

Spontaneous Volunteer Management Plan

Lewis County Emergency Management

The Spontaneous Volunteer Management Plan provides guidance for safe, efficient and scalable volunteer management. The Plan includes integration with incident management systems; communication with community members and voluntary organizations; volunteer reception, screening and training; matching and deployment; and volunteer retention.

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Lewis county Emergency Management

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# Contents

[Contents 1](#_Toc357373535)

Introduction

[Legal Authority 3](#_Toc357373536)

[Finance and Administration 3](#_Toc357373537)

[Purpose, Objectives, and Scope 4](#_Toc357373538)

[Planning Assumptions 4](#_Toc357373539)

[Plan Development and Maintenance 5](#_Toc357373540)

[Plan Activation 6](#_Toc357373541)

[Crisis Communications 7](#_Toc357373542)

[Concept of Operations 8](#_Toc357373543)

[Figure 1: Incident Command Structure With Activation Levels 10](#_Toc357373544)

[Volunteer Management System (VMS) 11](#_Toc357373545)

[Table 1: Volunteer Management System (VMS) Roles and Responsibilities 13](#_Toc357373546)

[Table 2: Volunteer Management System Partners 15](#_Toc357373547)

[VMS Implementation 15](#_Toc357373548)

[Figure 2: Volunteer Management System Flow Chart 18](#_Toc357373549)

[Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) 19](#_Toc357373550)

[Table 3: Volunteer Reception Center Locations 19](#_Toc357373551)

[Figure 3: CHRONOLOGICAL ACTION STEPS 21](#_Toc357373552)

[Volunteer Reception Center Areas 22](#_Toc357373553)

[Volunteer Retention 30](#_Toc357373554)

[Acronyms 31](#_Toc357373555)

[Appendices 32](#_Toc357373556)

[Resources 32](#_Toc357373557)

[Acknowledgments 32](#_Toc357373558)

Introduction

Most large scale emergency response involves volunteers of all types: affiliated and unaffiliated; deployed and self-deployed. The Spontaneous Volunteer Management Plan (Plan) provides tools to emergency planners, emergency management directors (EMD), and incident commanders (IC) for incorporating appropriate unaffiliated volunteers as well as affiliated volunteer groups such as Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), American Red Cross (ARC), Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD), and faith-based groups into a response. Effective volunteer management includes the following essential functions:

1. **Assess the situation** to determine the need for volunteers
2. **Confirm Command and Control** to ensure the integration of volunteers into incident command
3. **Coordinate Risk Communications** and public information to manage volunteer expectations
4. **Establish a Volunteer Management System (VMS)** to process and coordinate all volunteers:

* Make the safety of volunteers and responders the first priority
* Appoint a VMS director to integrate volunteers into incident command
* For large emergencies, designate a VOAD liaison to the external VOAD to ensure VOAD response is integrated into incident command
* Operate a Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) to manage volunteers: including registration, credentialing, training, job assignment, support, and demobilization
* When a VRC is activated, designate a VRC liaison to coordinate volunteer deployments and response needs
* Establish volunteer policies:
* Affiliated volunteers are deployed before unaffiliated volunteers
* When unaffiliated volunteers are used, all volunteers are processed through the VMS.

Historically, first responders have been hesitant to incorporate unaffiliated volunteers into response efforts, even when a clear need for additional “manpower” has been identified. This hesitation is grounded in real concerns about safety, liability, skills, character, and appropriateness to the gravity of the situation by unknown, untrained, and untested individuals. However, spontaneous volunteers, when managed appropriately, can bring needed skills and essential resources to a response when it has been determined that local, affiliated resources have been exhausted.

The Plan has been developed to help ensure effective management of spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers during response and recovery for a large-scale emergency or disaster. It follows the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and guidance for Emergency Support Function 15 (ESF-15) and, as such, is scalable to fit the scope of the event. Volunteer supervision and safety are primary considerations. The Plan should be reviewed and modified to meet the needs of the community and to ensure compatibility with existing plans such as the Community’s Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP). Next steps include developing a Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) and a training and exercise plan.

# Legal Authority

## federal

1. [The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief And Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 93-288, As Amended](https://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=3564‎)
2. [Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5)](http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/hspd-5.html‎)
3. [The National Response Framework (NRF), January 2008](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&ved=0CDkQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fema.gov%2Fnational-response-framework&ei=acKlUemnEo6t0AHipYHABg&usg=AFQjCNGgtHoVKboAH01JQw2uDxqXKvRnYQ&sig2=PRHj0NcS403BKa-r6CCekg&bvm=bv.47008514,d.dmQ)
4. [NRF, Volunteer and Donations Management Support Annex, January, 2008](http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nrf/nrf-support-vol.pdf)

## state

1. Emergency management personnel immunity
2. Volunteer immunity
3. Good Samaritan law
4. State board of health rules and regulations

## local

1. Lewis County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP)
2. Lewis County Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)
3. Lewis County Communications Plan
4. Add other here

# Finance and Administration

A goal of the Spontaneous Volunteer Management Plan is to supplement response capabilities and reduce response expenses for impacted communities. In the event that FEMA declares a disaster and the [Public Assistance Grant Program](http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/pa/index.shtm)[[1]](#footnote-1) is open to local government applicants, the Lewis County may be subject to a matching fund requirement. Work done by employees or contractors of Lewis County will be used to match available federal funds. Likewise, properly documented work performed by affiliated and spontaneous volunteers will be used to meet the matching requirement.

To ensure that donated volunteer time is allowable as a matching contribution, Lewis County will maintain accurate records of all affiliated and spontaneous volunteers including hours donated, the type of work completed, associated expenses and comparable hourly rates. All Lewis County personnel who supervise volunteers will be trained to thoroughly document this information on forms provided.

