip, mobilize and inspire people to take action that changes the world: HandsOn Network, MissionFish and the Civic Incubator.

HandsOn Network equips, mobilizes and inspires people to take action that changes the world. Our Network, now the largest in the nation, is leading people from impulse to action, turning their ideas for change into real projects like building wheel chair ramps, watershed protection projects and tutoring programs - action that addresses critical issues facing our communities, our nation and our world. The Network includes over 250 affiliates—that serve in all 50 states and in nine countries. In 2007 alone, these HandsOn Action Centers helped to deliver more than 33 million hours of volunteer service valued at 1.2 billion dollars.



Hands On
NETWORK



Notes



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