

BE PREPARED: MANAGING VOLUNTEERS IN EMERGENCIES

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

This Guide has been produced by Volunteering ACT with the support of a grant from the ACT Government and the Commonwealth under the Natural Disaster Resilience Program.

Volunteering ACT is proudly managed by Volunteering and Contact ACT. We are part of a nationwide network of likeminded organisations working across all States and Territories in Australia. This network includes the national peak body for volunteering, Volunteering Australia.



This Guide has been proudly endorsed by **Volunteering Australia.**



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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Volunteers play a critical role in dealing with emergencies and their aftermath in Australia. This Guide is part of a Natural Disaster Resilience Program project designed to raise awareness of the value of volunteers in times of crisis, and to encourage their better management.

The project included consultations with ten volunteer involving organisations in the ACT, who have a role in the Territory's Community Recovery Plan, to review volunteer management practices and provide advice on improvements. We also received constructive feedback and advice from an Advisory Committee with representation from several State-based organisations, the ACT Government and Volunteering Australia. Information on the agencies and individuals consulted can be found at Appendix A: Project Consultations. This Guide reflects the outcomes of those consultations.

The Guide also includes learnings from reviews and analyses of responses to major Australian and international disasters. Please reference Appendix B: Case Studies for further information.

While preparation of this Guide was undertaken by Volunteering ACT and contains references to ACT systems and processes, the key message is generic and applicable to all volunteer involving organisations across Australia. That message is: 'Be Prepared.' Rather than waiting until an emergency strikes, start planning now for how your organisation can best utilise the 'surge capacity' of spontaneous volunteers, particularly during the response and recovery phases of an emergency.

There are two distinct types of emergency volunteering:

1. Trained volunteers: volunteers who are engaged with an organisation outside of an emergency and who are trained to undertake a specific role in the response or recovery phase. Examples include State Emergency Service volunteers.

2. Spontaneous volunteers: people who volunteer directly in response to emergency situations. They may have no prior involvement with the organisation they volunteer with and may not have undergone organisation-specific induction or training.

Following an introductory section, this Guide is divided into two parts, discussing first the management of trained volunteers, and then identifying the key elements for an organisational plan for the efficient and effective management of spontaneous volunteers. The Guide also includes checklists and a section listing a range of strategic and practical resources and informative references.

We recommend the use of this Guide as a starting point for organisations to assess their level of preparedness for engaging volunteers in an emergency.

This Guide is by way of general information and is designed for discretionary use. It does not replace the requirement for organisations to obtain specific operational, legal, insurance or other advice in particular circumstances.

Be Prepared: Managing Volunteers in Emergencies is one in a series of Guides produced by Volunteering ACT to promote and support volunteering in the Canberra Region. It is readily accessible from the publications section of our website: www.volunteeringact.org.au

Maureen Cane
CEO, Volunteering and Contact ACT
October 2015

INTRODUCTION

Volunteering ACT is the peak body for volunteering and the volunteer resource centre for the Canberra Region.

Our primary function is to actively link people interested in becoming volunteers to vacant volunteering opportunities. These roles are advertised through us by our membership base of over 220 volunteer involving organisations.

As part of the ACT Community Recovery Sub-Plan 2015, Volunteering ACT has the responsibility to act as the central agency for registration of offers of assistance from individuals who want to volunteer in disaster preparation, response and recovery activities. This includes responsibility for the coordination of spontaneous volunteers.

“ Our primary function is to actively link people interested in becoming volunteers to vacant volunteering opportunities. ”

Spontaneous volunteers may have no prior volunteer experience or involvement in volunteering. Primarily they come forward as individuals or sometimes as participants in an emergent group, collectively undertaking a voluntary activity with a desire to help.

To effectively manage these spontaneous and other offers of assistance, Volunteering ACT delivers the Emergency Volunteering and Community Response to Extreme Weather service (EV CREW), a specialised volunteer registration, management and referral system.

The EV CREW system was designed and developed by Volunteering ACT's counterpart volunteering peak body Volunteering Queensland. EV CREW was operationalised during the Queensland Floods disaster of 2013 and has been tested many times since. EV CREW is the primary mechanism for engaging and managing spontaneous volunteers in an emergency in the ACT, outside pre-existing roles with specific emergency response agencies.

EV CREW facilitates basic matching of a registered person's skills, qualifications, location and any relevant equipment/transport they may be able to provide, with the volunteering roles that become available during an emergency. By registering volunteering roles with EV CREW volunteer involving organisations requesting additional help can receive volunteer support to meet community needs, whilst not duplicating the work of other agencies.

We encourage individuals to register with EV CREW and organisations, particularly those involved in emergency response and recovery efforts, to actively plan in anticipation of emergencies so that the generosity of committed spontaneous volunteers can be effectively utilised for the good of affected communities.

THE RESPONSE AND RECOVERY CONTEXT

This part of the Guide offers an environmental scan of principles, practices, learnings and technological developments, impacting on the effective engagement and management of spontaneous volunteers in emergencies.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Disaster management in Australia is predicated on four fundamental principles:

• Prevention

The identification of hazards and action to reduce the impact of those hazards in an emergency

• Preparedness

Ongoing activities that encourage people to plan, prepare and train for emergency situations

• Response

Action to respond to the immediate needs of an emergency situation

• Recovery

Restoration, rebuilding, and reduction of future risk over the longer term.

Volunteers are a key resource in all four stages of disaster management, particularly the volunteers involved in government emergency management agencies and non-government organisations. For example, trained volunteers with the State Emergency Service assist in pre-emergency mitigation of storm, water, and fire risks.

In addition, experience demonstrates that throughout the emergency management cycle there are several non-government organisations which, through trained and spontaneous volunteers, offer diverse and vital supports, often when citizens are in a heightened emotional state and tasks are emergent in nature.

This Guide's main focus is on the preparedness principle: considering how volunteer involving organisations can best prepare for an emergency so that all volunteers – both trained and spontaneous – are constructively deployed during the response and recovery stages.

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Volunteer involving organisations are encouraged to incorporate best practice principles of volunteer management into their volunteering programs.

Volunteering Australia's National Standards for Volunteer Involvement provide practical advice on making the best of the two-way relationship that is volunteering. The Standards provide an opportunity for organisations to achieve their goals by involving volunteers in their activities, and for volunteers to make meaningful use of their time and skills, contributing to social and community outcomes. The Standards are available for download from www.volunteeringaustralia.org.