The Lewis County will apply a labor rate to each type of volunteer work that is similar to the rate that an employee of Lewis County is paid, including taxes and fringe benefits, for the same or similar work, or the customary rate for that work if done by contractors in the local labor market.

# Purpose, Objectives, and Scope

## Purpose

Disaster conditions could result in convergence of, or the need for, spontaneous volunteers to assist in response and recovery. Disasters, which vary widely in type and magnitude, include weather and natural events such as ice-storms, hurricanes, wildfires, and earthquakes; and man-made events both intentional (criminal and terrorist) and accidental involving chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear releases caused by explosive, technological, transportation, or infrastructure related events in Lewis County. The impact of these disasters can be local, regional, or spread throughout the Commonwealth. Hazard Assessment and/or Mitigation Plans identify the most likely current threats to Lewis County in the Lewis County CEMP.

The Plan provides guidance for departments and agencies within the Lewis County to manage spontaneous volunteers during disaster response and recovery. It complements the Lewis County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP).

## objectives

* To enhance professional emergency response personnel activities, through the coordinated and planned involvement of spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers (SUV)
* Minimize response and recovery costs to the community
* Minimize disruption to first responders by spontaneous unaffiliated and non-coordinated affiliated volunteers
* Ensure the safety of volunteers, responders, and the community
* Provide a positive volunteer experience that encourages continued volunteer support and maintains/enhances the reputation and public perception of Lewis County.

## scope

The Plan is applicable to departments, agencies, and organizations of Lewis County, including the private sector, volunteer organizations, and residents living in Lewis County. It guides support agencies and mutual aid partners that respond within Lewis County and that have responsibility for volunteer recruitment, processing, assignment, training, and/or management.

# Planning Assumptions

* In a catastrophic emergency, volunteers will spontaneously self-deploy.
* Affiliated volunteers will only be deployed by their individual organizations at the request of incident command and will follow established Incident Command System (ICS) protocols.
* Non-government affiliated volunteer organizations will manage and administer their organization’s volunteer recruitment, training, and job assignment policies and procedures and deploy their volunteers in coordination with emergency management.
* During a disaster affecting Lewis County, local government, volunteer groups, and agencies may be adversely affected and unable to cope with a sizable influx of spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers.
* When local resources are insufficient, assistance will be requested by the IC/EOC through the “Request for Volunteer Form,” mutual aid agreements, and through other response and volunteer organizations.
* Volunteers will generally follow volunteer management mechanisms developed for them.
* Volunteers will generally respond to authoritative direction and act responsibly within their assigned areas.
* Volunteer deployment will be based on the size and type of disaster, as well as the skills needed by local officials to mount an effective response and recovery effort. During any particular disaster, it may be that not all volunteers or any volunteers (affiliated or unaffiliated) will need to be deployed.
* Departments and agencies involved in the management of volunteers may be asked to perform additional duties during disaster and emergency situations.
* In a catastrophic event, local, state, and/or federal emergency declarations will occur. State and federal disaster assistance will supplement, not supplant, the response provided by Lewis County. This assistance is provided only when local resources are insufficient to meet the demands of the incident.

# Plan Development and Maintenance

The Director of Emergency Management (DEM) or her/his designee, along with the local emergency planning committee (LEPC) is responsible for the maintenance, revision, and distribution of the Spontaneous Volunteer Management Plan and any subsidiary plans and tools. This includes the Standard Operating Guidelines, the Just-in-Time training Guide, job action sheets (JAS), and other necessary forms. The DEM will assess the need for and make revisions at least once every two years, or sooner, in the case of the following:

* A change in operational resources, policies, or procedures,
* A formal update of planning guidance or standards, or
* Plan activation or a major exercise.

# Plan Activation

## activation triggers

The Plan is activated and coordinated by the incident commander, local emergency management director or Lewis County. Triggers may include, but are not limited to the following situations:

* The impacts of the disaster and/or media coverage make an influx of spontaneous volunteers likely.
* Shortages of professional emergency responders require additional staffing support from outside sources.
* Volunteers with particular skills and/or special knowledge of Lewis County are needed to enhance response and recovery.
* Mutual aid partners request volunteers and/or volunteer management from the Lewis County activation authority.

After the initial incident assessment to determine the appropriate activation level of the Volunteer Management System, the plan is activated by any of the following:

* Incident commander (IC)
* Emergency management director (EMD)
* Unified command
* Emergency operations center (EOC)
* Other: request from a specific Lewis County agency

## activation levels

Because disasters vary in terms of their size, scope, duration, intensity and consequences, incident command will determine the appropriate activation level or sequence of activation levels based on specific and changing needs. The scope of the emergency will be used to establish the appropriate ICS structure. The likelihood of a fluid situation requires the Plan to be flexible and scalable.

### **Activation Level I: Small, Limited Event (EOC Activation Level 1: Controlled Emergency)**

Spontaneous volunteers will generally come from Lewis County. The need for volunteer management will typically be identified by the incident commander and first responders. The IC/EOC will appoint a Volunteer Management System (VMS) director, likely from an affiliated group such as Assistant Fire Coordinators, and (or) Assistant EMS Coordinators, who will manage affiliated and spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers at a staging area near the incident. It is likely that there is no need to stand-up a physical Volunteer Reception Center.

### Activation Level II: Medium to Large Event (EOC Activation Level 2: Limited Emergency Condition)

When the EOC is activated for a medium to large event, a more comprehensive and coordinated level of the Volunteer Management System (VMS) may be required. Media coverage will result in the arrival of onlookers and those who want to help. A Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) may need to be set-up outside the impacted area or at a pre-selected site. The perimeter of the incident site will be secured. Not all components of the Plan will need to be activated. VMS staff may fill multiple roles as needed.

