

SNOHOMISH COUNTY VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



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Purpose

The success of any response depends on a structured and uniform level of training that volunteers must have to be effective and safe. Volunteers play a vital role in the emergency management cycle of mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. To prepare volunteers, emergency managers have developed volunteer training programs to provide education, training and practice that will develop the skill sets needed to assist in an emergency or disaster without the volunteers becoming victims themselves.

This guide explains the roles and responsibilities of acting as an emergency response volunteer in Snohomish County and the associated responsibilities and opportunities. It is important information to have in order to facilitate good decision making during any activation. Training and education is necessary to be successful as a volunteer.

The Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management (DEM) is responsible for registering volunteers with the Washington State Emergency Management Division so that volunteers can serve as Washington State Emergency Workers. The information in this handbook is applicable to all the organizations associated with DEM. It describes the qualifications, organizational structure and registration process for all emergency worker volunteers who will be volunteering with a DEM recognized group

Please be aware that specific volunteer organizations have membership and training requirements that may be more stringent than those required to register as a volunteer with DEM.

If you have any questions about membership and registration, start with your organization contact or liaison. If questions remain, feel free to contact the DEM office at 425-388-5060 and ask for the DEM Volunteer Liaison.

The Need for Volunteers

The population of Snohomish County is growing rapidly every year. With significant hazards (such as earthquakes), lean emergency management resources, and a limited number of first responders in the county, volunteer support is necessary to help DEM achieve its mission of developing disaster-resistant communities. Therefore, one of DEM's most important functions is to collaborate with the many non-profit organizations in Snohomish County and empower them to grow and develop their capabilities.

DEM needs a core group of skilled and knowledgeable residents who are able to help by taking care of themselves and those around them in an emergency or disaster. The individuals who have chosen to volunteer and take the time to become trained and prepared are one major factor that significantly mitigates the impact of any disaster. DEM appreciates your interest in becoming part of that group.

Organizational Overview and Structure

Generally, when emergencies occur in Snohomish County they are dealt with very effectively by our firefighters, emergency medical personnel, law enforcement, etc. However, when a disaster overwhelms local resources, it requires a different response. Under these circumstances and when the Emergency Coordination Center (EEC) is activated, DEM is responsible for overall coordination of emergency management activities.

General Administrative Policies

Policies provide overall guidance and direction to DEM staff and volunteers regarding obligations and responsibilities within the DEM Volunteer Program. These policies do not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement with any emergency worker or volunteer. The Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management (DEM) reserves the right to change any of these policies at any time.

Emergency Worker. The Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 38.52.010 (4) states "Emergency worker" means "...any person who is registered with a local emergency management organization or the department and holds an identification card issued by the local emergency management director or the department for the purpose of engaging in authorized emergency management activities or is an employee of the state of Washington or any political subdivision thereof who is called upon to perform emergency management activities."

Registration and Credentialing. To be considered a pre-registered and affiliated emergency worker, a registration process needs to be completed and the volunteer needs to be assigned to a specific position through DEM or be a volunteer of a partner agency whose intake process is equal or exceeds that of DEM.

After joining an affiliated organization in Snohomish County, a volunteer's application will be sent to DEM and an ID card will be issued if the volunteer organization requires one.

At any time after an ID card is issued, the volunteer or DEM may terminate the relationship without cause. If a volunteer wants to withdraw from participation, DEM must be notified and the ID card must be returned. If DEM has terminated the relationship, the volunteer must return the card promptly (within 10 business days).

In order to be pre-registered as an emergency worker in Snohomish County, the following must be completed and submitted to the affiliating volunteer organization:

1. A completed Emergency Worker Registration Card aka "Volunteer Application Form"
2. A photocopy of a government issued ID card,
3. A certificate of completion for the following FEMA NIMS Courses;

IS 100a – Introduction to Incident Command System (available online at <http://training.fema.gov/IS/NIMS.asp>)

IS 700 – National Incident Management System (NIMS), An Introduction (available online at <http://training.fema.gov/IS/NIMS.asp>)

In addition, minors under the age of 18 have additional requirements:

1. All minors must sign a "Parental Consent Form for Minor Emergency Worker" form.
2. Volunteers, ages 14 and 15, must also be accompanied by a parent or guardian who must be registered with the same organization as the minor.
3. Minors 15 and under may only work with their parent or guardian at a task that is assigned and is within the scope of training and responsibility of the organization the parent and child are registered with.

The minimum age of a registered volunteer is 14 years of age.

