

Volunteer Guidance Tool

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1000 Use of Volunteers to Assist in Oil Spill Responses

The use of volunteers to assist in oil spill responses is recognized in 40 CFR 300 Part 185 (c), the NCP. The NCP defines “volunteer” as “any individual accepted to perform services by the lead agency which has authority to accept volunteer services” (for examples, see 16 USC 742f(c)). A volunteer is subject to the provisions of the authorizing statute and the NCP.

During an initial response before a need for volunteers has been expressed, the ICS structure may not contain positions specifically dedicated to volunteer management. The Liaison Officer will query other ICS Sections and Units concerning the need for the use of volunteers, or if there is interest expressed by the public and therefore a need to respond to requests for volunteers exists, the Liaison Officer will assign a Volunteer Coordinator to manage the work. If there are a significant number of volunteers needed, the Planning Section Chief will establish a Volunteer Unit under Planning.

Volunteers fall into two general categories:

- Affiliated volunteers are individuals associated with an Affiliated Volunteer Organization prior to an incident. They usually have received sufficient training to allow them to contribute to their host organizations, although individuals may not be trained in oil spill response.
- Non-affiliated volunteers are individuals not affiliated with an existing Affiliated Volunteer Organization. After a spill has occurred, convergent volunteers may express a spontaneous desire to participate in a response effort but may have little or no oil spill response training.

Human health and safety are the first priority in a decision regarding use of volunteers. The benefit of volunteer efforts must be weighed against concerns for volunteer safety. Based on the conditions specific to an incident, the UC will determine the suitability of integrating volunteers, whether affiliated or convergent, into an oil spill response.

1100 Affiliated Volunteer Organizations

Affiliated Volunteer Organizations generally hold a nonprofit status and provide some form of training, maintain an affiliated volunteer database, and have volunteer functions to facilitate current volunteer experience and communication. These groups also accept donations of money or materials.

1200 Non-Affiliated Volunteers

Oil spills typically receive significant press coverage and engender strong public concern for public health and injury to wildlife and the environment. This visibility and concern motivate citizens to assist where they can in the oil spill response. The opportunity for the public to volunteer during an oil spill can be helpful for their emotional experience and can assist in altering public perception in a positive manner.

Once a decision has been made to call for convergent volunteers, the Volunteer Coordinator within ICS may work with local emergency managers or an Affiliated Volunteer Organization to organize a volunteer intake and registration process.

1300 Volunteer Policy of the Regional Response Team and Northwest Area Committees

The general policy accepted by the NWACs/RRT10 is that volunteers will be used in low-risk activities and only after receiving safety training appropriate for their designated activities. If volunteers are used for higher risk activities such as wildlife rehabilitation or pre-cleaning beaches, specialized training and in some cases, licensing may be required.

- Priority will be given to volunteers associated with an Affiliated Volunteer Organization and with documented specialized training.
- Non-affiliated volunteers must participate through either local government or an Affiliated Volunteer Organization.
- Use of unpaid, convergent volunteers will supplement, not replace, the work of professional responders hired by the RP.
- For safety, liability, and management reasons, volunteers will not be used during hazardous material or incidents involving weapons of mass destruction.

1400 Decision to Use Volunteers

The UC will decide whether volunteers will be used in a specific incident, as well as in what roles/capacities they may serve, for what duration. The decision to use volunteers will be made by the UC after discussion of the advantages and disadvantages associated with a particular incident, with advice from legal representatives because volunteer coordination in an oil spill offers complications not normally encountered in a response. The UC should consider the following issues when deciding whether to utilize volunteers.

- Non-wildlife unaffiliated volunteers do not usually participate in physical removal or remedial activities during oil spill response. The Planning, Operations, and Logistics Sections will need to incorporate volunteer efforts into

many aspects of their duties. This paradigm shift will require time and effort during an Incident Command Post's daily routine.

- The timing of the Incident Action Planning process could be more immediate than the lead time volunteer training and deployment might require. The cycles could be mismatched and difficult to manage.
- Unaffiliated volunteers are “just in time” trained. This creates a higher risk of injury and liability than other oil spill responders who are trained and exercised on a regular basis.
- More risk and cost may be required to train volunteers at a minimum level, which could achieve a lower performance result at a higher threat to safety.
- Using volunteers at the Incident Command Post may create an information security risk.
- There are many agencies involved in oil spill response. UC should be aware of any litigious issues between agencies and subsequent access to sensitive information.
- If there is no RP for a spill, the responsibility of volunteer liability will need to be determined.

