

ANNEX

REGISTERED RESPONDERS

As mentioned there exist few states that have incorporated a registration program to help control and manage the need for identifying and making requests for such individuals when circumstances warrant such requests.

Registered Disaster Service Worker: (DSW) (California Office of Emergency Services: Disaster Service Worker Volunteer Program)

A disaster service worker volunteer is “...any person registered with an accredited Disaster Council...for the purpose of engaging in disaster service...without pay or other consideration.”²

Registered DSW volunteers are persons who have chosen to volunteer their time to assist a disaster or emergency services agency in carrying out the responsibilities of that agency.

The person must:

- be officially registered with the accredited Disaster Council; and,
- not receive any pay, monetary or otherwise, for the service being provided.

“Disaster service worker” includes public employees performing disaster work that is outside the course and scope of their regular employment without pay...”. (Labor Code, §3211.92(b).

The definition “...also includes any unregistered person impressed into service during a state of war emergency, a state of emergency, or a local emergency by a person having authority to command the aid of the citizens in the execution of his or her duties.”²

Circumstances can occur when an emergency official (a fire fighter, law enforcement officer, or other public official having authority to command the aid of citizens to carry out assigned duties) requires the immediate assistance of another person who may not be a public employee or a registered volunteer. In such a time, that official can order a bystander to assist in that emergency situation. When that is done, the bystander has just been impressed into service, and as such, is covered by worker’s compensation and has immunity from liability to the same degree as a registered DSW volunteer. Although rare, certain situations may warrant such action. The emergency official should take note of the impressed person’s name, address, and phone number at the scene of the incident. The impressed person is under the supervision of that official until released from that duty.

Convergent Volunteers: (California Office of Emergency Services: Disaster Service Worker Volunteer Program)

Convergent volunteers are not pre-registered volunteers, and have not been impressed into service. They are volunteers who come forward spontaneously during the time of a disaster or emergency event, or post disaster to assist without pay or compensation. Over the years, California has experienced major disaster events including floods, earthquakes and fires. During such events, individuals have offered to volunteer their time and skills to assist local government in aiding with the disaster. As many as 10,000 of these individuals (called convergent volunteers) came forward during the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989. Convergent volunteers are used to augment existing organizations. Pre-disaster registered volunteers are typically used before convergent volunteers. Convergent volunteers serve at the pleasure of the management of the agency they are assisting. The agency may restrict assignments, control their level of participation, or prohibit their use all together. The agency’s management assumes the responsibility to ensure that convergent volunteers are

physically and mentally capable of performing duties to which they will be assigned, and must provide training appropriate to the assignment. An example of training could be; safety instruction in filling and passing sandbags in a flood situation prior to a volunteer being assigned to that job. Another example of training could be; basic safety instruction in assisting at a shelter and processing incoming evacuees.

Volunteers who spontaneously come forward to assist can become registered as DSW volunteers for the duration of that single event. (*Refer to Registration and Training*) The local emergency plan should make provisions for organizing and registering convergent volunteers. To be covered for workers' compensation benefits, these volunteers must meet all of the requirements as indicated in the DSW Volunteer Program Regulations. This would include proper registration, appropriate training and working under official supervision. Some Disaster Councils have identified in their emergency plans that certain community-based organizations (CBO's) may facilitate the registration of convergent volunteers. Directing volunteers to a designated location and dispatching them through the CBO may help the accredited Disaster Council manage its resources. The CBO's however, cannot actually register the volunteers. They can assist volunteers filling out the registration form, but the public official having authority to do so must administer the loyalty oath, etc.

Once a convergent volunteer is registered as a Disaster Service Worker volunteer, that person is no longer convergent, but considered a registered DSW volunteer.