### Activation Level III: Catastrophic Event (EOC activation Level 3: full-scale emergency conditions)

During a very large or catastrophic disaster and/or an event that generates a large number of spontaneous volunteers that may threaten to overwhelm local capacity for volunteer management, a full activation of the VMS may be required. In this case, a regional Volunteer Coordination Task Force (VCTF) will be established with representatives from multiple EOC’s and affiliated volunteer organizations to help coordinate regional volunteer activity. Multiple local VMS operations will be coordinated by a unified or area command or regional EOC (REOC) VOAD Liaison working with the VCTF. Multiple VMS operations may be consolidated or regionalized to maximize available staff and resources needed to operate multiple VRCs. This consolidation may result in the activation of at least one large regional VRC, as well as a regional phone bank/call center. **See Figure 1, p. 11.**

# Crisis Communications

**(See Region 1 PIO SOG for additional messaging guidance)**

Early and effective crisis communications is a critical part of any response involving volunteers. Getting the right information to the right people at the right time, so that they can make the right decisions about volunteering is a critical component in the Spontaneous Volunteer Management Plan. The PIO will follow standard messaging release procedures as outlined in the CEMP, or PIO Standard Operating Guide (SOG) to ensure volunteer guidance is widely disseminated through traditional and social media channel to reach all stakeholders.

All message releases will be approved by the IC and released through the Joint Information System (JIS) or the Public Information Officer (PIO). During Level II/III Activation, the PIO/IC will determine the need for a physical or virtual Joint Information Center (JIC) to help coordinate all messaging.

Timely, informative, coordinated, and accurate public information is a critical factor in keeping on-lookers and potential volunteers from impeding the response and recovery processes of a catastrophic incident. The Public Information Officer must manage public expectations and make clear:

* needs in the impacted areas
* appropriate ways to help
* appropriate skills needed
* what is not needed
* where and how to volunteer
* where and how to donate time, supplies, equipment, and better yet, money.

## examples of pre-scripted messages

### General Messages

“As emergency management works to respond to and recover from Name of Disaster, an influx of unexpected or unrequested volunteers and donations can make the response and recovery process even more difficult. If you want to volunteer or donate, please visit our website at [website name and address] or call or visit the Volunteer Reception Center located at [address of VRC] between [list hours of operation and days open]. The Volunteer Reception Center phones are staffed e.g. Monday-Saturday) and may be reached at (Insert phone number).

“9-1-1 is for life threatening emergencies only. For information about the emergency, call the 2-1-1 helpline for assistance or go to [www.lewiscounty.ny.org](http://www.lewiscounty.ny.org).”

### Volunteering

“Community members and neighbors, for your safety, the safety of responders, and for the overall management of the disaster, we are asking that you stay [at home, indoors] away from the affected area [describe parameters] until further notice.”

“Volunteers who are not pre-registered should contact their local Red Cross chapter to find out about volunteer opportunities and Just-in-Time Training.”

“Community members and neighbors, for your safety, the safety of responders, and for the overall management of the disaster, we have a volunteer registration process. If you wish to volunteer:

* Call to register [insert phone number]
* Register on-line [insert url]to be created by IT at the time of emergency
* Come to the Volunteer Reception Center, located at [insert location]
* Have the following with you: government issued photo ID, professional credentials, emergency contact information, snacks, water, and cell phone
* Persons with the following credentials [license, skills, equipment] are needed [time frame]”
* “We know that everyone wants to help. We ask that all volunteers consider their own limitations and needs before volunteering. Be realistic about your ability to be self-sufficient and aid in disaster response and recovery. If you can’t volunteer, consider making a monetary donation.”

# Concept of OperatioNs

## volunteer definitions

**Affiliated volunteers** are attached to a recognized voluntary or nonprofit organization and are trained for specific disaster response activities. Their relationship with the organization precedes the immediate disaster, and they are invited by that organization to become involved in a particular aspect of emergency response.

**Unaffiliated volunteers** are not part of a recognized voluntary agency and often have no formal training in emergency response. They are not officially invited to become involved but are motivated by the incident and a desire to help others in times of trouble. They come with a variety of skills. They may come from within the affected area or from outside the area. These types of volunteers are also known as “convergent,” “emergent,” “walk-in,” or “spontaneous.”

**Spontaneous volunteers** are all assumed to be spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers (SUV), for the purposes of this plan, including affiliated volunteers who show up without being deployed by their registering organization. All spontaneous volunteers will be processed as unaffiliated volunteers.

## volunteer safety

Volunteer safety is the primary consideration during any response and recovery effort. Volunteers will never be asked to take undue personal risks or work beyond the scope of their experience or training.

## incident command system

This Spontaneous Volunteer Management Plan is consistent with the National Incident Management System. It defines actions and roles necessary to provide a coordinated spontaneous volunteer response using the Incident Command System (ICS). Within ICS, support staffing and volunteer management often fall under the Supply Unit of the Logistics Section. As with any response, the IC may move volunteer management to another section such as the Planning Resource Unit.

The Volunteer Management System (VMS) is scalable. Depending on the scope of the emergency, additional ICS positions will be added to accomplish required tasks. Not all positions or functions need to be completed by separate individuals. If no individual is assigned to a position, the responsibility is assumed by the immediate supervisory position for the function or task. For example, in a small incident, the Logistics Section Chief could assume all duties for the Volunteer Management System (VMS). In a larger incident the VMS Director could establish and oversee multiple VMS Branches and associated ICS supervisory and leader positions. **See** **Figure 1, p.11.**

# Figure 1: Incident Command Structure With Activation Levels

**Level I:** Solid lines

**Level II**: Activation Level I plus dotted lines

**Level III:** Activation Level I and II plus Volunteer Task Force Liaison in Command Staff

**Activation Levels II and III**

**Volunteer Reception Center**

**Activation Level 1**

# Volunteer Management System (VMS)

## organization

VMS infrastructure is necessary for volunteers to safely succeed at their mission to help. Policies, forms, facilities, communication protocols and volunteer leadership are all needed to provide positive experiences leading to successful volunteer engagement and retention. Examples of this organizational structure in Lewis County include:

