
Unit 5: Managing Spontaneous Volunteers

Introduction In this unit, we will discuss the normal rush of people responding after a disaster and cover the benefits of planning for this before the disaster happens.

Objectives At the conclusion of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Differentiate between spontaneous unaffiliated and affiliated volunteers.
2. Identify process for referring donated volunteer services to voluntary agency organizations, local EMAs, and local volunteer reception centers.
3. Match offered volunteer services to needs.
4. Explain the interaction process with the local volunteer centers in the response phase.
5. Cite ways to promote public messaging about the correct way to volunteer through recovery.

Scope

- Types of Volunteers
- Preparedness
- Key Stakeholders
- Managing Spontaneous Volunteers: An Activity

References

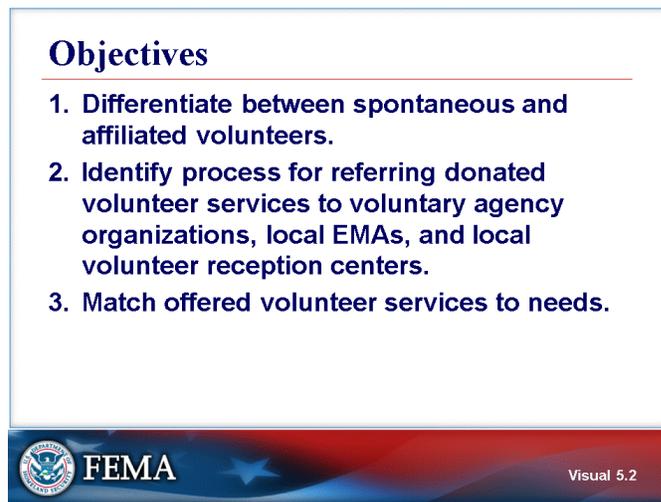
- *Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disaster: The Synergy of Structure and Good Intentions*
- “Unaffiliated Volunteers in Response and Recovery” by Volunteer Florida: the Governor’s Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service, <http://www.volunteerflorida.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/UnaffiliatedVolunteers.pdf>
- E0489, *Management of Spontaneous Volunteers in Disasters*, EMI, April 2011

Visual 5.1



Unit Objectives

Visual 5.2



1. Differentiate between spontaneous and affiliated volunteers.
2. Identify process for referring donated volunteer services to voluntary agency organizations, local EMAs, and local volunteer reception centers.
3. Match offered volunteer services to needs.

Visual 5.3

Objectives (Continued)

4. Explain the interaction process with the local volunteer centers in the response phase.
5. Cite ways to promote public messaging about the correct way to volunteer through recovery.

The slide features a decorative banner at the bottom with the FEMA logo on the left, the text 'FEMA' in the center, and 'Visual 5.3' on the right. The banner has a red, white, and blue wavy background.

4. Explain the interaction process with the local volunteer centers in the response phase.
5. Cite ways to promote public messaging about the correct way to volunteer through recovery.

Types of Volunteers

Visual 5.4

Traditional Affiliated Volunteers

- Are attached to a voluntary agency
- Normally trained for disaster response by their agency
- Logistical support is provided



The image shows three individuals standing in front of a white ambulance with a red cross on its side. The ambulance has 'FEMA' and 'AMBU' visible on it. The individuals are dressed in casual attire, including jackets and jeans. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

 **FEMA**              

Visual 5.4



One type of volunteer is the traditional affiliated volunteer. They are beneficial in that:

- They are already part of a voluntary agency and less likely to self-deploy.
- They are trained and liability insurance is covered by their agency.
- Their feeding, housing, and transportation are provided.

Since affiliated volunteers are already part of a larger organization, their needs are taken care of. Their organizations should already be a part of your plan.

Visual 5.5

Unaffiliated Volunteers

- No association with voluntary organization
- Feel motivated by degree of community ownership
- They may be highly skilled:
 - Accountant
 - Construction
 - Food Services
 - Information Technology
- Commonly known as Spontaneous



FEMA

Visual 5.5



Another type of volunteer is the spontaneous or unaffiliated volunteer. These volunteers:

- Have no association with a voluntary organization.
- Want to help their community.
- Bring many different skills to the table.

