

## **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **SONOMA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES MISSION STATEMENT**

The Department is committed to providing efficient and effective emergency response, planning, recovery, education and protection for disasters, fires, and hazardous materials incidents within Sonoma County by:

- Providing quality informational programs;
- Sponsoring public outreach programs to increase awareness and provide a forum for communication with the community we serve;
- Utilizing a corps of volunteers to support goals;
- Ensuring a strong partnership with the local communities through local advisory committees.

### **PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK**

The purpose of this Handbook is to provide overall guidance and basic information for volunteers who have committed time to work with the Department. This Handbook is designed to serve as a guide and does not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or employment agreement.

## **SECTION 2: THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**

### **OVERALL POLICY ON INVOLVEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS**

The County of Sonoma is committed to the principle of volunteerism. Volunteers are a valuable resource in enhancing the County's ability to deliver services in a cost effective manner by providing services which would not otherwise be available to the public.

The achievement of the Department of Emergency Services' goals is improved by the active participation of members of the community. The Department accepts and encourages the involvement of volunteers within appropriate programs and activities.

### **ROLE OF THE SONOMA COUNTY VOLUNTEER OFFICE**

Responsibility for implementation of volunteer policies and procedures is assigned to the County Volunteer Office within the Personnel Department. All volunteer positions must be approved through the County Volunteer Office.

The County Volunteer Office provides support to County departments by assisting in the development of volunteer jobs; recruitment of volunteers to fill job requests; ensuring that volunteers meet minimum qualifications; maintaining the necessary records for all volunteers; handling insurance issues related to volunteer work; consulting with appropriate County departments about any problems involving volunteers; holding annual recognition activities for volunteers; and issuing an annual report to the Board of Supervisors on volunteer program activities.

### **ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR**

The productive involvement of volunteers requires a planned and organized effort. The function of the Department Volunteer Coordinator, in collaboration with the County Volunteer Office, is to provide a coordinating point for effective volunteer resources engagement within this Department. The Department Volunteer Coordinator assists paid and volunteer staff efforts in support of the organization's mission.

### **DEFINITION OF A "VOLUNTEER"**

A Department of Emergency Services volunteer is an individual who, beyond the confines of paid employment and normal responsibilities, contributes time and service to assist the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services in the accomplishment of our mission. Unless specifically stated, volunteers will not be considered as "employees" of the Department.

**Volunteers must have the following on file with the Department Volunteer Coordinator:**

- **completed *County Volunteer Application***
- **signed *Volunteer Contract***
- **signed *Volunteer Handbook Acknowledgment / Code of Conduct Certification***

### **VOLUNTEER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Volunteers are viewed as valuable resources to this Department, staff and clients. Volunteers will be extended the right to be given meaningful assignments, be treated as equal co-workers, effective supervision, involvement and participation, and recognition for work done. In return, volunteers agree to actively perform their duties to the best of their abilities and to remain loyal to the goals and procedures of this Department.

## **SECTION 3: MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services is a government agency dedicated to providing service to the public. The Department of Emergency Services has traditionally requested and received the highest ethical performance from volunteers. In an effort to maintain the high standard of conduct expected and deserved by the public and to enable the organization to continue to offer services required, the Department of Emergency Services operates under the following Code of Conduct, applicable to all volunteers.

### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

Volunteers shall:

- Treat other volunteer co-workers in a respectful, cooperative and courteous manner at all times.
- Communicate all official business in a professional manner and refrain from making comments of a racial, sexual or derogatory nature. (including e-mail, Internet, two-way radio, etc.).
- Use the name, emblem, endorsement, services or property of the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services for official business only.
- Not accept or seek on behalf of himself/herself or any other person, any financial advantage or gain of other than nominal value which may be offered as a result of the volunteer's affiliation with the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services.
- Not publicly utilize any Department of Emergency Services affiliation in connection with the promotion of partisan politics, religious matters, or positions on any issue not in conformity with the position of the Department of Emergency Services.
- Keep confidential all Department of Emergency Services information that is available solely as a result of the volunteer's affiliation with the Department of Emergency Services.
- Not knowingly take action or make any statement intended to influence the conduct of the Department of Emergency Services in such a way as to confer any financial benefit on any person, corporation, or entity in which the individual has a significant interest or affiliation.
- At all times act in any manner that is consistent with the best interests of the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services.