There are 8 standards addressing the key areas of volunteer involvement:

STANDARD 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The governing body and senior employees of an organisation lead and promote a positive culture towards volunteering and implement effective management systems to support volunteer involvement.

STANDARD 2: COMMITMENT TO VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

Commitment to volunteer involvement is set out through vision, planning and resourcing, and supports the organisation's strategic direction.

STANDARD 3: VOLUNTEER ROLES

Volunteers are engaged in meaningful roles that contribute to the organisation's purpose, goals and objectives.

STANDARD 4. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Volunteer recruitment and selection strategies are planned, consistent and meet the needs of the organisation and volunteers.

STANDARD 5. SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Volunteers understand their roles and gain the knowledge, skills and feedback needed to safely and effectively carry out their duties.

STANDARD 6. WORKPLACE SAFETY AND WELLBEING

The health, safety and wellbeing of volunteers is protected in the workplace.

STANDARD 7. VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Volunteer contribution, value and impact is understood, appreciated and acknowledged.

STANDARD 8. QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Effective volunteer involvement results from a system of good practice, review and continuous improvement.

The Spontaneous Volunteer Management Resource Kit 2010, developed in support of a project overseen by the Australian Red Cross and funded by the Federal Government, states that, in an emergency, 'good volunteer management practices should not be bypassed, only expedited.' The Kit is available for download from www.dss.gov.au.

EMERGENCY VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

In addition to the general volunteer management principles outlined above, particular principles apply during emergencies relevant to both trained and spontaneous volunteers.

These principles are:

- **Those affected by the disaster are always the first priority**
- **Everybody has a right to offer assistance and to feel their offer has been valued**
- **Managers/coordinators of volunteers have a right to respectfully decline offers of assistance where they are deemed inappropriate or are not needed**
- **Volunteers have a right to the support, training and direction needed to undertake their duties**
- **Volunteers have a responsibility to work collaboratively with, and follow the direction of, their managers/coordinators**

With respect to on-the-ground management of volunteers in emergencies or disasters the experience of the ten organisations consulted with as background to the production of this Guide is:

- That a team structure with team leaders is of proven value, providing for clear lines of responsibility and fostering the sharing of knowledge and skills, sound communication and a sense of belonging.
- That it is important to have in place a succession planning process to ensure continuity of the knowledge and skills base of trained volunteers.

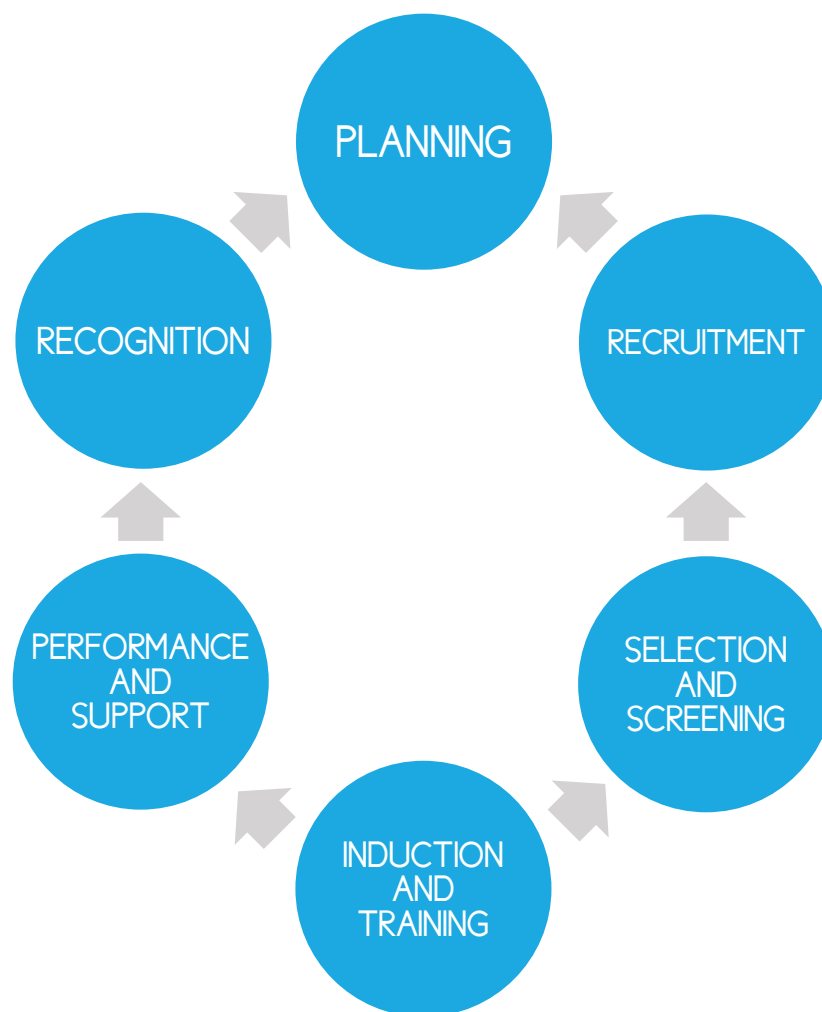
Organisations should also bear in mind learnings based on Australian and international experience of disasters that indicate:

- There can be unprecedented outpourings of support for the victims of disasters, expressed through spontaneous volunteering. In these circumstances many have never volunteered before and often they have a compelling need to 'do something'. Management of their expectations and particular awareness of the risks of deploying untrained people into unfamiliar situations are essential aspects of managing volunteers in emergencies.
- The use of members of the affected local communities as spontaneous volunteers in the response and recovery phases of an emergency can be powerful factors in fostering community resilience and solidarity, promoting personal healing and self-care, and reducing social isolation. These positives arising from otherwise distressing events should be nurtured and celebrated as part of emergency management of volunteers involved in the recovery phase in particular.
- Occasionally, spontaneous volunteers will come together to form their own innovative groups as a reaction to a unique set of needs or circumstances. Existing volunteer involving organisations should encourage collaboration and, where appropriate, affiliation with such groups in the interests of sharing information and experience of volunteer management principles and standards.
- Digital volunteering is a specific type of spontaneous volunteering available to be harnessed through social media platforms to supplement the response and recovery effort, transcending geographical barriers and enabling tasks beyond the capacity of volunteers working in the disaster zone. Organisations should consider the use of technology to enhance their communications and their capacities in emergencies, including through digital volunteering.