In disaster operations, one of the most important aspects of these volunteers is for a community to coordinate a way to match them with a voluntary organization and transition them from unaffiliated to affiliated.

This is often done through regular and social media releases that announce the details of how to serve as a volunteer with a local organization.

It is not the job of the VDCT to transition them to the disaster response, but the job of the organization with whom they want to affiliate.

Visual 5.6

Unaffiliated Volunteers (Continued)

- May not have skills relevant to current disaster
- Must be a major consideration for the annex or EOP
- Could include convergent groups
 - No affiliation with emergency management
 - Individual or group acts independently outside the recognized coordination of the impacted jurisdiction

The image shows the FEMA logo on the left, the word "FEMA" in the center, and a decorative banner with a blue and red gradient and a white star on the right. The text "Visual 5.6" is located in the bottom right corner of the banner.

These volunteers:

- May have varied skills but those may not be conducive to the mission.
- Will show up, therefore you must address them in planning.
- It may be tempting to look at spontaneous volunteers as a problem, but you need to reframe them as a resource. Work closely with the VOAD lead in the EOC or Emergency Manager to see what jobs have priorities and if you can use them to fill those jobs.
- Can include convergent groups. These groups:
 - Have no affiliation with an emergency management group and should be addressed in your plan.
 - May have liability insurance. If they do not, treat them as spontaneous volunteers and match them with an affiliated group.

Visual 5.7

Public Perception

Well-managed volunteers:

- Contribute to a positive public perception of the response and recovery effort
- Can fill in the gaps and meet individual needs of survivors, offer comfort and encouragement



 **FEMA** 

Visual 5.7



Well-managed spontaneous volunteers can create a positive public perception of disaster relief efforts. This perception is important because:

- The press may interview individuals or organizations.
- Volunteers may want to volunteer again or become affiliated.
- Volunteers will tell others about the organization they worked with.

It may encourage others who have not volunteered or donated before to contribute to current or future disasters.

Preparedness

Visual 5.8

General Planning Before a Disaster

- Identify existing local volunteer coordination processes and protocols
- Identify a volunteer intake coordinating agency
- Determine location for physical intake
- Establish MOUs with organizations
 - E.g., who will staff the VRC


FEMA

Visual 5.8



- The location, agency, and person you will refer volunteers to should all be in your plan.
 - Community centers and faith-based campuses are good for Volunteer Reception Centers (VRCs) because they often have:
 - Large open rooms
 - Adequate parking
 - Sanitary facilities
 - Venues to be used for VRCs should be targeted for priority restoration of utilities.
 - Wherever your facility, establish one entrance and a separate exit to create flow.
 - Schools are not good locations because they are often used for shelters.
- Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with stakeholders should be in your annex or emergency plan.
 - Tap into existing resources; do not reinvent the wheel.

Visual 5.9

General Planning Before a Disaster
(Continued)

- Determine process of vetting which organization will receive volunteers
- Determine priority needs and roles of organizations that can use unaffiliated volunteers
- Research existing liability issues and laws that affect unaffiliated volunteers

The slide features a decorative banner at the bottom with the FEMA logo on the left, the text 'FEMA' in the center, and 'Visual 5.9' on the right. The banner has a red, white, and blue color scheme with a star.

Planning involves:

- Knowing the agencies working the disaster in order to determine which volunteers will be referred to them based on the agencies' needs and the volunteers' skills.
 - Organizations may have specific needs, such as volunteers for populations with access or functional needs or animal needs.
 - Agreements to be made ahead of time.
- Referring to legal counsel about liability issues.
- Discovering one organization in the community that is a logical choice for coordinating the multi-agency utilization of spontaneous volunteers.

Visual 5.10

**General Planning Before a Disaster
(Continued)**

- Educate local coalitions and community members
- Build a community network
- Engage the business community
- Establish reporting procedures

The slide features a decorative banner at the bottom with the FEMA logo on the left, the text 'FEMA' in the center, and 'Visual 5.10' on the right. The banner has a red and blue wavy background with a white star.

