

Volunteer Management and Coordination

This section covers the involvement of volunteers and coordination with Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD).

Details on volunteer management best practices, local solutions for the 2019 Memorial Day tornadoes, lessons learned, and organizational files/forms are contained in this section.

Best Practice Recommendations:

1) Understand the role of Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) and utilize as necessary

- **Rebuilding & Repairing:** As part of long-term recovery, voluntary organizations can provide skilled volunteers, funding, and building materials to assist survivors in meeting their unmet, disaster-caused needs. This begins as part of a disaster case management process supported by long-term recovery groups and is limited to primary, owner-occupied residences.
 - **Skilled volunteers:** electricians, plumbers, carpenters, roofers, drywall and general contractors, tilers, painters, masons
- **Clean-up & Muck-out:** Voluntary organizations help individuals clean-up, provide emergency repairs, and remove debris from homes damaged or impacted by a disaster by using skilled/trained volunteers, tools, equipment, and cleanup kits to support operations.
- **Volunteer Management:** Voluntary organizations can help manage unaffiliated volunteers (*those individuals not associated with a formal volunteer organization*) as a service to the impacted community to avoid problems associated with unaffiliated volunteers. They arrange to connect these volunteers with reputable organizations capable of utilizing their unique skills. They also provide logical support and training to make the best use of unaffiliated volunteers.

During early response, volunteer management is a critical part of providing muck-out and emergency repairs to survivors. Voluntary organizations can match volunteer resources to survivor needs.

2) Capitalize on numerous partnerships in collaboration and keep welcoming them throughout the different phases of disaster recovery

Community-Based Organizations:

- All communities have clubs, groups, and organizations who work to meet every day needs of the community and its residents.
- They vary in scope and mission, but when disaster strikes, they often are among the first to offer assistance.
- They have a much greater presence and are often connected to the most vulnerable in the community though not necessarily integrated into the emergency management structure.

Faith-Based Organizations:

- They include local churches, food banks, spiritual care, and after school programs.
- They often stretch their resources to meet the needs that arise due to disasters.
- Many participate in Long Term Recovery Groups.
- They bring a wealth of resources from their respective denominations, such as: facilities, to shelter, serve food, kitchens, leadership and are often trained in counseling spiritual care.
- They are often the most trusted organizations at the community level.

- 3) Establish a central contact for handling volunteer inquiries; a person to take calls, emails, and sign-ups.**
 - Have a website to point the general public or VOADs toward with contact information.
 - Set up a system for responding to new volunteer inquiries quickly and track communication. Many faith-based groups will have a leader, pastor, or veteran disaster response volunteer to liaison communication to/from.
- 4) Have meaningful work for volunteers regardless of skills and abilities.**
 - Outlining skills and abilities of a volunteer or group prior to work assignment is critical. Many VOADs will have rotating groups of volunteers coming to the area so skills and abilities change often.
 - Provide auxiliary volunteer work that is not weather dependent. Due to the impact of COVID-19, many volunteer opportunities were limited to outside work only and community-based organizations, like The Foodbank, was not offering any volunteering. But it is nice to have a back-up project or location if there is weather, limited work for the group size, or materials fall through last minute.
- 5) Thank volunteers continually for their efforts and track volunteer hours.**
 - Many groups of volunteers will be doing dirty, backbreaking, hard work and their efforts should be recognized while they are serving in the impacted community.
 - Provide local food, healthy snacks, treats and goodies, and/or mementos.
 - As best as possible, establish reports for tracking volunteer service hours. This labor translates to a monetary equivalent that is meaningful for the community to understand.
- 6) Establish an orientation for welcoming out of town volunteers. This establishes a connection to the survivors.**
 - This applies to both local and out of town volunteers. Many groups need a better understanding of the disaster, what happened, who they'll be helping, why these survivors need assistance, and to meet the long term recovery team and construction leaders.
 - A host site or volunteer headquarters is the ideal place for coming and goings of VOADs and to provide a presentation, video, or handouts.
 - Unaffiliated volunteers or ad hoc groups may need a quick on-site orientation where they'll be doing the work. They may be able to spend time with the survivors.
 - Orientations should also include expectations of interactions (no evangelizing), the work to be done, and safety protocols.
- 7) Establish a main point of contact for each regional VOAD liaison.**
 - This will help expedite decision making and arrangement of formal agreements, especially when it comes to allocating funds and approval of resources.
 - This will also help avoid duplication from within the same group responding to the impacted community.