PLANNING FOR MANAGING VOLUNTEERS IN EMERGENCIES

This part of the Guide focusses on the most effective tool organisations have to ensure best practice in volunteer management, including the management of both trained and spontaneous volunteers in emergencies: the Volunteer Management Plan.

As illustrated below, the recommended volunteer management planning cycle has six stages, from planning to recognition.



While arguably no amount of planning will address every possible scenario that may eventuate in an emergency, we recommend the preparation of an overarching approach including specific policies and practices for the management of volunteers in emergencies.

We recommend utilising the planning cycle headings for guidance under which key pre-emergency tasks can be identified for action.

While organisations will differ on the detail, reflecting their varying services and programs, local and international experience demonstrates the value of including the cycle's elements in organisations' plans for the management of volunteers in emergencies.

MANAGEMENT OF TRAINED EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERS

CONSULTATIONS

In 2014-15 Volunteering ACT consulted with ten volunteer involving organisations who have responsibilities in an emergency under the ACT Community Recovery Plan. The learnings from these consultations shaped the recommendations in this section of the Guide.

Each of the organisations we consulted with utilise volunteers year round and these volunteers receive induction and training relevant to their specific roles. The consultations revealed several similarities between each organisation, including that each organisation had robust volunteer management processes in place.

The key similarity between the ten organisations was the emphasis on the value of teams within their volunteering programs. Each organisation had implemented a team structure, which aided in communication between members, allowed people to feel more involved, and promoted more robust programs through the sharing of knowledge and skills.

Another observation was that many of the organisations did not have issues with volunteer retention, with many organisations noting that their volunteering programs were at capacity. This is due, in part, to the reputation of those organisations and the nature of the work undertaken by their volunteers. It further evidences the fact that there is a strong community interest in emergency volunteering outside emergency situations.

One of the shortcomings identified through the consultations was that many organisations lacked succession planning, with most relying on a core cohort of volunteers. Volunteering ACT made recommendations that succession planning be instituted to ensure ongoing sustainability.

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PLAN

A volunteer management plan is a comprehensive outline of the steps involved in engaging volunteers. The steps include: planning, recruitment, selection and screening, induction, training and development, retention, and recognition.

This section outlines some effective tools to be used in each stage of the volunteer management plan when engaging and managing trained emergency volunteers. We suggest implementing each stage to ensure a comprehensive approach to volunteer engagement.

Planning

This phase is undertaken prior to recruitment and covers the development of your organisation's overall volunteer engagement strategy. This includes the design of volunteer roles, including the position description.

During the planning phase you should consider how the volunteer roles you have developed adhere to the aforementioned National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, and how they reflect your organisation's broader mission and objectives.

Position Descriptions

A written position description is an organisation's most valuable tool for sourcing and recruiting suitable volunteers.

The position description should cover important information including the role description, selection criteria, chain of responsibility, location, time commitment, organisational values and expectations, and any additional information that may be specific to the role, including such things as whether volunteers need specific training or if there are uniform requirements for the role.

A sample position description utilised by the Australian Red Cross ACT can be found at Appendix C: Red Cross Position Description.

RECRUITMENT

The recruitment phase of the volunteer management plan covers the identification of advertising and recruitment strategies. The development of your position description during the planning phase will assist you in marketing the role to prospective volunteers.

Advertising

There are a variety of mediums that can be used for advertising volunteer roles. Traditional methods such as word-of-mouth and promotion through personal networks are still successful. There are also a variety of online platforms that may be utilised, including your organisation's website and social media platforms.

Volunteering ACT has an online volunteer referral service, which member organisations are able to use to advertise volunteer positions on our website. The referral service is a useful tool for attracting a diverse range of applicants, and is part of a national database that underpins Go Volunteer and SEEK Volunteer.

Volunteer Intake

Volunteer intake can be rolling or periodic, depending on your organisation's needs. For organisations with complex selection processes and/or limited staff resources, periodic intakes may be the best option because recruitment, induction and training can be aligned according to a set schedule and planned accordingly. Rolling intake is appropriate when there are sufficient volunteer coordination resources to train new volunteers on an ongoing basis, and there is enough work for volunteers to do year-round.

SELECTION AND SCREENING

Pre-Interview Screening

Sometimes it may be appropriate to undertake pre-interview screening of applicants to assess their eligibility for volunteering roles. Such screening processes may include requesting a CV from applicants, or conducting an informal telephone interview. Pre-interview screening can be a good method of reducing the human resourcing impact of conducting interviews for every applicant.

Interviews

Interviews are integral to ensuring that the right person is matched to the right role. All applicants should be interviewed before being offered a volunteer role where this is appropriate and practicable.

Due to the stretched nature of human resources for some organisations, conducting individual interviews may not be a realistic goal. It may be valuable to conduct group interviews to assess the suitability of all applicants in the event that individual interviews are not possible or necessary. If volunteers work in teams or divisions, it may also be a good idea to involve team leaders in the interview process. This relieves pressure on the Volunteer Coordinator, and allows team leaders to have input into the selection of the volunteers that they will be supervising.

Mandatory Background Checks

Many volunteering roles will require mandatory background checks such as a National Police Check. In addition, the ACT now has a Working with Vulnerable People Scheme that aims to reduce the risk of harm or neglect to vulnerable people in the ACT. Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) checks are comprised of both a National Police Check and a Working with Children Check. WWVP checks are free to obtain for volunteers.

If a background check is required in order for a volunteer to undertake their role it is recommended that applicants be asked to obtain checks after they have been offered a role. This enables applicants to avoid having to complete high volumes of paperwork before being formally accepted into a role.

INDUCTION

Orientation

Volunteers should receive a full induction following their formal engagement with your organisation. Utilising an induction checklist ensures a consistent approach and guarantees all aspects of induction are covered, including organisational expectations and work health and safety requirements. An induction also informs volunteers where important amenities and facilities in the workplace are located.

In large organisations it may be appropriate for two stages of induction to occur. The first may be a general organisational induction by the Volunteer Coordinator, and the second may be an induction specific to the role that the volunteer will be undertaking, conducted by their direct supervisor. If a face-to-face induction is mandatory this should be stated in the position description.

Online inductions can also be a useful tool as they provide comprehensive information to the volunteer, which can be completed in the volunteer's own time.

Code of Conduct

Volunteers should sign up to your organisation's Code of Conduct. This ensures that the volunteer understand the organisation's values, and that behavioural expectations are clearly understood from the outset. The Code of Conduct is also a useful tool for performance management on an ongoing basis.

