

Volunteer Reception Center Exercise Pre- or Post-exercise Discussion Topics

Who authorizes a volunteer center to set up & operate a Volunteer Reception Center (VRC)?

Volunteer centers should not self deploy. Discuss the VRC concept with the city or parish emergency manager. You might have to convince them of your ability to manage unaffiliated volunteers before they will be willing to “open the flood-gates” to this frightening unknown quantity.

(If there is EM reluctance, Calvin, you might have to enter the discussion. There are several persuasive arguments in that manual posted on our website at:

<http://www1.volunteerflorida.org/publications/docs/unaffiliatedvolunteers.pdf> .)

What logistical items do we need to address and who will do them?

1. Site selection (several alternatives are needed)
2. Phones
3. Press releases providing VRC location, phone numbers, email, etc. (update regularly)
4. Write (or adapt) the safety training for volunteers
5. Job orientation / training for volunteers (Will this be provided by receiving agencies at the VRC or at the job site?)
6. Volunteer identification system / supplies
7. Food for VRC staff (contingency agreements with local restaurants?)
8. Transportation for volunteers into secured areas

How should we let organizations that might need volunteers know about the VRC?

1. Representative of the Volunteer Center should call, email or visit agencies that might need disaster volunteers and explain the process.
2. Make a presentation at a VOAD / interfaith / unmet needs coalition meeting.

What is our capacity to accommodate and manage unaffiliated volunteers?

1. Are we able to be accountable for hundreds of individuals and families?
2. Are there work sites established where volunteers will be trained and supervised?
3. Regarding non-local volunteers, might it be advisable to encourage only groups from organizations that will provide a team leader / supervisor?
4. Are there places for individuals, families and teams to stay?

Media relationships are invaluable.

Try to establish a relationship with one contact from each station or paper and talk in depth with them about the issues surrounding volunteers. This will help them understand your role and trust the information you provide them. Offer information regularly.

If there aren't enough agencies with things for volunteers to do, how can we help organize projects for volunteers, without placing the VC in a position of responsibility for projects that are outside the scope of our mission, skill and liability limits?

Convene a meeting of potential partner organizations with a variety of skills and resources. Discuss the needs, possible solutions and what each partner could offer.