

SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS IN DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

Whenever there is a major disaster challenges will occur affecting the capacity of local CARTs to respond. There is also a likelihood unaffiliated volunteers will show up. Whether we have planned for them or not they WILL come!

Unaffiliated or spontaneous volunteers usually lack formal disaster training. Their efforts may be well-intentioned but may hinder the local response and recovery operation. Because these volunteers are untrained, however, does not mean that they are not skilled! The goal is to determine through a screening process what skills and experience they do possess may be effectively used. No spontaneous volunteer will be given any direct animal care or handling responsibilities.

Planning ahead for spontaneous volunteers is to everyone's advantage. Each Virginia County has a unique combination of community resources. In developing your CART emergency response plan determine if your locality has a Volunteer Center or other organization to serve as a coordinating agency. Ideally, there will be a *Volunteer Reception Center* activated by local Emergency Management. A list of these centers for your reference is available online, <http://www.vaserviceorg/go/volunteer/>. This model is very helpful in determining the skills and interest of spontaneous volunteers and processing this information. This may provide opportunities to identify potential volunteers in advance of a disaster and provide appropriate response and recovery training for them.

Otherwise, it may be necessary to identify a member of your local CART to be prepared to interview and register unaffiliated volunteers who show up during a disaster response. This process should take place in a remote location apart from the emergency shelter. Time does not allow for an extended conversation with the potential volunteer but should be sufficient to provide insight to the volunteer's interest in responding, general skills and degree of ability to function under the ICS guidelines.

The volunteer should be given a brief orientation and requested to fill out the registration form "CART Volunteer Information Form". In addition to the required contact information this form includes a checklist of tasks and skills often needed during a disaster response. The "Policies, Standards and Indemnity Form" and the "Code of Conduct Form" should also be completed before the volunteer is given an assignment. These forms are available at <http://www/VirginiaSART.org>.

Occasionally there may be an opportunity to give a spontaneous volunteer an immediate assignment. In most cases it will be necessary to ask the volunteer to wait while you see if there are assignments available. This also provides the opportunity to review the volunteer's application and to resolve any concerns about the individual's ability to follow directions and to complete a given assignment.

It is very important to express appreciation to the unaffiliated volunteer for willingness to come forward to offer assistance during the disaster response and recovery. Regardless of whether there is an immediate need for this individual's assistance or not there is the potential of this person ultimately becoming a member of your local CART. Make an effort to follow up with a note or phone call, or an invitation to a CART meeting if it seems appropriate.

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