Planning involves:

- Being proactive in the community. Attend local community meetings or visit local stores.
- Contacting organizations that may not be a part of emergency management.
- Contacting local businesses that may have existing volunteers, donate goods, or offer discounts during times of disasters.
 - According to a survey by Deloitte and The Conference Board, 77% of companies believe volunteer programs can help them improve their business practices and nearly 50% said aligning their giving programs—including volunteering—with business objectives was the biggest change in their philanthropy. (*Talent Management Magazine*, April 2009 issue)
- Establishing reporting procedures to track the number of volunteers that show up, call in, or are referred to an organization. Keep track of volunteer hours.

Key Stakeholders

Visual 5.11

Key Stakeholders in Managing Unaffiliated Volunteers

- Emergency management
- Volunteer center(s)
- VOAD members
- Faith-based organizations
- Community leaders
- Corporate and business partners
- Media



FEMA

Visual 5.11



- It is beneficial to identify all potential partners and build cooperative relationships with organizations such as these listed on the visual.
- Document the number of volunteers your organization has and what they do for your organization. Use this information as you work with community leaders to demonstrate the benefits volunteers give to the community through your organization. This may help garner assistance from the community when needs arise.

Visual 5.12

Volunteer Management – Questions to Consider

- How will volunteers be supervised?
- Will there be liability coverage for the volunteers? How? In what circumstances?
- How will hours be tracked for a potential soft match against the State's cost share for the disaster?

The image shows a decorative banner at the bottom of the slide. On the left is the FEMA logo, which includes the text 'FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY' around a central emblem. To the right of the logo is the word 'FEMA' in large, bold, white letters. Further right is a blue star on a red and white background. On the far right of the banner, the text 'Visual 5.12' is written in a small font.

- How will volunteers be supervised?
- Will there be liability coverage for the volunteers? How? In what circumstances?
- How will hours be tracked for a potential soft match against the State's cost share for the disaster?



- A great Website: <http://www.nonprofitrisk.org>
 - On this site, you can find laws for each State on liability for volunteer organizations.
 - You should know the law in your particular State.

Managing Spontaneous Volunteers: An Activity

Visual 5.13



**Managing Unaffiliated Volunteers:
An Activity**

- Review the scenario and additional information
- Answer the questions/issues to consider
- Summarize your responses on the easel chart
- Be ready to report to the class



**FEMA**Visual 5.13

Purpose:

To determine your role in the process of managing spontaneous volunteers.

Directions:

- Review the scenario (in Unit 3).
- Read through the additional scenario information for this unit.
- Working with other members of your small group, answer the questions for Unit 5.
- Record your answers on the easel and be prepared to report to the class.

ADDITIONAL SCENARIO INFORMATION FOR THIS UNIT

Even though a media message including information about volunteers was released in Unit 3, spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers are hanging around, wanting to help. At least 2 dozen people are milling around the burned out apartment building, but no one is directing them. Over the next few days, others volunteer their services to help people left homeless by the fire. No one has a structured process in place for managing or coordinating the spontaneous volunteers.

Questions/issues for this Unit to be addressed by the group:

- Spontaneous volunteers will need to be coordinated. What key stakeholders from your community would you collaborate with and what would be their role?
- What tasks could these volunteers undertake?

What's In Your Annex?

Visual 5.14

What's In Your Annex?

Does your annex:

- List key stakeholders for management of unaffiliated volunteers?
- Set up a VRC or similar mechanism?

FEMA Visual 5.14

Unit Summary

Visual 5.15

Summary

1. Differentiate between spontaneous unaffiliated and affiliated volunteers.
2. Identify process for referring donated volunteer services to voluntary agency organizations, local EMAs, and local volunteer reception centers.
3. Match offered volunteer services to needs.

FEMA Visual 5.15

1. Differentiate between spontaneous unaffiliated and affiliated volunteers.
2. Identify process for referring donated volunteer services to voluntary agency organizations, local EMAs, and local volunteer reception centers.
3. Match offered volunteer services to needs.

