



**DEEPSOUTH  
CENTER FOR**  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

# Emergency Preparedness Training for Volunteers, Community and Faith-based Organizations



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*Your Environment. Your Health.*

DEEP SOUTH CENTER FOR  
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# Deep South Center

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The Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ) was founded by Dr. Beverly Wright in 1992 in collaboration with community environmental groups and other universities within the Southern region to advance environmental justice. Since this time, the Center has become a powerful resource for environmental justice research, education, as well as health and safety training for environmental careers.





The advent of natural disasters over the last decade :

- Has put a strain on our federal, state, and local government resources.
- Resulting in an inefficient and slow to respond Government
- This inefficiency has caused volunteer groups help fill the voids
- Untrained or poorly trained individuals can cause additional safety issues

Too **many** workers, vehicles, and convergent **volunteers** at the scene of a **disaster** can create congestion and interfere with response activities, and the need to manage ... The verification process also checks the **training** and **skills** of the individual to assure that they possess the **skills** they say they do



# Objectives

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- The Need for Volunteers, Community and Faith-Based Organization (VCFBO)
- The Guideline and Regulations
- The Volunteers, Community and Faith-Based Organization: The Challenge
- The Importance of Safety Training

***Disaster VCFBO are  
priceless but  
disaster survivors are our  
purpose.”***

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While it is always valuable for VCFBO to have a positive experience, the needs of the disaster survivors and those of the affected community must take precedence over these organizations.

# Red Cross Numbers

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- As of August 29, 2016 more than 2,900 Red Cross volunteers deployed for Louisiana flooding from all 50 states & territories
- More than 6,300 volunteers deploy in less than two months, two and half times the number called upon by this point in 2015
- Red Cross bracing for disaster volunteer deployment spike from previous year of more than 24,000 deployments

# National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)

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- **National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)** serves as the primary point of contact for voluntary organization coordination in FEMA's National Response Coordination Center, supporting Emergency Support Function 6 (Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services) under the National Response Framework.
- **National VOAD** members, including voluntary, non-profit and faith-based organizations, are working closely with affected communities to provide mobile feeding in areas where there are power outages, to assist with debris removal, and as needed, to support with temporary roofing for disaster survivors.

# Other Volunteer and Faith-Based Organizations

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- **Salvation Army** reports serving more than half a million meals to people who have been displaced or have had their homes damaged by Hurricane Irma in south-eastern states of the United States. This is in addition to the church and charity's ongoing emergency response in many of the Caribbean islands, and in reaction to Hurricane Harvey in Texas.
- **Habitat for Humanity International** reported local Habitats are checking on homes and conducting assessments in their communities, and are helping families with long-term hurricane recovery.

# Other Volunteer and Faith-Based Organizations

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- **NECHAMA**, a Jewish non-profit social service organization, has mobilized hundreds of students to aid in post-disaster rebuilding efforts across the United States. Through partnerships with local communal organizations, their volunteers assist in all aspects of recovery including: assisting in cleaning up, removing debris, cleaning and sanitizing homes, hanging drywall, painting, flooring, and more.
- **United Way** is standing up Volunteer Reception Centers to coordinate unaffiliated volunteers from other states, and tie them in with established organizations performing response and recovery operations.

# The Affected

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- No community is immune to the havoc and devastation caused by disaster. When disaster strikes, emergency response and voluntary agencies automatically mobilize. Each has a specific role to help ensure a community's successful response to and recovery from the disaster's devastation.
- Yet, one element within the present system continues to challenge this process: Spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers.

# The Influx

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These volunteers are eager to respond and contribute to the community's recovery, but usually lack the training to help them be effective in these roles.

Unaffiliated volunteers often arrive on-site in numbers too great for traditional disaster responders to manage as they try to meet the immediate needs of communities affected by disaster.

# The Challenge

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The challenge, therefore, is reconciling the desire to help felt by unaffiliated volunteers with the need of responder's to do their jobs unencumbered by the responsibility of managing volunteers.

# The Challenge

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- 42 percent of volunteers organization reported that volunteers had been injured most disaster response
- Only two organizations, surveyed by John Hopkins School of Public Health, said always made sure that the volunteers they tapped in a disaster had prior response training
- Accepting any legal liability for unsolicited volunteers

# Do More Harm

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Their self-sacrifice is inspiring, but results of a study suggest these unsolicited or "spontaneous" volunteers may be putting themselves and others at risk for injury and, in rare cases, death as a result of their lack of training in safe and proper disaster response.

# Managing Risks

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Some basic steps for managing risk for disaster volunteers include:

- **Create a position description.** When taking requests for volunteers from agencies, be clear what skills and abilities are required to ensure that appropriate volunteers are placed.
- **Use a volunteer application.** Basic information should be gathered about volunteers to ensure they are who they say they are and they have the skills necessary to safely perform the tasks they are assigned.
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# Managing Risks

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**Provide a safety training and keep records.** Make sure volunteers understand basic safety procedures and have acknowledged that they received this training. This can protect the organization in the event that something happens

Interview all potential volunteers. Interviews are an excellent way to verify information given on volunteer applications and to get a sense of the volunteering individual's intentions. Many volunteer organizations will not make referrals to disaster placement over the phone or Internet without a face-to-face interview. Sadly, not all volunteers have good intentions.

# Managing Risks

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- Be particularly cautious when placing volunteers in assignments working with vulnerable populations, such as children or the elderly. Also, volunteers' physical health and abilities should be appropriate to the location and requirements of volunteer assignments. Use common sense in placement, as some volunteer roles are more risky than others.
- Include a Release of Liability form in the volunteer application. Make sure volunteers understand the risks they may encounter in a disaster service assignment by including a Release of Liability directly on the volunteer application form and reviewing it with potential volunteers during the interview

# Training Guidelines for VCFBOs

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- NIEHS – Safety Awareness for Responders to Hurricanes And Other Disasters: Protecting Yourself While Helping Others
- HAZWOPER - 29CFR1910.120, - Volunteers

# Training Objectives

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- Identify the hazards in the field
- Explain how to protect yourself from these hazards
- Increase safety and health awareness



Titus 3: 14

## Safety Awareness for Responders to Hurricanes And Other Disasters: Protecting Yourself While Helping Others



# Training Talking Points

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1. Importance of safety training
2. Life safety hazards
3. Post disaster hazards associated with debris cleanup
4. Dealing with stress





# WHY

Hard on the body, soul and spirit

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# Physical Hazards and Health Hazards

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- Heat,
- Electrical,
- Falls
- Back safety
- Animal, snake, insect bites and poisonous plants



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“Understanding how to train  
Volunteers and Faith-Based  
Community in disaster is a life’s  
journey not a destination”!

# Sources

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- FEMA - Volunteers Play Integral Role in Disaster Relief and Recovery Efforts, September 18, 2017;
- American Red Cross: Across the Nation: Red Cross Deploys Record Number of Volunteers for Disaster Response, August 2016
- NIEHS, Safety Awareness for Responders to Hurricanes And Other Disasters;
- OSHA, Hazardous Waste and Operation, Recovery, 29CFR1910.120(e)

# Sources

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- National Service: Volunteer Management and Disaster Response,
- Florida Volunteer Management Guide:
- Johns Hopkins Medicine: Untrained volunteers may do harm as well as good during disasters, 2014
- Managing Spontaneous Volunteers; Risk Management, Cooperation for National & Community Service



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