

Managing spontaneous volunteers in an emergency

Workshop aim:

The workshop aims to assist in the management of spontaneous volunteers by promoting:

- Pre-emergency preparation
- Best practice management

Overview of the workshop

- Motivations and expectations of spontaneous volunteers
- Managing spontaneous volunteers

Motivations and expectations of spontaneous volunteers

Who is a spontaneous volunteer?

Potential spontaneous volunteers are individuals or groups of people who seek or are invited to contribute their assistance during and/or after an event, and who are unaffiliated with any part of the existing official emergency management response and recovery system and may or may not have relevant training, skills or experience

Key themes from research report

- The role of the media
- Timing of offers of help
- The importance of the event
- Needing to help
- ‘I’ll do anything’

Why do people offer to help?

- 81% Media coverage
- 62% Talking to others
- 53% Call for volunteers
- 44% Size or enormity of event
- 86% Needing to do something to help
- 39% Feeling useful instead of distressed
- The need to talk

When do people offer?

78% within the first week

- 12% on the first day
- 45% within the first few days
- 21% later in the first week

What do people want to do?

- 62% Anything
- 51% Cleaning up
- 46% Food preparation
- 37% Driving
- 35% Emotional support

When do people expect to be used?

- 26% Within a few days
- 23% Straightaway
- 16% Only if needed

- 34% Whenever

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Managing spontaneous volunteers

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using spontaneous volunteers?

Advantages and disadvantages

Advantages

- Flexible, ready workforce
- Surge capacity
- Can be
 - Be highly skilled
 - Be experienced
 - Have local knowledge
- Community recovery and resilience

Disadvantages

- Appropriateness of skills
- Skills in emergency context
- Motivation
- Disengagement with mainstream volunteering

Managing spontaneous volunteers

What are the differences between managing spontaneous volunteers and volunteers outside of an emergency?

Differences

- Motivations
- Managing offers of help
- Resource implications
- Effectively declining offers of help

Managing spontaneous volunteers

- Normal volunteering management principles apply
- Developing a communication strategy
- Managing information flow
- Converting spontaneous volunteers into affiliated volunteers

Planning to use spontaneous volunteers

- Identifying potential roles
- Insurance
- Recruitment and screening
- Volunteer induction
- Integrating spontaneous volunteers
- Supervision
- Managing post incident
- Evaluating effectiveness of using spontaneous volunteers

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