Registration expiration may vary depending on the specific partner organization's policies and requirements. Volunteers with expired registrations are considered inactive and ineligible to participate in training events or activations. Be mindful that failure to keep a registration current could jeopardize state liability protection. To renew an expired ID card, have your organization notify DEM to facilitate getting an updated ID card. The card can be picked up or forwarded to the parent volunteer organization.

Temporary Emergency Workers. DEM provides field registration kits and trained personnel to support on-scene registration of temporary emergency workers during disasters. Utilization of temporary emergency workers is limited to those tasks that have a supervisor present at all times. **Unaffiliated volunteers who are minors** must be accompanied by an adult parent or authorized guardian who must be legally able to sign the Parental Consent form and who must remain with the minor at all times if 15 or younger.

DEM Partner Organizations

DEM affiliated programs.

Snohomish County Emergency Response Volunteers (SERV) is made up of volunteers, from Snohomish County with a wide range of experience that donate their time to support the Emergency Coordination Center (ECC) during activations, trainings and exercises.

The SERV Team provides necessary support functions that allow the ECC to run smoothly and operate efficiently and effectively to provide necessary support to the incident. Team members are needed to assist in the day-to-day support functions of the ECC. Tasks may include monitoring the incoming phone calls, assisting with displays throughout the room, writing Situation Reports (and assisting the Planning Section as a whole), helping to input resource requests (assisting the Resource Section), monitoring the front door and screening visitors, and other responsibilities as needed. These team members are critical to keeping the ECC running safely and efficiently.

Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) programs educate residents about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area, and provides training in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, disaster medical triage and treatment, and team organization. Several Snohomish County communities have organized CERT teams that local jurisdictions can activate when needed to support the response to a local emergency. For structured CERT teams DEM can pre-register CERT trained volunteers affiliated with a team. Individuals who have been through the CERT course but are not affiliated with a community team will be required to register as unaffiliated volunteers during an event.

Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS) is an organization of amateur radio operators who volunteer to provide radio communications for State and local governments in times of emergency. ACS members are assigned to duty stations in the DEM ECC, the EOCs of DEM's member jurisdictions, and at Incident Command Posts, as well as other locations deemed useful during an emergency or disaster.

Activation and Response

Activation. When DEM activates emergency response volunteers, notification may be received by telephone, text or email. Typically volunteers are notified through a web-based communications platform. Unless instructed otherwise, volunteers, once notified, should call their volunteer organizations to indicate availability and scheduling, as well as receive any other response instructions.

If the need for unaffiliated volunteers arises, DEM will notify the community that a Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) is being established, its location and hours of operation. This information will be distributed through normal news media channels, radio and social media outlets.

A volunteer is considered to be “an emergency worker on duty” when the following four elements are in place:

1. The volunteer have been pre-registered as a member of a recognized emergency response organization or has registered as a temporary emergency worker at a Volunteer Reception Center (VRC).
2. The volunteer is activated by an authorized person or agency.
3. The volunteer is operating under the authorization of a Washington State mission number.
4. The volunteer has reported to, and signed in at, a location designated by their organization.

ID Card. You must display a current emergency worker identification card during any activation or run the risk of being denied access to the work area. Security is heightened during an actual emergency or disaster. Volunteers shouldn't assume that they can gain access to a sensitive work area without displaying proper identification.

EMD Authorization. All assignments performed during an emergency activation or training event must be approved by the Washington State Emergency Management Division (EMD). EMD indicates its approval by assigning a mission number to the mission or training event.

Supervision. The worker must operate under the direction and control of a supervisor authorized by the DEM Director or a partner organization.

Check-in/Check-Out. Volunteers must sign in and out of duty at either the incident command post or the Volunteer Reception Center.

Responsibilities. The responsibilities of Washington State Emergency Workers are specified in WAC 118-04-200, and all registered volunteers must comply with these responsibilities. You can find specific details on the EMD website (www.emd.wa.gov)

Claims. A comprehensive liability and/or property loss reimbursement program covers volunteers while working under the supervision and direction of the Department of Emergency Management or a volunteer organization. Registered volunteers are indemnified against personal liability, bodily injury or property damage so long as they are functioning within the parameters of the legal definition of an Emergency Worker. Under certain conditions volunteers may be able to be reimbursed for fuel, toll and ferry expenses when using your personal vehicle (WAC 118-04-360). More complete information is located on the Washington State Emergency Management Department's website.

Volunteers who may become injured or have equipment damaged or lost should notify their immediate supervisor in the organization they are affiliated with. DEM will be proactive in helping with the reimbursement claims process for any out of pocket expenses incurred. In the event of an injury, contact the DEM Volunteer coordinator immediately so that the appropriate paperwork can be provided and help given to understand the process involved. Because of the volunteer's high value to the community, DEM is committed to helping with the navigation of the claims process.