Coordinated system for messaging to community members from response officials regarding emergency status including but not limited to “Social Media”

Reverse 9-1-1, or other alert systems

Policies and procedures that routinely integrate affiliated volunteers into responses

Formal system for acknowledgement and appreciation by community officials of Citizen Corps groups, leaders, volunteers

Other (specify)

## command and control

The incident commander delegates volunteer management to the appropriate section chief, who may delegate to a VMS Director. Community based and voluntary organizations that wish to be part of the response will be coordinated through the VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters) liaison appointed by the incident commander. The VOAD liaison may also serve as the VMS director in a Level I incident. In a Level II or III incident, a community Volunteer Coordination Task Force (VCTF) may be formed to coordinate multiple volunteers and VOAD organizations.

## mutual aid agreements and memoranda of understandings

If the need for volunteers or the number of spontaneous volunteers overwhelms the emergency management system, Lewis County will request assistance from other local jurisdictions and agencies in accordance with existing mutual aid agreements (MAA) and memoranda of agreement (MOA). Copies of existing agreements are on file; all requests will be channeled through the EOC in accordance with mutual aid policies and procedures.

## resource requirements

The VMS director with the EOC logistics section chief will assess the following resource needs:

### Facilities

* Volunteer reception center (VRC)
* Volunteer staging area
* Volunteer housing, care, and feeding

### Supplies

* Office equipment and supplies
* Medical equipment and supplies
* PPE – personal protective equipment
* Signage: internal and external directional

### Transportation of Volunteers

* Private/public
* Liability coverage(s)

### Communications

* Radios
* Phone bank/call center site
* Internet
* Cell service
* HAM operators

### Personnel

* Volunteer Management System (VMS) director

VRC coordinator (VRCC)/VRC operations chief

* VOAD liaison
* VRC liaison
* Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) staff
* Volunteer Reception Center security
* Volunteer Coordination Task Force (VCTF) liaison

The table below outlines the objectives of the VMS, specific tasks, and the ICS position or organization responsible. Modify as needed to match the Lewis County’s ICS structure, or dynamics of the incident.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Table 1: Volunteer Management System (VMS) Roles and Responsibilities | |
| Role/Task | Responsibility |
| Support Effective Volunteer Recruitment | |
| Determine volunteer need: activate/ demobilize the plan at the appropriate level | IC/EOC |
| Appoint Volunteer Management System (VMS) director | IC/Section Chief |
| Appoint Volunteer Reception Center coordinator (VRCC) if needed | VMS Director |
| Appoint VOAD liaison | IC/EOC |
| Appoint Volunteer Reception Center liaison (if VRC is activated) | VMS Director |
| Provide public information with instructions regarding the need for and how to volunteer | PIO |
| Provide public information to voluntary organizations and the public when volunteers are not needed | PIO |
| Outreach and coordination with affiliated volunteer/NGO and other volunteer organizations | VOAD Liaison/VMS Director |
| Schedule and coordinate meetings of the volunteer groups to coordinate, update, and collaborate on the volunteer management system and operational process before, during, and after a disaster | VOAD Liaison/VMS Director |
| Provide advice to the VRC liaison on suitable candidates for volunteer management functions | VMS Director |
| Determine when to demobilize the VMS | IC/EOC/VMS Director |
| Ensure efficient, effective, safe response | |
| Direct and support the Volunteer Management System (VMS) | IC/EOC/Logistics/VMS Director |
| Identify suitable candidates for the various volunteer management functions | VMS Director/VRCC |
| Select VRC site(s) and coordinate equipping and staffing the facility | Logistics/VMS Director |
| Secure VRC site perimeter to prevent unauthorized volunteer entry | Security |
| Coordinate training of volunteers for operation of the VRC | VMS Director/VRCC |
| Supervise VRC operations | VMS Director/VRC |
| Select a phone bank/call center site and coordinate equipping/staffing the facility | VMS Director/VRCC |
| Coordinate volunteer training for the phone bank/call center | VMS Director/VRCC |
| Ensure sufficient staffing support for volunteer processing | VMS Director/VRCC |
| Credential and check volunteer CORI/SORI, as able | VMS Director/VRCC |
| Provide identification (badge, wrist band etc.) | VMS Director/VRCC |
| Track all volunteer expenses and contributions for potential reimbursement | VMS Director/VRCC/Finance |
| Effective, Efficient, Safe Volunteer Assignment | |
| Match volunteer skills/interests with identified incident response personnel needs | Planning/Operations/VMS Director/VOAD Liaison |
| Minimize time to assign volunteers | VMS Director/VRCC |
| Expedite pre-registered, affiliated volunteers: MRC, CERT, DART, ARC, DBHRT | VMS Director/VRCC |
| Process volunteer groups from a particular faith community, or CBO | VMS Director/VRCC |
| Quickly interview potential volunteers for skills/interests | VMS Director/VRCC |
| Maintain volunteer force for assignment to future shifts | VRC Planning/Logistics |
| Objective: Volunteer Training/Safety | |
| Brief volunteers on roles and responsibilities | VRC Operations |
| Provide logistical support for volunteers (e.g. transportation to site) | VRC Logistics |
| Provide secure environment for volunteer processing | Logistics/VRC Logistics |
| Brief volunteers on safety issues | Safety Officer |
| Ensure on-site training, supervision, and evaluation | VRC Operations |
| Provide safety personal protective equipment (PPE) to volunteers | Logistics/VRC Logistics |
| Track volunteers for medical follow-up, as needed | Medical Unit Leader |
| Provide Critical Incident Stress Management or Disaster Behavioral Health Support as needed | VRC Medical Unit Leader |
| Officially discharge volunteers | VMS Director/VRCC |
| Volunteer Retention | |
| Ensure a positive experience for volunteers | VRC Operations |
| Minimize time at reception center for potential volunteers | VRC Operations |
| Maximize number of volunteers assigned | Operations/VRC Operations |
| Evaluate volunteer performance | VRC Operations |
| Thank volunteers - provide POC information and encourage retention/affiliation | VRC Operations |
| Conduct incident review “hot wash” with volunteers | VRC Operations |