Visual 5.16

Summary (Continued)

4. Explain the interaction process with the local volunteer centers in the response phase.
5. Cite ways to promote public messaging about the correct way to volunteer through recovery.

The slide features a decorative banner at the bottom with the FEMA logo on the left, the text 'FEMA' in the center, and 'Visual 5.16' on the right. The banner has a red and blue wavy background with a white star.

4. Explain the interaction process with the local volunteer centers in the response phase.
5. Cite ways to promote public messaging about the correct way to volunteer through recovery.

APPENDIX

	Page
Appendix A: Volunteer Protection Act of 1997.....	5-18

PUBLIC LAW 105-19—JUNE 18, 1997

VOLUNTEER PROTECTION ACT OF 1997

Volunteer Protection Act of 1997

This is the text of Public Law 105-19; the Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 as signed into law by President Clinton on June 18, 1997:

One Hundred Fifth Congress of the United States of America

AT THE FIRST SESSION

Begun and held at the City of Washington on Tuesday, the seventh day of January, one thousand nine hundred and ninety-seven

An Act

To provide certain protections to volunteers, nonprofit organizations, and governmental entities in lawsuits based on the activities of volunteers.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States Of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Volunteer Protection Act of 1997”.

SECTION 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.

- (a) FINDINGS—The Congress finds and declares that—
- (1) the willingness of volunteers to offer their services is deterred by the potential for liability actions against them;
 - (2) as a result, many nonprofit public and private organizations and governmental entities, including voluntary associations, social service agencies, educational institutions, and other civic programs, have been adversely affected by the withdrawal of volunteers from boards of directors and service in other capacities;
 - (3) the contribution of these programs to their communities is thereby diminished, resulting in fewer and higher cost programs than would be obtainable if volunteers were participating;
 - (4) because Federal funds are expended on useful and cost-effective social service programs, many of which are national in scope, depend heavily on volunteer participation, and represent some of the most successful public-private partnerships, protection of volunteerism through clarification and limitation of the personal liability risks assumed by the volunteer in connection with such participation is an appropriate subject for Federal legislation;
 - (5) services and goods provided by volunteers and nonprofit organizations would often otherwise be provided by private entities that operate in interstate commerce;

(6) due to high liability costs and unwarranted litigation costs, volunteers and nonprofit organizations face higher costs in purchasing insurance, through interstate insurance markets, to cover their activities; and

(7) clarifying and limiting the liability risk assumed by volunteers is an appropriate subject for Federal legislation because--

(A) of the national scope of the problems created by the legitimate fears of volunteers about frivolous, arbitrary, or capricious lawsuits;

(B) the citizens of the United States depend on, and the Federal Government expends funds on, and provides tax exemptions and other consideration to, numerous social programs that depend on the services of volunteers;

(C) it is in the interest of the Federal Government to encourage the continued operation of volunteer service organizations and contributions of volunteers because the Federal Government lacks the capacity to carry out all of the services provided by such organizations and volunteers; and

(D)(i) liability reform for volunteers, will promote the free flow of goods and services, lessen burdens on interstate commerce and uphold constitutionally protected due process rights; and (ii) therefore, liability reform is an appropriate use of the powers contained in article 1, section 8, clause 3 of the United States Constitution, and the fourteenth amendment to the United States Constitution.

(b) **PURPOSE**—The purpose of this Act is to promote the interests of social service program beneficiaries and taxpayers and to sustain the availability of programs, nonprofit organizations, and governmental entities that depend on volunteer contributions by reforming the laws to provide certain protections from liability abuses related to volunteers serving nonprofit organizations and governmental entities.

SECTION 3. PREEMPTION AND ELECTION OF STATE NONAPPLICABILITY.

(a) **PREEMPTION**—This act preempts the laws of any State to the extent that such laws are inconsistent with this Act, except that this Act shall not preempt any State law that provides additional protection from liability relating to volunteers or to any category of volunteers in the performance of services for a nonprofit organization or governmental entity.