1500 Federal Agency Volunteer Management Policy

The three primary federal regulations governing oil spill response—40 CFR 300 (NCP), 29 CFR 1910.120 (Occupational Safety and Health Standards/Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response) and 40 CFR 311 (Worker Protection)—do not exclude the use of volunteer organizations. However, all spill response operations must comply with these regulations. Various health and safety requirements for different on-site activities are outlined in 29 CFR 1910.120. In addition, various federal property owners (e.g., United States Department of Defense and Department of Energy) may have specific regulations, policies or national security concerns regarding the use of volunteers. The USCG requires each volunteer to sign a “hold harmless” clause. The legal representatives of these organizations must be consulted prior to employing volunteers.

The USCG and EPA have signed a [Memorandum of Understanding with the Corporation for National and Community Services](#) for the management of non-affiliated volunteers. [The NRT has published the Use of Volunteers Guidelines for Oil Spills.](#)

The USCG Auxiliary is chartered to assist the USCG as authorized by the Commandant and by Congress. Their functions include all missions authorized by law except military operations and law enforcement. They are involved with marine safety, environmental protection, search and rescue, aircraft operations, seamanship training, weather training,

radio and computer operations, public education instruction, aids to navigation, vessel safety checks, support during disasters, recruiting assistance, and safety patrols.

1600 Washington Volunteer Management Policy

Ecology has established a system to pre-register volunteers and operators of “vessels of opportunity” who have expressed interest in being trained and available to assist in responding to oil spills (before, during, or after). Some Washington plan holders have contracted access to pre-trained “vessels of opportunity” that are able to deploy boom, assist in oil recovery, and support logistical needs during a response. These assets are accessed through the company’s response contractors.

1601 Washington Volunteer Wildlife Rescue Operations

Oiled wildlife response programs throughout the world regularly incorporate the volunteers as a part of their overall rescue strategy. In Washington State, volunteers are used in combination with paid staff and consultants.

Wildlife Volunteers

- The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is recognized as the “affiliated organization” for the purpose of recruiting and training, volunteers for oiled wildlife rescue.

See Section 9310, “Northwest Wildlife Response Plan” for a description of the Wildlife Branch duties and responsibilities.

1602 Washington Volunteer Emergency Worker Program

Washington State's Emergency Worker Program is designed for use during emergencies, disasters, and related incidents. Local governments, with the Washington Military Department, Emergency Management Division providing assistance, implement the Emergency Worker Program. While this program has generally been used for search and rescue missions, local officials may elect to implement it for volunteers in oil spills for specific tasks. However, if local emergency management agencies elect to implement this program for oil spill response, they will need to be integrated into the Incident Command structure established by the state and federal OSCs for the spill. The following are some of the job classes of emergency workers that have been established in the Emergency Worker Program:

- Administrative assistance such as recruiting, coordinating, and directing oil spill support activities.
- Communication assistance that is carried out in accordance with approved state or local emergency operations and communication plans.
- Fire service assistance, including fighting fires, rescuing persons, or protecting property. This job class does not include volunteer fire fighters while operating under RCW 41.24.

- Mass care assistance, including the provision of food, clothing, and lodging for persons who may be temporarily displaced or for oil spill response workers; and
- Public education assistance involving public education and informational activities necessary to keep the public informed during an oil spill.

This list is just a summary of the potential activities for volunteers under the Emergency Worker Program that may be appropriate during an oil spill. Emergency workers will be assigned to an emergency worker class in accordance with their skills, abilities, licenses, and qualifications. Emergency workers must register in their jurisdiction of residence or in the jurisdiction where their volunteer organization is headquartered. Please refer to Chapter 118-04 of the Washington Administrative Code or contact local emergency management agencies.

1700 Oregon Volunteer Management Policy

State agencies may provide limited training but have no resources to manage volunteer organizations.

Human health and safety are the first priority in decisions regarding use of volunteers. Volunteers will normally only be used in very low risk activities and only after receiving appropriate safety training. Volunteers with documented specialized training will be given higher priority for use.

1800 Idaho Volunteer Management Policy

The State of Idaho has several statutes that allow for use of volunteers, and there are limited immunities. Idaho’s plans and policies would require training consistent with 29 CFR 1910.120.

1900 Makah Tribe Volunteer Management Policy

The Makah Office of Marine Affairs has created an ordinance to address the rapid training of tribal members to participate in a response. The following table shows the training requirements.

Public Interest Volunteers	
Wildlife rescue and recovery	
On the beach	4 hours
In the water wading	4 hours
In small boats	4 hours
Wildlife cleaning at staging areas outside the “hot zone”	4 hours

Beach cleanup (especially the cleaning of oil-affected stones, etc.)	4 hours
Visitors to the "Hot Zone"	
Personnel who may be required to perform on-site duties during the response mode of operation	24 hours
Full time employees of contractors and those giving the 4-hour Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER)	40 hours
Conducting Overflights – Helicopter Emergency Egress Device System (HEEDS) training	8 hours