# Table 2: Volunteer Management System Partners

The following Voluntary, Community Based, Faith-Based and Private organizations will be relied on to respond to an emergency to assist with the VMS Plan in Lewis County. List all that apply.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Role/Organization | Name | Phone | Email |
| Chief Elected Official |  |  |  |
| Emergency Mgmt. Director |  |  |  |
| Local Voluntary Organizations | MRC |  |  |
|  | CERT |  |  |
|  | American Red Cross |  |  |
|  | Salvation Army |  |  |
|  | Rotary |  |  |
|  | Lions |  |  |
|  | Other |  |  |
| Faith Community |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Media Channels |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Business Community |  |  |  |

# vms Implementation

**See Figure 2 (p. 19) for VMS Flow Chart.**

## activation

1. IC determines need for volunteers and volunteer activation.
2. IC delegates volunteer management to the logistics section chief (or planning section chief).
3. IC, EOC, and section chiefs determine that a Volunteer Management System (VMS) and/or Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) are required. In Activation Level III, a fully staffed volunteer incident command structure may be needed in addition to the event’s incident command.

## appoint VMS Director –ics structure

1. Section chief appoints a Volunteer Management System (VMS) director to manage volunteers, organizations/agencies, and a Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) (if activated).
2. IC instructs PIO to work with VMS director to provide appropriate volunteer messages.
3. In Activation Level II or III, a VOAD liaison may be appointed to assist the VMS director in coordinating with voluntary organizations deploying volunteers. Otherwise, the VMS director will coordinate directly with the VOAD.
4. IC and logistics section chief confer - agree to open a VRC.
5. In Activation Level II or III, VRC coordinator(s) may be appointed to assist the VMS director and serve as the VRC operations chief.
6. VMS director appoints a VRC liaison to work with the EOC/IC.

## **engage community support**

In a large scale or prolonged emergency, particularly in the recovery phase, it is recommended that a community Volunteer Coordination Task Force (VCTF) be created to work through the incident command VOAD liaison to coordinate and manage affiliated volunteers. The VCTF may also be asked to assist with the management of spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers. The VCTF may consist of MRC, CERT, DART, ARC, and faith-based or other community-based agency coordinators and/or other stakeholders that manage volunteers and have the ability to coordinate, process, assign and supervise volunteers.

## **provide public information - crisis communications**

1. The PIO in coordination with the VMS director and with permission of the IC, communicates with the public regarding the need for volunteers, including who, what, when, where, why, and how.
2. The PIO coordinates public information with the VOADs who are responding to the incident to ensure that messaging to the public and volunteers is consistent, appropriate, and effective.

## activate volunteer reception center

1. At the VRC or other volunteer management site, the following volunteer management functions are provided to process and accommodate both affiliated and unaffiliated volunteers. Spontaneous volunteers will require additional processing and training before being deployed.

**Registration:** Welcome, triage, orientation, information, registration, phone center, message center

**Credentialing**: Identification, credentialing, background checks

**Training:** Safety and Just-in-Time training, operation training as available for EDS or sheltering

**Assignment:** Liaison with IC/operations, matching, badging/vests, deployment

**Support:** Transportation and trouble desk

**Demobilization**: Debriefing, evaluation, and volunteer retention/follow-up

**Facilities:** Volunteer and staff food, sanitation/cleaning, and rest area

**Data:** Documentation logs of all actions, volunteer time, volunteer records, forms, expenses

1. IC/EOC continues to re-evaluate need for volunteer deployment and communicates with section chiefs, Volunteer Management System (VMS) director, Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) coordinator and VOAD liaison.
2. VOAD liaison coordinates with

* PIO and VOAD members to ensure consistent public messaging about the changing need for volunteers including any long-term need for volunteers, especially during recovery
* Volunteer Management System (VMS) director and/or VRC coordinator
* Volunteer Coordination Task Force (VCTF), MRC, and/or other affiliated coordinator(s) to expand or contract based upon on-going needs assessment.

1. VMS director and VRC coordinator ensures that the following activities are completed:

* Welcome, register, and credential volunteers
* Basic Just-in-Time training, including safety messages; may also include specific operations training such as sheltering, emergency dispensing, etc. as appropriate
* Badge (identification)
* Job Action Sheets (JAS) as they are available
* Deployment
* Volunteer support
* De-mobilization and retention resources

1. Operational periods continue as deemed necessary

## support recovery

1. IC/EOC and VMS director assess long-term needs and requirements for volunteers for recovery
2. Recovery coordination passes to appropriate local or regional organizations and agencies, VOAD, or VCTF.

## demobilization

1. Event closes with hot wash, After Action Report, and Improvement Plan
2. Records are completed
3. Volunteers are acknowledged and thanked
4. Spontaneous Volunteer Management Plan is revised or updated as necessary.

# Figure 2: Volunteer Management System Flow Chart

# Volunteer Reception Center (VRC)

Every incident is unique and volunteer management will be scaled to meet current needs. In Type II or III activation, the primary method for coordinating volunteers employs the concept of a volunteer reception center (VRC)*.* Volunteer reception centers can be structured as:

* part of a response facility, like an emergency dispensing site, shelter, or reception center
* a stand-alone walk-in center referred to as a volunteer reception center
* phone bank
* virtual online process
* a combination of two or more of these strategies.