(b) **ELECTION OF STATE REGARDING NONAPPLICABILITY**—This Act shall not apply to any civil action in a State court against a volunteer in which all parties are citizens of the State if such State enacts a statute in accordance with State requirements for enacting legislation—

- (1) citing the authority of this subsection;
- (2) declaring the election of such State that this Act shall not apply, as of a date certain, to such civil action in the State; and
- (3) containing no other provisions.

SECTION 4. LIMITATION ON LIABILITY FOR VOLUNTEERS.

(a) **LIABILITY PROTECTION FOR VOLUNTEERS**—Except as provided in subsections (b) and (d), no volunteer of a nonprofit organization or governmental entity shall be liable for harm caused by an act or omission of the volunteer on behalf of the organization or entity if--

- (1) the volunteer was acting within the scope of the volunteer's responsibilities in the nonprofit organization or governmental entity at the time of the act or omission;
- (2) if appropriate or required, the volunteer was properly licensed, certified, or authorized by the appropriate authorities for the activities or practice in the State in which the harm occurred, where the activities were or practice was undertaken within the scope of the volunteer's responsibilities in the nonprofit organization or governmental entity;
- (3) the harm was not caused by willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, reckless misconduct, or a conscious, flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed by the volunteer; and
- (4) the harm was not caused by the volunteer operating a motor vehicle, vessel, aircraft, or other vehicle for which the State requires the operator or the owner of the vehicle, craft, or vessel to--(A) possess an operator's license; or (B) maintain insurance.
 - (A) Possess an operator's license; or
 - (B) Maintain insurance

(b) **CONCERNING RESPONSIBILITY OF VOLUNTEERS TO ORGANIZATIONS AND ENTITIES**—Nothing in this section shall be construed to affect any civil action brought by any nonprofit organization or any governmental entity against any volunteer of such organization or entity.

(c) **NO EFFECT ON LIABILITY OF ORGANIZATION OR ENTITY**—Nothing in this section shall be construed to affect the liability of any nonprofit organization or governmental entity with respect to harm caused to any person.

(d) **EXCEPTIONS TO VOLUNTEER LIABILITY PROTECTION**—If the laws of a State limit volunteer liability subject to one or more of the following conditions, such conditions shall not be construed as inconsistent with this section:

- (1) A State law that requires a nonprofit organization or governmental entity to adhere to risk management procedures, including mandatory training of volunteers.

- (2) A State law that makes the organization or entity liable for the acts or omissions of its volunteers to the same extent as an employer is liable for the acts or omissions of its employees.
- (3) A State law that makes a limitation of liability inapplicable if the civil action was brought by an officer of a State or local government pursuant to State or local law.
- (4) A State law that makes a limitation of liability applicable only if the nonprofit organization or governmental entity provides a financially secure source of recovery for individuals who suffer harm as a result of actions taken by a volunteer on behalf of the organization or entity. A financially secure source of recovery may be an insurance policy within specified limits, comparable coverage from a risk pooling mechanism, equivalent assets, or alternative arrangements that satisfy the State that the organization or entity will be able to pay for losses up to a specified amount. Separate standards for different types of liability exposure may be specified.
- (e) **LIMITATION ON PUNITIVE DAMAGES BASED ON THE ACTIONS OF VOLUNTEERS—**
- (1) **GENERAL RULE—**Punitive damages may not be awarded against a volunteer in an action brought for harm based on the action of a volunteer acting within the scope of the volunteer’s responsibilities to a nonprofit organization or governmental entity unless the claimant establishes by clear and convincing evidence that the harm was proximately caused by an action of such volunteer which constitutes willful or criminal the individual harmed.
- (2) **CONSTRUCTION—**Paragraph (1) does not create a cause of action for punitive damages and does not preempt or supersede any Federal or State law to the extent that such law would further limit the award of punitive damages.
- (f) **EXCEPTIONS TO LIMITATIONS ON LIABILITY—**
- (1) **IN GENERAL—**The limitations on the liability of a volunteer under this Act shall not apply to any misconduct that—
- (A) constitutes a crime of violence (as that term is defined in section 16 of title 18, United States Code) or act of international terrorism (as that term is defined in section 2331 of title 18) for which the defendant has been convicted in any court;
- (B) constitutes a hate crime (as that term is used in the Hate Crime Statistics Act (28 U.S.C. 534 note));
- (C) involves a sexual offense, as defined by applicable State law, for which the defendant has been convicted in any court;
- (D) involves misconduct for which the defendant has been found to have violated a Federal or State civil rights law; or
- (E) where the defendant was under the influence (as determined pursuant to applicable State law) of intoxicating alcohol or any drug at the time of the misconduct.