Volunteer Assignment Agreement

A volunteer assignment agreement is an overarching document that covers the rights and responsibilities of both the volunteer and the organisation. It is a useful tool for performance management, provides a definitive timeframe for the volunteer's engagement, and ensures that expectations are met by both parties.

Volunteer assignment agreements also reduce the amount of paperwork that volunteers are required to complete, by referring to all necessary documentation in one place and requiring one acknowledgement from the volunteer.

An example Volunteer Assignment Agreement can be found at Appendix D: Volunteer Assignment Agreement.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Initial Training

Volunteers should receive any essential training at the commencement of their role. Some organisations may have an accreditation process, which requires their volunteers to complete mandatory training in order to become an active team member. If your organisation has specific intake periods throughout the year, a training calendar can be developed to coincide with your volunteer recruitment.

“ Providing ongoing development opportunities can be a great way to recognise the contribution of volunteers, and further enhance retention. ”

Ongoing Development

Providing ongoing development opportunities can be a great way to recognise the contribution of volunteers, and further enhance retention. In-house training can be a cost effective way of providing such development opportunities, as can developing partnerships with other likeminded organisations.

Reflection and evaluation are also important parts of professional and organisational development. In an emergency situation debriefing following an activation of your volunteer workforce is an essential aspect of the volunteer management cycle. The purpose of debriefing is to learn from the activation experience and put systems in place to prevent any identified problems from reoccurring. A survey may be a useful tool for getting in-depth feedback from volunteers. It is integral to look after the emotional health and wellbeing of volunteers, and refer anyone experiencing emotional distress to an appropriate service.

A group debriefing checklist can be found at Appendix E: Group Debriefing Checklist.

RETENTION

Retention refers to an organisation's ability to maintain an adequate volunteer capacity to continue its operations, and receive a return on the investment made in recruiting and training volunteers. It involves having a recruitment strategy that replenishes the volunteer pool as it depletes due to natural attrition, and providing a positive working environment that allows for volunteers to build relationships with other staff. The suggestions that follow have been shown to enhance volunteer management, thus contributing to good retention outcomes.

Working in a team

Working in a team is a great way to promote cohesion amongst volunteers and to use human resources efficiently. It also allows for the creation of roles with specific responsibilities. Examples of these roles include team leaders, general members, community education officers, administration officers, equipment officers, and any other relevant executive or committee position such as Chair or Secretary. Having a diverse range of roles provides more opportunities for development and progression, which can improve volunteer retention.

Mentoring

Mentoring provides an opportunity for leadership development, skills sharing and assists with succession planning. A formal mentoring program may be a good retention strategy and may further enhance your volunteering program.

Communication

Given that trained emergency volunteers may be inactive for long periods of time it is important to keep them engaged through good communication. A good starting point is a periodic organisational newsletter that updates volunteers of any developments, upcoming events, or further training opportunities.

If a team structure is utilised it is a good idea for team leaders to be responsible for some level of communication. For example, all communication related to meetings could be disseminated by team leaders, and communication relating to organisational developments could be disseminated by senior staff.

RECOGNITION

Volunteer recognition is an integral aspect of the volunteer management cycle. Depending on the resources of your organisation such recognition may range from verbal appreciation, to small gifts, to volunteer recognition events. Informal and ongoing avenues of recognition are also essential and formal recognition should not replace the informal gestures of thanks.

MANAGEMENT OF SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS

Spontaneous volunteers often have valuable skillsets that can be utilised in the response and recovery phases of an emergency. While many of the principles underpinning the management of spontaneous volunteers are the same as for managing trained volunteers, your organisation's policies and procedures may require adaptation to ensure they are appropriate in an emergency.

The above can be achieved by developing an organisational policy on the involvement of spontaneous volunteers prior to an emergency situation arising, with the fundamental question being whether or not the engagement of spontaneous volunteers in an emergency is appropriate for your organisation. Such a policy will ensure good practice and also assist in managing the expectations and performance of volunteers once they are engaged.

Policy development should take into account a range of relevant matters including:

- Consideration of where your organisation fits into or might fit into the local/regional/state emergency framework.
- Position descriptions: consider what roles are appropriate for spontaneous volunteers to undertake. If existing roles are not suitable, it may be appropriate to review and adapt them to be more flexible.
- Insurance: review your volunteer insurance, in particular to check how many volunteers your organisation can engage at one time and in one situation.
- Risk analysis: what risks can you foresee and what mitigation strategies are you able to put in place?
- Background checking: which roles require background checks and how will these checks be carried out?
- Induction: what will the induction consist of and who will carry it out?
- Training: do any of the roles require specific training and who will be responsible for this?
- Coordination: who will be responsible for coordinating and supervising volunteers?
- Health and safety: who is responsible for checking the welfare of volunteers and ensuring they comply with safe practices including any relevant legislation?
- Debriefing: what things should be covered in a debriefing following an activation, when will a debriefing occur, and who will carry it out?

Your organisation might also take into consideration the following observations which are based on national and international experience of the management of spontaneous volunteers. To inform your planning of the management of spontaneous volunteers in an emergency please see Appendix F: Spontaneous Emergency Volunteer Management Plan Checklist.

If an emergency is declared and volunteers are required to fill various roles an organisation may opt to undertake in-house recruitment, capitalising on their current volunteer workforce through adaptation of their usual duties, or contacting former volunteers or people with proven experience with the organisation. Such recruitment offers the advantage of familiarity with an organisation's culture and processes, thus expediting induction and training.

Where more volunteers are needed, it is generally not advisable to put out a public call for volunteers. This can lead to organisations being overwhelmed by offers of assistance, mixed messages about the perceived need for volunteers, and dissatisfaction on the part of those not offered roles. In the event an organisation is approached by more volunteers than needed, they should be referred to their local volunteering peak body where an alternative role may be sourced with another organisation.

Organisations in the ACT can notify their capacity/interest in offering tasks for volunteers to Volunteering ACT through EV CREW. Organisations can register any number of campaigns (tasks requiring volunteers). As set out in the ACT Community Recovery Sub-Plan at times of disaster Volunteering ACT will:

- Activate the Emergency Volunteering Coordination Centre, utilising the EV CREW system. This centre will be the central coordinating point for incoming requests from organisations who are seeking volunteers, as well as from individuals who are pledging to offer their time and assistance; and,
- Act as an information provider and a gateway to easily disseminate information to the general public and registered emergency volunteers of progress and areas where assistance may be needed.