In the event that the volunteer's obligation to operate in the best interests of the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services conflicts with the interests of any organization in which the individual has a financial interest or an affiliation, the individual shall disclose such conflict to the Department of Emergency Services upon becoming aware of it, shall absent himself or herself from the room during deliberations on the matter, and shall refrain from participating in any decisions or voting in connection with the matter.

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY**

The Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services, in recognition of the volunteer staff, as well as the community it serves, reaffirms its policy to assure fair and equal treatment in all of its practices, for all persons. We will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age or national origin, nor against a qualified disabled individual, disabled veteran or war veteran. The Department holds its volunteers to the same standard.

## **PREVENTION OF HARASSMENT**

The Department is committed to offering volunteer opportunities and to maintaining an environment free of discrimination. As a matter of law and of common decency, as a volunteer, you are entitled to pursue your volunteer activities free from harassment. This includes inappropriate and disrespectful conduct and communication of sexual nature. Therefore, harassment by anyone will not be tolerated. Anyone engaging in such activity is acting beyond the scope of any authority they may have from the Department. Anyone who violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge. Any manager or supervisor who is made aware of a complaint of harassment and fails to take action will be subject to disciplinary action.

Sexual harassment has been defined by federal and state regulations as a form of sex discrimination. It refers to behavior which is unwelcome, is personally offensive, debilitates morale, and interferes with the work performance or effectiveness of a volunteer. It can consist of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other physical or verbal conduct of a sexual nature by supervisors or others in the workplace.

### **Complaint Procedure:**

1. Any volunteer who feels he/she has experienced harassment should immediately report the matter to their supervisor, the Department Volunteer Coordinator or the appropriate Division Manager. The confidentiality of a sexual harassment complaint will be maintained and the complainant protected from reprisal.
2. All complaints will be promptly investigated and appropriate action will be taken to stop any harassment.
3. If we are able to validate the complaint, disciplinary action up to and including discharge, will be taken against the harasser.

If you feel you have experienced harassment, we urge you to talk to your supervisor or the Department of Emergency Services staff. We do not want you to feel that you must tolerate an inappropriate or uncomfortable situation. All complaints will be quickly investigated and action will be taken to stop any harassment.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

No person who has a conflict of interest with any activity or program of the Department, whether personal, philosophical, or financial will be accepted to serve as a volunteer.

## **REPRESENTATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES**

Prior to any action or statement which might significantly affect or obligate the Department, volunteers should seek prior consultation and approval from appropriate staff. Volunteer staff are authorized to act as representatives of the Department as specifically indicated within their job descriptions and only to the extent of such written specifications.

Failure to observe the Code of Conduct or any of these policies may result corrective action or termination of the volunteer's relationship with the Department.

## **DRESS CODE**

As representatives of the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services, all staff members are responsible for presenting a positive image to clients and to the community. Volunteer staff will dress appropriately for the conditions and performance of their duties.

## **TIME SHEETS**

Individuals are responsible for the accurate completion of time sheets, when utilized within their line of service. It is also the responsibility of the individual to submit completed time sheets to their supervisor at the end of each calendar month. Maintenance of these records enables the County Volunteer Office and the Department Volunteer Coordinator to effectively document and recognize volunteer staff contributions.

## **MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS**

A system of records is maintained on each volunteer in the County Volunteer Office within the Personnel Department, including skills and interests, dates of service, positions held, duties performed, evaluation of work (if evaluation is requested by volunteer), and awards received. Designated staff shall be responsible for submitting all appropriate records and information to the Department Volunteer Coordinator in a timely and accurate fashion. Volunteer personnel records shall be accorded the same confidentiality as paid staff personnel records.

## **SECTION 4: RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**

### **POSITION DESCRIPTIONS**

Volunteer staff will be provided with a current description of the duties and responsibilities of the position for which they have volunteered and been engaged to fill. All descriptions shall include a description of the purpose and duties of the position, a designated supervisor and a listing of job qualifications .