The choice of the VRC site, including style, size, accessibility, and location is driven by a needs assessment by the command staff and section chiefs. Initial operational periods may not require any volunteer response. Continued situational awareness and needs assessment will determine whether to incorporate affiliated volunteers and/or spontaneous volunteers.

## criteria for choosing a location for volunteer reception center:

* adequate space for all VRC functions
* multiple rooms, areas available
* safety/security
* availability of secure parking
* availability of food, sanitary facilities, and rest areas for staff
* internet access including Wi-Fi or “hot spot”
* communication capabilities
* accessible and in close proximity to the affected area

Due to the unique topography of Lewis County Churches and (or) fire halls will serve as pre-identified volunteer reception centers in Lewis County, depending on the size and scope of the given emergency. This list will include emergency dispensing sites, shelters, and reception centers, if the site will be used for volunteer reception.

# Table 3: Volunteer Reception Center Locations

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Event | Limitations | Name |
| Flooding | Identify location outside of a flood plain |  |
| Extended power outage | Identify location with back-up generators |  |
| Emergency dispensing |  |  |
| Sheltering |  |  |
| All-hazards |  |  |
|  |  |  |

## volunteer reception center staffing

The Lewis County EMO will staff the volunteer reception center with the following:

Employees of the jurisdiction with the following preferred skills: persons who are familiar with the community, VRC facility, and emergency response procedures and who possess good public relations or “customer service” skills, interact regularly with the public, can make quick decisions, exercise good judgment, and are able to work well under stress.

Employees of other jurisdictions: mutual aid assistance from other jurisdictions may be requested after fully utilizing local resources.

Affiliated Volunteers (CERT, ARC Public Health, etc.): will be assigned to assist with volunteer reception early in the response phase. [List Here]

Spontaneous volunteers as needed: if additional staff resources are needed, SUV who possess strong organizational, written and verbal skills, have experience in human resources such as interviewing and data management, are social workers, instructors or teachers, and have passed basic background checks may be recruited to staff the VRC.

## direction and control

Volunteer management is an element of the logistics section with control from Lewis County’s logistics section chief and the VMS director. All requests regarding the VRC will be made through logistics at the EOC, or upon direction of the IC through the logistics/VMS director at the Volunteer Reception Center.

The VMS director may appoint a VRC coordinator who will coordinate with the VRC liaison at the EOC who will collaborate with other command and general staff to determine volunteer needs, safety, logistics and public information at a volunteer reception center.

A VRC liaison should be present at the EOC continuously while the VRC is operational. Each agency/organization active in the operation and supporting the VRC will maintain its independence in operating and administering its programs but will maintain a cooperative, coordinated response to the disaster and provide agreed-upon resources to the VRC through the EOC VRC liaison and, if activated, through the VCTF liaison (appointed by the VCTF), and VOAD liaisons.

## **vrc public information**

The designated onsite VRC coordinator or public information officer is the only staff member authorized to respond to media inquiries at the VRC. All media arriving at the VRC will be escorted at all times by the PIO. The PIO will coordinate closely with the EOC PIO and the Joint Information Center (JIC) (if activated), to ensure consistent messages are delivered to the media and public.

## volunteer risk management

The Volunteer Reception Center is critical for managing certain inherent risks associated with spontaneous volunteers. Volunteers need to accept a certain level of risk, inherent in all disaster situations. Choose policies below.

Potential volunteers will be screened for suitability.

Professional license verification and Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS) background checks (CORI, SORI) may be necessary for some functions, especially those that interact with vulnerable individuals such as elders and children.

Volunteers will be provided with adequate training and supervision, especially until credentials and license checks are complete.

All volunteers will sign a liability release form.

Confidentiality agreement forms will be signed as appropriate.

Volunteers will be informed of liability protections and their potential limitations.

# Figure 3: CHRONOLOGICAL ACTION STEPS

**See appendix for associated forms:**

# Volunteer Reception Center Areas

Registration Desk

## Registration Policies: Check Below

Everyone entering or leaving the VRC must sign in and out at the Registration Desk

All volunteers both affiliated and unaffiliated that are under the direction and control of the IC will be processed through the VRC and receive the basic safety training.

A confidential file will be kept on all volunteers processed through the VRC

All volunteers will be assessed for suitability for the response based on criteria established by the IC

All volunteers must sign all registration forms

## Registration Desk Tasks

**Volunteer Welcome**: Make each Volunteer feel valued

**Sign-in**: Everyone entering or leaving the VRC must sign in and out on the Sign-In **FORM**

**Volunteer Triage:** Work with Security to assess the appropriateness of all Volunteers presenting

Use VRC Processing Checklist **FORM** with Rapid Interview Questions

**Volunteer Orientation**: Provide situational awareness on incident and volunteer opportunities, including affiliations. Distribute:

* Volunteer Registration Instructions
* Volunteer Registration

**Volunteer Message Center**: Maintain a volunteer message board

**Phone Bank:** A phone bank will be maintained to answer questions and direct volunteers

**Volunteer Registration:** Ensure all required forms are completed and signed with an expedited process for affiliated volunteers

**Forms:** (Note: all forms must be completed, signed, dated, and witnessed by the staff at the registration desk

* VRC Processing Checklist for staff
* Volunteer Instructions Checklist
* Volunteer Registration
* Volunteer Code of Conduct FORM
* Volunteer Confidentiality FORM
* Volunteer Release and Waivers FORM

**Data Management:** Documentation logs of all actions, volunteer time, volunteer records, forms, and expenses

* Create a file for each volunteer with copies of ID, credentials, forms, deployments, etc.

Registration Desk Supplies:

Pens, pencils, paper, clipboards

Phones and contact lists

Internet, laptop, printer, scanner, copier

Volunteer folders

**FORMS:**

* Sign-in Sheet
* VRC Processing Checklist
* Volunteer Registration Instructions
* FEMA Readiness Deployment Checklist
* Volunteer Registration
* Volunteer Code of Conduct
* Volunteer Confidentiality
* Volunteer Release and Waivers

Credentialing Desk

## Credentialing Policies

The IC will set the required standards for credentialing and background checks.