SELECTION AND SCREENING

The selection and screening process for spontaneous volunteers will be greatly facilitated by the mapping of likely volunteer roles within a risk assessment framework.

For some roles there may be little or no formal process required other than registration of personal details, but more complex roles might involve interactions with vulnerable people and/or exposure to confidential information. In those situations it is important to identify these requirements up front as part of pre-planning so that the need to undertake background checks or the requirement for volunteers to have specific knowledge or experience is clearly identified and documented.

Organisations should also consider whether their need for additional volunteers in emergency/disaster situations could provide opportunities for young people or people from diverse backgrounds, for example through assisting with social media or language interpreting/translation.

In an emergency, and where appropriate, the selection and screening processes may blend with induction and training.

INDUCTION AND TRAINING

All volunteers should receive some form of induction and training before undertaking their voluntary service, with the level of detail and instruction being dictated by the nature of the roles in question.

At a minimum, all volunteers should be given a site orientation, be introduced to their supervisor, receive information on workplace safety, be instructed on their role/job description, and be instructed on how to use any relevant equipment.

All volunteers should be made aware of the supports available to them through the duration of their volunteering activity, both operational and with respect to their health and wellbeing.

Communication protocols should be clearly explained to volunteers, including the organisation's policies towards, and use of, social media. With respect to media enquiries it is recommended that volunteers should not talk on behalf of an organisation; rather any media enquiries should be directed to a team leader or manager. This ensures consistency in messaging and takes account of official communications from the authority coordinating the response to the emergency or disaster.

PERFORMANCE AND SUPPORT

All volunteers should be provided with ongoing feedback on their contribution to the achievement of the organisation's objectives.

An essential aspect of performance and support of volunteers is debriefing. This can be conducted in a group situation, which may foster resilience by allowing individuals to bond over their volunteering experiences. It can also be undertaken on an individual basis, especially for those individuals susceptible to trauma through emotional response.

Organisations should put in place a formal process for referring volunteers to specialist services, such as counselling, where necessary and appropriate.

As part of performance and support, organisations should utilise team structures. These can assist with skills/professional development and succession planning, allowing experienced volunteers to take up leadership positions and planning for exiting volunteers being replaced by new recruits. Succession planning may assist with retention of volunteers in an organisation, as a return on an organisation's investment in the effective management of their volunteers.

RECOGNITION

Volunteer recognition concludes the volunteer management planning cycle and should be given in a timely and efficient manner. Volunteers should be thanked for the work they are performing and should be encouraged to continue volunteering.

Sharing stories with fellow volunteers can be a cathartic, rewarding experience, which may help to validate an individual's experience and confirm the scope and value of their contribution to the overall recovery effort.

Sharing positive volunteering experiences with friends and family is affirming and encourages others to volunteer.

Informal events, such as an end-of-the-shift BBQ and formal volunteer recognition events offer opportunities for teams and groups to reminisce collectively on their experiences and provide a form of closure, contributing to the health and wellbeing of the volunteers.

The Emergency Spontaneous Management and Induction and Training checklists at Appendix G: Spontaneous Emergency Volunteer Management Induction and Training Checklist suggest the questions organisations might ask to translate the above key elements into practical action before, during, and after an emergency.

CONCLUSION

This Guide is designed to assist volunteer involving organisations with trained volunteers and those contemplating the utilisation of spontaneous volunteers' desire, enthusiasm, skills and energy at times of crisis.

As stated at the beginning, the message is to 'Be Prepared' – in particular to commit the time and effort in working through the possible roles that could be played by spontaneous volunteers in your organisation in an emergency, and how such people should be effectively managed.

Bearing in mind the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement and best practice principles of emergency volunteering management, we recommend following the volunteer management planning cycle for guidance on identifying pre-emergency tasks deserving of action.

Doubtless this time and effort will have been well-spent if your organisation is ready to convert the willingness of individuals to 'do something' into practical assistance of value to your community in times of need.

APPENDIX A: PROJECT CONSULTATIONS

VOLUNTEERING ACT THANKS THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS FOR PARTICIPATING IN CONSULTATIONS TO REVIEW VOLUNTEERING MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND PROVIDE ADVICE ON IMPROVEMENTS:

ACT Community Fire Unit
ACT Rural Fire Service
ACT State Emergency Service
Anglicare NSW South, NSW West & ACT
Australian Red Cross ACT
Communities@Work
Lifeline Canberra
St John Ambulance ACT
St Vincent de Paul Society
The Salvation Army

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APPENDIX B: CASE STUDIES

What constitutes good practice volunteer management may be different during 'peacetime' than in times of crisis. The following case studies provide an insight into the particular nuances of managing volunteers in situations where there is often a heightened emotional state and the tasks being undertaken are emergent in nature. The case studies also highlight the positive impact that spontaneous volunteers and emergent groups can have, further demonstrating the need to consider how they are acknowledged and integrated into response and recovery activities.

KOBE EARTHQUAKE

The Kobe Earthquake of January 1995 was a catastrophic natural disaster that caused the deaths of 6,279 people. A further 34,900 people were injured and more than 300,000 persons lost their homes. Studies conducted following the earthquake concluded that Kobe was not prepared for a major earthquake, further compounding the response related demands. Both spontaneous volunteering and emergent group activity were prevalent from the outset of the disaster, with an estimated 630,000 to 1.3 million people engaged in volunteer activity following the earthquake.

One of the differentiating characteristics of the Kobe earthquake disaster was the unprecedented outpouring of support from the Japanese people. For a number of reasons including cultural, familial and traditional, volunteerism is not as prevalent in Japanese society with comparison to developed Western countries such as Australia and the United States. Due to a trend of low civic participation in formal volunteering, government plans had not factored the volunteer response into their disaster management strategy prior to the 1995 earthquake.



This case study demonstrates the unique way that people perceive volunteering in the context of an emergency.



This case study demonstrates the unique way that people perceive volunteering in the context of an emergency. Barriers to volunteering become less relevant and peoples' altruistic motivations to help supersede factors that may preclude them from volunteering in other circumstances.