### **INTERVIEWING**

Prior to being assigned or appointed to a position, all volunteers will be interviewed to ascertain their suitability for and interest in that position. The interview should determine the qualifications of the volunteer, their commitment to fulfill the requirements of the position, and should answer any questions that the volunteer might have about the position.

### **CERTIFICATE OF ABILITY**

The County of Sonoma strongly supports the goals of the Americans With Disabilities Act. We do not discriminate against disabled volunteers who are otherwise qualified to perform the essential functions of a particular assignment. Volunteers under a course of treatment which might affect their ability to perform their volunteer work may be asked to provide written verification of suitability from their physician. Any volunteer who, after acceptance and assignment by the Department, enters a course of treatment which might adversely impact upon the performance of their volunteer duties should consult with their immediate supervisor and/or the Department Volunteer Coordinator.

## **SECTION 5: TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **ORIENTATION**

All volunteers will receive a general orientation on the nature and purpose of the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services, an orientation on the nature and operation of the program or activity for which they are recruited, and a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of the position which they are accepting in that effort.

### **TRAINING**

Volunteers will receive specific on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their volunteer assignment. For some positions, formal training is offered/required. The timing and methods for delivery of such training should be appropriate to the complexity and demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer.

### **CONTINUING EDUCATION**

All volunteer staff should attempt to improve their levels of skill during their terms of service. Additional training and educational opportunities may be made available to volunteers during their connection with the Department. This continuing education may include both additional information on performance of their current volunteer assignment as well as more general information, and might be provided either by the Department or by encouraging the volunteer to participate in educational programs provided by other agencies.

## **SECTION 6: SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION**

### **REQUIREMENTS OF A SUPERVISOR**

Each volunteer staff person who is accepted to a position with the Department must have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for direct management of that volunteer. This supervisor will be responsible for day-to-day management and guidance of the work of the volunteer, and will be available to the volunteer for consultation and assistance.

### **LINES OF COMMUNICATION**

Volunteer staff are entitled to necessary information pertinent to the performance of their work assignments. Accordingly, volunteers are included in and have access to appropriate memos, materials, and meetings relevant to the work assignments. To facilitate the receipt of this information, volunteer staff should be included on distribution schedules and should be assigned a site for receipt of information distributed in their absence. Primary responsibility for ensuring that the volunteer receives such information will rest with the direct supervisor of the volunteer. Lines of Communication should operate in both directions and should exist both formally and informally.

If a personnel issue arises at any level, and cannot be resolved, it shall be immediately brought to the attention of Department of Emergency Services staff. All personnel issues are considered confidential and shall only be discussed with affected parties, the Department of Emergency Services staff, and appropriate County offices.

### **EVALUATIONS**

Volunteer staff will receive, if requested, periodic evaluations to review their work. The evaluation session is an opportunity for both the volunteer staff member and his/her supervisor to examine and improve their relationship.

### **ABSENTEEISM**

Volunteers are expected to perform their duties on a regularly scheduled and timely basis. If expecting to be absent from a scheduled duty, volunteers should inform their staff supervisor as far in advance as possible so that other arrangements may be made. Continual absenteeism will result in a review of the volunteer's work assignment or term of service.

### **OPEN DOOR POLICY**

The Open Door Policy simply means that we want volunteers to feel free to bring their questions, suggestions or concerns to their Supervisor or Department of Emergency Services staff for discussion and resolution. Any time a volunteer has an unresolved issue regarding his or her job, working conditions, or relationships with other volunteers or employees, they should first discuss the matter with their immediate supervisor. Since their supervisor is closest to the work situation, they are in the best position to resolve problems and will attempt to do so as soon as possible. This discussion will be considered confidential to the volunteer and their supervisor. When you feel that your supervisor has not answered your questions or has not provided a reasonable solution to the problem, you may wish to discuss it with the Department of Emergency Services staff. You are encouraged to bring forward any situation you believe requires correction or needs resolution. You can be assured that you will not be criticized nor will your position be jeopardized for doing so.

## **SERVICE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE DEPARTMENT**

The Department welcomes and accepts the service of volunteers with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the Department.