All unaffiliated volunteers will have CORI/SORI checks done if possible. If not completed immediately, the volunteer will be assigned to sensitive areas or tasks and/or partnered with a credentialed volunteer.

Spontaneous volunteers must bring copies of clinical licenses and CPR/first aid cards for verification. No volunteer will be permitted to practice clinically without verification of licensure.

The following methods will be used to complete background checks:

Public safety official

Human resource official

Private entity (specify)

Other (specify)

The following positions/departments have authority in Lewis County to conduct Criminal Background checks:

Lewis County Sheriff’s department

Lowville PD

## Volunteer Credentialing Desk Tasks

**Identification:** Must have a government issued photo ID (driver’s license, passport, NYS Driver’s license of non-driver ID, etc.)

**Licenses**: Must provide copies of all licenses and certifications such as:

* + Commercial driver’s license, or other specialty trade credential
  + CPR/first aid cards; medical license: must complete medical credentials section
  + ARC, or other affiliation ID; health officer/agent; inspector of buildings; DPW; first responder

Verification: Must obtain official verification of all licenses, certifications, affiliations

IC/operations determines the required background checks needed by volunteers

Credentialing Desk Supplies

Pens, pencils, paper, clipboards

Phones, contact list

Internet, laptop, printer, scanner, copier

**FORMS:**

* Volunteer Credentialing Checklist
* Volunteer Assignment Card (VAC)

Training Desk

## Training Policies

All volunteers must report to a designated Volunteer Reception Center or staging area for an orientation, safety training, and Just-in-Time training prior to receiving a temporary badge, Job Action Sheet(s), and deployment assignments.

At completion of the temporary deployment, spontaneous volunteers must make arrangements with their supervisor or VRC coordinator to return their temporary badge until a full background and credentialing process has been completed. This step may take several days depending on the nature of the disaster and availability of state DCJIS records.

## Volunteer Training Desk: *See Just-In-Time Training (JITT) SOG*

## Training Desk Supplies

Pens, pencils, paper, clipboards

White board or flip chart and markers

Laptop with office and projector

JITT training materials

**FORMS:**

* JITT Core Competencies Card

Assignment Desk

## Assignment Policies

All deployed volunteers must carry their Volunteer Assignment Card (VAC) at all times along with their incident badge and other identification

Volunteers are responsible for having their VAC signed and dated by each trainer or supervisor

Volunteers must always sign in and out with their supervisors

## Volunteer Assignment Desk Tasks

**Liaison:** Establish communications with volunteer liaison to coordinate volunteer needs and assignments

**Matching:** Work with available volunteers and requesting agencies to match volunteer skills/wants with needs

**Assignment Briefing:** Use Assignment Briefing **FORM**; provide details of assignment and Volunteer Tracking **FORM**

**Badges:** Issue official, dated Incident badges or identification, Volunteer Assignment Card

**Vests:** Issue as available volunteer identification shirts, vests, wristbands, or hats

Returns: Provide information on returning volunteer identification items

Deployment: Deploy volunteers with assignment instructions and Volunteer Tracking FORM

Demobilization: Provide volunteers with demobilization instructions

Assignment Desk Supplies

Pens, pencils, paper, clipboards

Internet, laptop

Phone and contact lists

Volunteer identification: wrist band, vest, hat, shirt, or other volunteer identification

**FORMS:**

* Request for Volunteer
* Volunteer Tracking
* Volunteer Assignment Card (VAC)
* Demobilization Instructions: returning equipment and signing out
* Volunteer Badges

Support Desk

Support Policies

The Support Desk will make every effort to assist volunteers who are having deployment problems, but each volunteer is responsible for his/her own health, safety, transportation, and support.

Complaints and concerns will be logged as they are received.

Any complaints or concerns that involve life, property or environmental safety should be reported to a supervisor immediately.

Immediate threats to life safety should be reported to 9-1-1.

## Volunteer Support Desk Tasks

**Transportation:** Coordinate and arrange safe transportation for volunteers

**Supervision:** Provide volunteer support, supervision, and evaluation as able

**Trouble Shooting:** Staff the Trouble Desk and coordinate volunteer issues, requests, and complaints

**Support:** Coordinate with logistics to provided volunteers with support

Support Desk Supplies

Pens, pencils, paper, clipboards

Internet, laptop, printer

Phone and contact lists

FORMS

* Incident Report
* Transportation

Demobilization Desk

## Demobilization Policies

Debriefing including Psychological First Aid and/or Critical Incident Stress Management may be conducted at the close of the volunteer service.

Contact information reviewed at debriefing will include notification that an MRC unit coordinator may contact spontaneous volunteers following de-mobilization to discuss further interest/training.

Spontaneous volunteers may be given MRC unit coordinators’ contact information and MRC Core Competency Card.

## Volunteer Demobilization Desk Tasks

**Badge Return**: Collect all volunteer identification such as badges and vests

**Reports:** Collect all final reports and activity logs

**Exit Information:** Ensure that all volunteers receive exit Information

**Sign-Out:** Ensure that all volunteers sign out and leave promptly

**Data:** Create a data base for medical follow-up and study as appropriate

**Volunteer Affiliations:** Provide information on affiliated volunteer opportunities and organizations such as the MRC

**Stress Management:** Provide behavioral health first aid or critical incident stress management as appropriate

Demobilization Desk Supplies

Pens, pencils, paper, clipboards

Internet, laptop, printer

Phone and contact lists  FORMS:

* VRC Demobilization Checklist
* Exit and Demobilization Information

VRC Facility

VRC Facilities Policies

**Data Management:** A volunteer database will be used to store contact and background information about spontaneous volunteers. It will mirror the volunteer intake form. A separate database file should be established for each disaster at the time of the VRC activation so that staff will have the ability to search the database for volunteers with particular skills and availability. The database will be used to produce summary reports for final reporting. Manual systems that replicate the computerized database will be used in events where power is unavailable.