The Kobe earthquake highlighted the need for disaster management agencies to avoid complacency by considering the entire range of events a region may experience, not rely on recent or frequent disasters to inform prevention and preparedness. Studies conducted following the Kobe earthquake showed that there is a widespread assumption that catastrophic disasters merely require an extension of the disaster management arrangements for routine emergencies. In reality, the planning for catastrophic events should be based on worst-case scenarios where typical disaster management strategies may not suit the breadth of response activity required. Prevention and preparedness initiatives need to take into account the unique challenges caused by catastrophic disasters such as the loss of vital infrastructure or the inability of first responders to access major sites within a disaster zone.

9/11 TERRORIST ATTACKS

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks involved, “unique and compounding variables that challenged all aspects of disaster planning and management.” The disaster affected the ability of official response organisations to undertake their core response duties, and many response organisations reported being overwhelmed by volunteer demand. Red Cross, an organisation well versed in the use of emergency volunteers, reported that they had received 22,000 offers of assistance and processed 15,570 volunteers within two and a half weeks of the disaster. Research was conducted into the behavior of spontaneous volunteers who offered their assistance in the wake of the attacks. The study showed that:

- Most participants said they had never volunteered before.
- Many participants felt victimised and helpless and this contributed to their motivation to volunteer.
- The primary motivation of the volunteers surveyed was the compelling need to ‘do something’ or help in some way.

These findings have been mirrored in subsequent studies, representing some of the key differences between volunteering in emergencies and everyday volunteering. The post-9/11 study also identified that the 15,000 people who volunteered following the attacks “enhanced the effectiveness of meeting emergency response and recovery needs.” The use of local residents in the response and recovery phases of an emergency has proven to be a powerful way of fostering community resilience and creating feelings of solidarity between community members. This was echoed in the volunteer survey with participants noting they experienced increased feelings of interconnectedness and reduced social isolation.

One of the final key findings of the study showed that many volunteers provide both self-oriented and other-oriented explanations of their motivation to volunteer in an emergency. This further signifies the importance of involving local residents in the recovery of their own communities as both a way to help others, and a way to promote personal healing and self-care.

CHRISTCHURCH EARTHQUAKE

One of the most significant case studies in modern times of the powerful potential of spontaneous volunteers and emergent groups is the Student Volunteer Army that cropped up in the wake of the 2010 and 2011 Christchurch Earthquakes. The Student Volunteer Army, founded by university student Sam Johnson, was comprised of 13,000 members at its peak.⁸ These members were recruited via a Facebook page set up by Johnson, demonstrating how social media often plays a significant role in communicating information in modern disasters. Johnson commented that, “Social media was a very strong energy source following the earthquake, with self-journalism proving to be more up-to-date than mainstream media in many respects.”

“ It is imperative that we recognise the existence of spontaneous volunteers and emergent groups, and encourage them, where appropriate, to become affiliated with formalised organisations to better redirect their efforts in the response and recovery phases of an emergency. ”

Many of the characteristics of formal volunteering were embodied by the Student Volunteer Army but these processes were not formalised in a traditional way. For example, Johnson created physical spaces for assembly, structured the Army into groups and teams, and had a core mission. The Army undertook a number of low level tasks such as clearing silt, delivering chemical toilets, and laying sandbags. Interestingly, the Student Volunteer Army underwent a process of legal formalisation following the earthquake, becoming an incorporated society. This illustrates how emergency situations breed innovation, and that spontaneous volunteering is often a reaction to a unique set of circumstances. People do not circumvent process to be deviant, rather they choose to act without being encumbered by the bureaucratic processes that are often tied to formal volunteering.

Finally, the case of the Student Volunteer Army demonstrates that emergency situations often elicit a personal, emotional response in individuals who want to help and these individuals will channel their efforts through any means possible. This is often irrespective of what emergency services agencies and non-profit organisations deem as best practice. It is imperative that we recognise the existence of spontaneous volunteers and emergent groups, and encourage them, where appropriate, to become affiliated with formalised organisations to better redirect their efforts in the response and recovery phases of an emergency.

DIGITAL VOLUNTEERING

Modern day emergency management has seen heavy interaction with all forms of media, both traditional and new. Social media platforms provide a place for individuals to interact and coordinate themselves as evidenced in the above case study on the Student Volunteer Army in New Zealand.

In addition to the use of social media, digital literacy enables volunteers to contribute in new and innovative ways to provide further support to organisations and groups working on the ground. One such example is the website Tomnod that invites virtual volunteers to use satellite images to explore the Earth. Mere hours after the Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 went missing in 2014 Tomnod was accessed by millions of users who analysed satellite imagery in an attempt to find the missing aircraft. A similar crowdsourcing campaign was implemented following the 2010 Haiti earthquake where students from a Massachusetts university launched a live crisis map to document the extent of the damage.

Digital volunteering provides a useful resource that can be harnessed in an emergency to enhance response activities. The activities undertaken using technology and virtual volunteers can free up organisations and local volunteers to focus on emergent, on the ground tasks. Digital volunteering also enhances recovery by encouraging future planning, and expanding the scope of the recovery effort. One such example is a Facebook page set up following the 2011 tornadoes in the US that allowed people to share photos of items they found following the disaster. Some 2000 displaced items were able to be returned to their original owners, but an incidental benefit was that scientists were given valuable insights into how far light items can travel when dislodged by tornadoes.

These examples of digital volunteering demonstrate the innovative ways in which people are able to contribute to response and recovery activities. While a key component of resilience is the matching of local volunteers to emergent tasks, the ability to transcend geographical barriers through virtual volunteering provides the opportunity for additional tasks to be undertaken that are beyond the capacity of organisations and volunteers working in the disaster zone.

APPENDIX C: RED CROSS POSITION DESCRIPTION



POSITION DESCRIPTION – TEAM MEMBER LEVEL

| | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Position Title | Emergency REDiPlan Community Speaker | Department | Emergency Services |
| Location | NSW | Direct/Indirect Reports | Nil |
| Reports to | REDiPlan Team Leader | Date Revised | September 2013 |

■ Position Level Descriptor

An individual at the Team Member level is accountable for their own performance and contributes to team performance. People at the Team Member level do not have any people reporting to them on a day to day basis

■ Position Summary

Emergency REDiPlan is a community education program that aims to provide quality, practical and innovative information to help people make informed choices about preparing for emergencies. It promotes resilience in households and communities to the impacts of an emergency or disaster.

Community speakers are part of a network of volunteers that deliver interactive REDiPlan presentations and facilitate discussion on topics about emergency household preparedness.