Lessons Learned:

- 1) Establish relationships early on and outline potential partnerships and deliverables. National VOADs all operate under different timelines and circumstances of a disaster.**

- The Long Term Recovery Group coordinated primarily with two national faith-based VOADs – Brethren Disaster Ministries and Mennonite Disaster Service.
 - Team Rubicon was heavily focused on initial response and debris clearing, but Brethren Disaster Ministries arrives in the rebuilding phase to offer volunteer labor for the long-term recovery/rebuild work when most groups have packed up and left.
 - Mennonite Disaster Service provided specific, targeted repairs like roofing through local volunteers only. This was important as other volunteer groups were not comfortable on roofs or did not possess the tools/skills.
- 2) Target any potential host sites before a disaster by coordinating within a COAD. Capacity needs, like showers, a full-service kitchen, and designated sleeping quarters needs to be understood to best accommodate large groups coming and going.**
- Local fire codes may inhibit the expediency of establishing a host site depending on a buildings intended use and age.
 - Locally, the former Memorial Presbyterian church on S Smithville was a great location to host groups potentially up to 40-50 volunteers with a complete industrial kitchen, but it did lack showers so a shower trailer needed to be installed.
 - Brethren Disaster Ministries set-up their national host site locally to accommodate the extended stay of skilled volunteers from all over the country to serve for a week’s time in the greater Dayton region.
 - Mennonites did not end up needing a national host site due to the impact of COVID-19 and restrictions of gathering and traveling.
- 3) Many unaffiliated volunteers or ad hoc volunteer groups will be difficult to wrangle in a formal volunteer program.** These groups spring into action immediately after a disaster and will continue throughout long-term rebuilding, possibly knocking on doors of impacted survivors, soliciting work.
- Be sure to set clear communication to all contacts that case management is the front door to repair/rebuild assistance with volunteers and securing “materials, muscle, and money”. This can ensure repairs are done correctly and minimizes confusion or duplication of services offered.
 - It will also prevent any confusion or lack of trust later on in long-term recovery when reluctant home-owners may finally ask for help through reputable channels.
- 4) Volunteers must avoid making promises to the survivor that may or may not be part of an agreed upon scope of work.** This causes miscommunication and expectation issues for repair/rebuild work. Assistance from case management to communicate the agreed scope of work volunteers will and will not do can be clearly outlined before onsite work begins. Communication should continue between volunteer site leads and incoming volunteer groups.
- Coordination of potential volunteer repair and rebuild projects for survivors were intentionally vetted before any work started. This step verified homeownership, insurance involvement, unrelated/deferred maintenance, and other unique situations like contractor fraud.

Included Files and Forms:

- 1) Accident Incident Report Form

- 2) BDM Volunteer Registration Release Form
- 3) LTRG Volunteer Release Liability Form
- 4) MDS Best Practices for Projects
- 5) Presentation Volunteer Orientation
- 6) Safety Guidelines Worksites MVLTRG
- 7) Tool Kit Sheet
- 8) VOAD Intake Packet Waiver
- 9) Volunteer Info Quick Sheet Repair Rebuild Teams
- 10) Volunteer Job Criteria Checklist
- 11) Volunteer Job Description
- 12) Volunteer Tracker Contacts
- 13) Volunteer Welcome Letter Local Groups
- 14) Volunteers Skills Level Assessment
- 15) Worksite Prep Checklist

References:

- FEMA Emergency Management Institute Training: IS-0288.a The Role of Voluntary Organizations in Emergency Management <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-288.a>
- FEMA Emergency Management Institute Training: IS-00244.b Developing and Managing Volunteers <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=is-244.b>

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