## **DISMISSAL OF A VOLUNTEER**

Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules and procedures of the Department or who fail to satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignment are subject to corrective action and/or dismissal. Unsatisfactory behavior or performance will be brought to the attention of the volunteer. The volunteer will be given an opportunity to change or correct the problem, when appropriate.

Possible grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct or insubordination, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, theft of property or misuse of agency equipment or materials, abuse or mistreatment of clients or co-workers, failure to abide by Department policies and procedures, failure to meet physical or mental standards of performance, and failure to satisfactorily perform assigned duties.

## **RESIGNATION**

Volunteers agree to provide services for the time period specified in the Volunteer Contract, but may decide to sever the relationship with the Department. Prior notice of such a decision should be communicated as soon as possible. It is highly recommended that the volunteer participate in an Exit Interview with the County Volunteer Office to ascertain why the volunteer is leaving the position, suggestions the volunteer may have to improve the position, and the possibility of involving the volunteer in some other capacity within the County.

## **DEPARTMENT VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR – VOLUNTEER STAFF REPRESENTATIVE**

The Department Volunteer Coordinator also serves as Staff Representative for volunteers. Those staff who are supervising volunteers are responsible for maintaining regular communication with the Department Volunteer Coordinator on the status of volunteers and are responsible for the timely provision of all necessary paperwork. The Department Volunteer Coordinator should be informed immediately of any substantial change in the work or status of a volunteer. It is required that the Department of Emergency Services staff be consulted in advance before any corrective action is taken.

## **SECTION 7: SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION**

### **ACCESS TO DEPARTMENT PROPERTY AND MATERIALS**

As appropriate, volunteer staff will have access to Department property and materials necessary to fulfill their duties and shall receive training in the operation of any equipment. Property and materials shall be utilized only when directly required for Department purposes. Specific procedures and guidelines (if applicable) will be explained when a volunteer receives an orientation for their specific volunteer position(s).

### **INSURANCE**

All volunteer injuries/illnesses that arise out of or occur during the performance of a volunteer's job duties for the County must be reported immediately to the volunteer's supervisor. Certain workers' compensation benefits are available to cover such injuries/illnesses. Generally, as prescribed in the State Labor Code, these benefits include full payment of all medical expenses and reimbursement for travel to and from medical facilities. Additionally, if a job-incurred injury/illness cause a volunteer to lose time from a regular paid position elsewhere, some salary compensation benefits may be paid on a wage-loss basis.

Volunteers working in County approved programs are covered by the County for liability claims of others that may be filed against them and/or the County because of alleged negligent acts or omissions within the scope of the volunteer's duties for the County.

**When a volunteer will be driving in the scope of his/her duties, the following will be required:**

- 1) proof of a valid California Driver License**
- 2) evidence of automobile insurance**

The County of Sonoma has Excess Automobile Liability Insurance for volunteers that use their vehicles as part of their volunteer assignment. A volunteer's private auto insurance provides primary protection. The Excess Automobile Liability Insurance extends the volunteer's coverage to further protect the County from claims. Volunteers are encouraged to consult with their own insurance agents regarding the extension of their personal insurance to include community volunteer work.

**Note:** Getting to and from the worksite is not considered driving for the County and is the responsibility of the volunteer.

Volunteers who are registered Disaster Services Workers and are engaged in regularly scheduled Disaster Services activities, including authorized training, are covered only *during* such activities - not while en route between home and the place to which they are to report for service or training. However, if a Disaster Service Worker is suddenly called to duty during an emergency, workers' compensation coverage starts when the Disaster Service Worker leaves their home and lasts until they are able to return, as long as they make no route deviations for personal reasons.

## **RECOGNITION**

Recognition of the many and varied contributions of volunteer staff is accomplished both formally and informally. Informal recognition (including positive feedback for a job well-done) is the responsibility of each supervisor. Formal activities are coordinated in cooperation with the County Volunteer Office. The Volunteer Office is responsible for setting standards for recognition activities. Formal recognition activities include, but are not limited to, an annual Volunteer Recognition Event and development of nominations for annual awards beyond the Department.