■ Position Responsibilities

Key Responsibilities

- Present emergency household preparedness sessions to community members and groups, facilitating discussion on topics about emergency household preparedness
- Tailor approved Red Cross presentations to suit your presentation style and the needs of the audience
- Liaise with the REDiPlan Team Leader to organise and provide feedback on sessions
- Where possible assist in promoting the program in the local area
- Travel to community meetings and events within a designated region
- Undertake all tasks in line with Red Cross Code of Conduct and Emergency Services guidelines
- Perform all duties in a safe manner consistent with Workplace Health and Safety requirements
- Report and document all incidents or service delivery concerns in accordance with procedures
- Immediately notify REDiPlan Team Leader if you cannot attend your scheduled events
- Participate in relevant training sessions and other volunteer activities
- Attend team meetings as required

■ Position Selection Criteria

Technical Competencies

- An understanding of, and interest in Emergency Services
- Ability to speak confidently and facilitate discussion with large and small groups
- Demonstrated interpersonal skills and sensitivity when working with community members and other volunteers with varying backgrounds, beliefs, cultures and attitudes as well as vulnerable groups including seniors and people with a disability
- Basic understanding of IT, particularly DVD players

Behavioural Capabilities

- **MODEL | Demonstrate Care and Commitment | Demonstrates the Seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross Movement: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality**

Shares skills and encourages clients to learn | Acts as a practical resource to vulnerable people | Identifies and addresses needs, issues and concerns of clients | Consistently demonstrates behaviours in accordance with the Red Cross Code of Conduct

- **MODEL | Value Diversity | Promotes respect for diversity and human dignity**

Appreciates the diversity of Red Cross's people and clients | Considers the impact of words and behaviour when interacting with others | Is sensitive to others feelings | Listens to and acknowledges others thoughts and feelings

- **COLLABORATE | Engage and Influence others | Demonstrates appropriate engaging and influencing skills aligned with Red Cross objectives**

Establishes contact with others in response to specific needs | Presents a point of view in a constructive and objective manner | Makes a strong positive personal impression on others | Demonstrates a commitment to meet the needs of internal and external customers | Establishes and maintains good working relationships with internal and external stakeholders

■ General Conditions

All Red Cross staff and volunteers are required to:

- Adhere to the 7 fundamental principles of Red Cross:
Humanity | Impartiality | Neutrality | Independence | Voluntary Service | Unity | Universality
- Act at all times in accordance with the Code of Conduct
- Comply with the Work Health and Safety management system
- Undertake a police check prior to commencement and every 3 years thereafter
- Support a child safe organisation by undertaking screening for suitability to work with children, youth and vulnerable people and to comply with relevant state/territory legislative requirements
- Assist the organisation on occasion, in times of national, state or local emergencies or major disasters

APPENDIX D: VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT AGREEMENT

This agreement tells you what you can expect from us, and what we expect from you. We aim to be flexible, so please let us know if you would like to make any changes and we will do our best to accommodate them.

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------|
| THIS AGREEMENT IS BETWEEN (VOLUNTEER NAME) AND (ORGANISATION NAME) | | | |
| COMMENCEMENT DATE: | | | |
| PROGRAM OR AREA: | | | |
| POSITION: | | | |
| COMMITMENT: | HOURS PER WEEK FOR A PERIOD OF | | MONTHS |
| ASSIGNMENT PERIOD: | FROM: | | TO: |
| SUPERVISOR: | | | |
| TRAINING: | | | |

(Organisation) will:

- Introduce you to how the organisation runs, your role within the organisation as well as to provide any training required for you to carry out your role properly
- Provide regular consultations with a main point of contact to ensure that your role is adequately explained to you as well as to provide you with an opportunity to give feedback
- Give you an opportunity to participate in relevant decision making processes
- Endeavour to respect your skills, dignity and individual wishes at all times
- Reimburse you for authorised out-of-pocket expenses
- Consult and keep you informed of changes within the organisation and its associated programs
- Insure you against injury
- Provide a safe workplace in which an equal opportunities policy is enacted
- Apply our complaints procedure should any need arise.

I _____ agree to do my best to:

- Abide by the organisation's Code of Conduct and other policies and procedures
- Work reliably in accordance with my Position Description and advise my supervisor when ever I am unavailable or unable to carry out any specified duties
- Follow rules and procedures, including Work Health & Safety procedures as well as meeting Equal Opportunity Requirements
- Undertake training or evaluation as required and discuss any variation of duties or the desire to move to other tasks with my supervisor
- Agree to return any equipment related to my volunteer role upon completion of my volunteer work
- Observe confidentiality and privacy laws and not disclose any information, contracts, documents, resources or personal details to any third party whilst I am volunteering or at any time thereafter unless required to do so by law.

| | | | |
|------------------------------|--|--------------|--|
| VOLUNTEER SIGNATURE: | | DATE: | |
| SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE: | | DATE: | |

Note: This Agreement is made in good faith only and is not intended to be a legally binding contract.

APPENDIX E: GROUP DEBRIEFING CHECKLIST

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <p><u>PREPARATION</u></p> | <p>Do you have all the necessary information and paperwork for an effective debriefing of the volunteers? For example, their names, the name of their supervisor/Team Name (if any) and where they were deployed. Do you have any reports from the group's supervisor on their volunteer experience during the emergency?</p> |
| <p><u>INTRODUCTIONS</u></p> | <p>Introduce yourself including your name and your role. Describe the purpose of the group debrief:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to acknowledge and thank the volunteers for their contribution - to share feedback on what happened - to learn what went well and what did not go well, so as to manage better in future emergencies - to identify the potential for further volunteering roles for group members, and - to discuss the possibility of staging a formal recognition event, if the volunteers so choose. |
| <p><u>FEEDBACK</u></p> | <p>Would the group like to share any stories of their volunteer experiences? What went well for you as a spontaneous volunteer? What didn't go well? What did you find was the hardest/worst aspect of your volunteer experience? What was the best aspect? Did you find your induction and training appropriate and adequate in the circumstances? What could we have done better?</p> |
| <p><u>INCIDENTS</u></p> | <p>Were there any incidents we should know about? For example, were there any minor injuries, issues with equipment, miscommunications with community members, hazards you identified, or conflicts within the team or with your supervisor?</p> |
| <p><u>COMMUNICATION</u></p> | <p>What was your experience of our communications? Did they work between you and your supervisor, you and your team and you and people from other agencies? What did you think of our use of phone, text, email, and/or social media? Were there any media enquiries and did our protocol assist?</p> |
| <p><u>SUPPORTS</u></p> | <p>Encourage volunteers to advise if they would like to have a one-to-one debriefing session. Let volunteers know that you also have access to specialist support and/or further debriefing services if required.</p> |
| <p><u>RECOGNITION</u></p> | <p>Ensure the volunteers understand that your organisation appreciated their contribution during the emergency. Advise the volunteers if you will be holding a thank you event, and encourage them to provide feedback on their experience.</p> |

APPENDIX F: SPONTANEOUS EMERGENCY VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PLAN CHECKLIST.