**Confidentiality and privacy of information** are important concerns when developing and using a database and VRC staff will adhere to the jurisdiction’s policies on these issues.

**Safety:** A safety officer will be assigned to the VRC who will report to the EOC safety officer. The safety officer identifies and assesses health and safety hazards at the VRC and takes appropriate measures to mitigate them.

**Security:** A security officer will be onsite at all times the VRC is open or staffed. No weapons of any nature, alcoholic beverages, or drug paraphernalia will be permitted anywhere at the VRC.

**Food:** Rest areas and food will be supplied for VRC volunteers. Water and snacks may be provided for all volunteers at the VRC.

VRC Facility Tasks

Food, water, sanitation, cleaning, rest area, first aid kit

Phones, TV, internet, secure power supply, HVAC

Secure storage area for volunteer items, if available

Facilities Supplies

Supplies for staff

Supplies for facility operations

FORMS:

* Facility Assessment Checklist
* Facility Contact List

VRC Data Management

## VRC Data Management Policies

All volunteer information is considered sensitive and should be kept confidential

All activities, hours, and expenditures should completely documented

All logs and documents should be completed at the end of each shift and filed with the EOC finance section.

## Data Management Tasks

**Documentation:** Data management system both paper and electronic

**Security:** Security and privacy protection for all data

**Files:** Individual volunteer files

**Reporting:** Reporting protocols at the end of each shift/operational period

Data Management Supplies

Pens, pencils, paper, clipboards

Phones and contact lists

Internet, laptop, printer, scanner, copier

FORMS:

* Resource Request
* Financial Tracking
* Volunteer Hours Tracking

Phone Bank/Call Center

This may be a separate area managed by a call center unit leader. The VMS director, in coordination with the logistics section chief and public information officer will determine the need for activating a call center/phone bank, which will be located at the Volunteer Reception Center or another location with sufficient capacity. The phone center will receive phone calls from prospective volunteers and agencies requesting volunteers.

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# Volunteer Retention

A positive experience encourages volunteers to continue to provide support for current and future operations. A poor volunteer experience could lead to disruptive and/or unsafe behavior.

Disaster and emergency volunteer management, “volunteer leadership,” is not a linear process. Just as emergency preparedness is a cycle linked by overlapping phases including prevention, response, recovery and mitigation; so is volunteer management. Strong and sustainable volunteer programs are founded and grounded upon people with passion and programs with policies and principles.

Volunteer recruitment, reception, training and retention are interwoven. It is therefore, useful to conceptualize SUV retention in terms of a paradigm in which the process is continuous and cyclic with opportunities for outreach, reception, engagement, and interaction with a prospective or registered volunteer. Every interaction is an opportunity to build the relationships, interests, skills, sense of purpose and connectedness that build upon the individual’s desire to be useful and of service. Volunteer policies:

* Volunteers will be contacted for follow-up post incident to convey appreciation for services rendered and recruitment into an affiliate group. This includes acknowledgements to employees as well. Issues to consider monitoring include potential physical/medical issues related to job assignments. If needed, volunteers should be offered critical incident stress management (CISM) assistance.
* When volunteers are released, they will be asked to consider registering with a VOAD or other recognized volunteer organization such as the MRC or CERT.

Citizen Corps groups have a unique opportunity to be the conduit to attracting, receiving, assessing, training, and managing spontaneous volunteers. When evidence of organizational structure is perceived, particularly in the time of chaos, spontaneous volunteers frequently feel a sense of security and affirmation that their decision to help is validated. Evidence of organizational structure may be seen, heard, and psychologically and/or emotionally experienced. These factors are generated through means that are already in motion within the National Incident Management System and the Incident Command System throughout the year.

# Acronyms

**AAR** After Action Report

**ARC** American Red Cross

**CB** Community Based Organization

**CEMP** Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

**COAD** Community Organizations Active in Disaster

**CERT** Community Emergency Response Teams

**DART** DisasterAnimal Response Team

**DBHRT** Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team

**EMA** Emergency Management Agency (government: local, state, territorial, tribal, and federal)

**EOC** Emergency Operations Center

**ESF** Emergency Support Function

**ESF15** Volunteers and Donations

**FBO** Faith Based Organization

**FDAA** Federal Disaster Assistance Administration

**FEMA** Federal Emergency Management Agency

**IC** Incident Command

**ICS** Incident Command System

**IM** Incident Management

**JIC** Joint Information Center

**JITT** Just-in-Time Training

**MRC** Medical Reserve Corps

**NIMS** National Incident Management System

**NGO** Non-Government Organization

**VMS** Volunteer Management System

**NVOAD** National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters

**PIO** Public Information Officer

**POC** Point of Contact

**POD** Points of Distribution

**PPE** Personal Protective Equipment

**REOC** Regional Emergency Operations Center

**SOG** Standard Operating Guideline

**SUV** Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteer

**UC** Unified Command

**VMS** Volunteer Management System

**VRCC** Volunteer Reception Center Coordinator

**VOAD** Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters

**VRC** Volunteer Reception Center

**VCTF** Volunteer Coordination Task Force

# Appendices

### VMS Forms: *See Tab 1*

### VMS Job Action Sheets (JAS): *See Tab 2*

### VMS Just-in-Time Training (JITT) Guide: *See Tab 3*

### VMS Public Information Officer (PIO) SOG: *See Tab 4*

### VMS Volunteer Management SOG (future)

# Resources

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1. <http://www.fema.gov/public-assistance-local-state-tribal-and-non-profit> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)