(2) **RULE OF CONSTRUCTION-** Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to effect subsection (a) (3) or (e).

SECTION 5. LIABILITY FOR NONECONOMIC LOSS.

(a) **GENERAL RULE-** In any civil action against a volunteer, based on an action of a volunteer acting within the scope of the volunteer’s responsibilities to a nonprofit organization or governmental entity, the liability of the volunteer for noneconomic loss shall be determined in accordance with subsection (b).

(b) **AMOUNT OF LIABILITY—**

(1) **IN GENERAL—**Each defendant who is a volunteer, shall be liable only for the amount of noneconomic loss allocated to that defendant in direct proportion to the percentage of responsibility of that defendant (determined in accordance with paragraph (2)) for the harm to the claimant with respect to which that defendant is liable. The court shall render a separate judgment against each defendant in an amount determined pursuant to the preceding sentence.

(2) **PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSIBILITY—**For purposes of determining the amount of noneconomic loss allocated to a defendant who is a volunteer under this section, the trier of fact shall determine the percentage of responsibility of that defendant for the claimant’s harm.

SECTION 6. DEFINITIONS.

For purposes of this Act:

(1) **ECONOMIC LOSS—**The term “economic loss” means any pecuniary loss resulting from harm (including the loss of earnings or other benefits related to employment, medical expense loss, replacement services loss, loss due to death, burial costs, and loss of business or employment opportunities) to the extent recovery for such loss is allowed under applicable State law.

(2) **HARM—**The term “harm” includes physical, nonphysical, economic, and noneconomic losses.

(3) **NONECONOMIC LOSSES—**The term “noneconomic losses” means losses for physical and emotional pain, suffering, inconvenience, physical impairment, mental anguish, disfigurement, loss of enjoyment of life, loss of society and companionship, loss of consortium (other than loss of domestic service), hedonic damages, injury to reputation and all other nonpecuniary losses of any kind or nature.

- (4) **NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION**- The term nonprofit organization means--
- (A) any organization which is described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt from tax under section 501(a) of such Code and which does not practice any action which constitutes a hate crime referred to in subsection (b)(1) of the first section of the Hate Crime Statistics Act (28 U.S.C. 534 note); or
 - (B) any not-for-profit organization which is organized and conducted for public benefit and operated primarily for charitable, civic, educational, religious, welfare, or health purposes and which does not practice any action which constitutes a hate crime referred to in subsection (b)(1) of the first section of the Hate Crime Statistics Act (28 U.S.C. 534 note).
- (5) **STATE**—The term “State” means each of the several States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, any other territory or possession of the United States, or any political subdivision of any such State, territory, or possession.
- (6) **VOLUNTEER**—The term “volunteer” means an individual performing services for a nonprofit organization or a governmental entity who does not receive—
- (A) compensation (other than reasonable reimbursement or allowance for expenses actually incurred); or
 - (B) any other thing of value in lieu of compensation, in excess of \$500 per year, and such term includes a volunteer serving as a director, officer, trustee, or direct service volunteer.

SECTION 7. EFFECTIVE DATE.

- (a) **IN GENERAL**—This Act shall take effect 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act.
- (b) **APPLICATION**—This Act applies to any claim for harm caused by an act or omission of a volunteer where that claim is filed on or after the effective date of this Act but only if the harm that is the subject of the claim or the conduct that caused such harm occurred after such effective date.