PLANNING

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <u>POLICY FRAMEWORK</u> | How does our organisation fit into the local/regional/state emergency/disaster framework? Do we have the capability and capacity to contribute effectively to emergency response and recovery? |
| <u>RISK</u> | What risks do we run in recruiting spontaneous volunteers? Is our insurance cover adequate? Do we need advice from our insurers? What workplace health and safety hazards do we need to mitigate? |
| <u>COORDINATION</u> | Who will be responsible for coordinating spontaneous volunteers? Is there a clear statement of their responsibilities? Could a viable team structure be put in place? |
| <u>VOLUNTEER ROLES</u> | Have we mapped the tasks spontaneous volunteers would be likely to undertake? Are we clear on the skills and experience required to undertake these tasks? Do we have role/job descriptions? |
| <u>COMMUNICATIONS</u> | Do we have clear protocols in place for internal and external communications? Who is the contact person for Volunteering ACT's EV CREW system? Who is responsible for communicating with spontaneous volunteers? What use will we make of phone, text, email and social media? |
| <u>RECRUITMENT</u> | In an emergency what will our recruitment strategy be? Is in-house recruitment practical? Do we have up-to-date contact information on current and former volunteers? Are we ready to recruit through EV CREW campaigns? Do we have a Code of Conduct for spontaneous volunteers? |
| <u>SELECTION AND SCREENING</u> | Have we determined our selection and screening process? Will individuals require interviewing? What background checks will be mandatory? Are there any opportunities to engage young people or people from diverse backgrounds in suitable roles? |
| <u>INDUCTION AND TRAINING</u> | Do we have an induction and training checklist prepared? What health and wellbeing supports are in place for volunteers? Have we decided how best to communicate with our volunteers? Is our policy for handling media enquiries explicit with respect to volunteers? |
| <u>PERFORMANCE AND SUPPORT</u> | Who will be responsible for providing feedback to the volunteers on how things are going? What de-briefing will be done, how, when, and by whom? What trauma-related specialist services are in place as back-up? |
| <u>RECOGNITION</u> | How will the spontaneous volunteers' contribution be acknowledged and celebrated? What opportunities will be there be for the sharing of experiences? Will there be a formal thank you event? What will the organisation do to encourage volunteers to continue volunteering? |

APPENDIX G: SPONTANEOUS EMERGENCY VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT INDUCTION AND TRAINING CHECKLIST

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <p><u>PREPARATION</u></p> | <p>Do you have all the necessary information and paperwork for your volunteers? For example, information on the nature of the emergency, position descriptions, checking in and out sheets, communication policy, and available supports.</p> <p>Do you have all the necessary equipment for the volunteers? For example, hard hats, safety vests, overalls, gloves, cleaning equipment, food and equipment for catering, and IT devices.</p> |
| <p><u>INTRODUCTIONS</u></p> | <p>Introduce yourself including your name and your role. If not yourself, introduce the volunteers' supervisor. If time permits, have the volunteers introduce themselves to one another.</p> <p>Advise the volunteers of their team name, if any, e.g. Team North.</p> <p>Confirm the volunteers know that they will not be paid for their volunteer service.</p> |
| <p><u>SAFETY FIRST</u></p> | <p>Confirm volunteers are dressed for safety. For example, by wearing closed shoes or high visibility vests. If relevant, confirm volunteers have brought any relevant equipment they have offered as per their EV CREW registration. Identify any known or potential hazards to the volunteers.</p> |
| <p><u>SITUATION</u></p> | <p>Describe the event and the current situation. What is known of the number of affected people and how their current safety and wellbeing? What is known of the damage to property? What weather is forecast and what likely impact will it have on the situation? What is predicted might happen next? Stick to what is reasonably known to be factual and avoid speculation.</p> |
| <p><u>ORIENTATION</u></p> | <p>Describe the response and recovery volunteer work to be done. Confirm the location(s) – inside or outdoors? Will they be working alongside people from other agencies or groups? Using position descriptions describe/demonstrate the tasks to be done and confirm understanding of the use of any equipment. Confirm behavioural expectations. For example, all volunteers are required to sign up to the Code of Conduct. Confirm communication policy and protocols. For example, what should volunteers do if approached by the media and how should social media be used? Emphasise general and specific safety considerations.</p> |
| <p><u>LOGISTICS</u></p> | <p>Describe where the volunteers will be going and how they will get there. Confirm the length of their shifts and when they will have breaks. Confirm catering arrangements, access to water and location of toilets. Confirm First Aid arrangements. For example, who is qualified and responsible to administer First Aid, and what is the location of First Aid kits? Confirm the equipment/tools to be provided at the site and the use of checking in and out sheets.</p> |
| <p><u>SAFETY SUPPORTS</u></p> | <p>Advise volunteers to be aware of their own health and welfare. For example, highlight the dangers of becoming over-fatigued and physically/psychologically distressed. Advise volunteers to tell their supervisor immediately if they experience any such feelings so they can be relieved of their duties and receive appropriate medical or other supports.</p> |

HELPFUL RESOURCES

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIES AND FRAMEWORKS

United Nations' Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, March 2015. Available for download from www.unisdr.org

National Disaster Resilience Framework

National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, Companion Booklet

National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, Community Engagement Framework

National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, Council of Australian Governments, 2011

All available for download from www.ag.gov.au

Emergency Management Volunteers Action Plan. Available for download from www.ag.gov.au

Australian Capital Territory Community Recovery Sub-Plan March 2015. Available for download from www.communityservices.act.org.au

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Let's Talk About Inclusion: Promoting Inclusion in Your Volunteer-Involving Organisation. Volunteering ACT, August 2014. Available for download from www.volunteeringact.org.au

EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERING WEBSITE

WWW.EMERGENCYVOLUNTEERING.COM.AU

