Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Disaster
Show Me Partnership Conference

AmeriCorps Disaster Response Teams
Clear and Present Danger

- Prospect of continuing severe weather events with escalating frequency and damaging impacts
- Catastrophic events affecting multi-state regions and/or multiple disasters simultaneously affecting several parts of the country
- Missouri Spring 2017
- 2017 Hurricane Season

Moore, OK.
Consequences

- Multiple location events affect the availability and adequacy of response and recovery resources
- Disaster fatigue for faith-based and voluntary organizations active in disaster
- Focus on life-safety, incident stabilization and property conservation

Clarksville, MO flooding 2013.
They Will Come

• Volunteers will show up, whether asked or not.
• They may present a challenge to “professionals” and the community; or they can be a valuable asset.
• Address emergency human services, alleviate pressure of local emergency responders
• The difference is coordination and facilitation.
The Paradox

Volunteer and Donated Resources VS. Capacity for Coordination and Engagement
# Categories of Disaster Volunteers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affiliated</th>
<th>Spontaneous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Attached to a voluntary organization</td>
<td>• Come in ones and twos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pre-registered with an organization</td>
<td>• Not pre-registered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Often trained in specialized skills</td>
<td>• Might have skills and training, or may not</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Management structure</td>
<td>• Do not have any pre-established management structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Covered by agency’s insurance</td>
<td>• May self-deploy independently or part of a group</td>
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</table>
Emergency Response Team

Characteristics of Spontaneous Volunteers

• Timely help
• Not tied to any organization
• Wide range of skills
• May have disaster training
• Individual or groups
• May be local or out-of-town
• May be disaster survivors
Challenges with Spontaneous Volunteers

• May have lack of training or supervision
• Ineffective, duplicated or underutilized efforts
• Obstruction of efforts hindering relief
• Drain on already overburdened resources
• Lack of accountability – negative publicity
• Acting independently, as an individual, or group, outside of the recognized coordination system of the impacted jurisdiction(s).
Benefits of Effective Management of Spontaneous Volunteers

- Survivor’s benefit from volunteer energy
- Agencies get help to provide services
- Communities recover more quickly
- First responders are free of managing spontaneous volunteers
- Volunteers may become affiliated
- Cost-share against Federal Reimbursement
TRIAGE SELF-DEPLOYED ASSETS

Reception/Mobilization Site

- Public Safety
- Law Enforcement
- Fire
- EMS

Unified Command Staging Area:
- Fire
- Police
- EMS

Liaison

Health

Show Me Response

Affiliated Groups

CERT
MRC
etc.

Incident Command Logistics

Unaffiliated Volunteers/Groups

Volunteer Reception Center
What is a VRC?

• A system that matches volunteers and donations with identified survivor and community needs.
• Usually a physical location that provides reception space for volunteers and homeowners, storage space for tools and equipment, and meeting space for organizations involved in response.
• Model can be modified to involve more virtual elements or more collaborative elements.
The Process

Agency/Gov’t Needs

Homeowner Needs

Donated Resources

Volunteer Resources

Volunteer Reception Center / Recovery Center

Needs Reassessed

Resources Utilized and Needs Met
Needs and Resources

Needs

• VRCs must involve a way to identify and track unmet needs in the community:
  - Physical Homeowner Reception Location
  - Canvassing
  - Homeowner Hotline
  - Online Homeowner Intake
  - Coordination with Multi-Agency Resource Centers (MARCs)
  - Social Media
  - Organization/Government Needs Registration Process
  - Forms, Databases, and Mapping
Needs and Resources

Resources

• VRCs must involve a way to capture, track, and coordinate resources flowing into an area:
  - Physical Volunteer Reception Location
  - Volunteer Hotline
  - Online Volunteer Intake
  - Coordination with VOADs, COADs, and grassroots volunteer efforts
  - Social Media and Traditional Media
  - Forms, Databases, and Mapping
Potential Partners

The VRC Team

- Nonprofit
  - Volunteer Connectors
  - Faith-Based Organizations
  - Chambers of Commerce
  - Civic/fraternal

- Government
  - Emergency management
  - Education
  - Law enforcement
  - Health/mental health

- Business
  - Food vendors
  - Real estate
  - Technology companies
  - PPE suppliers
VRC Setup and Operation: Layout, Roles, and Process
Physical Location Considerations:

- Size
- Location
- Amenities
- Parking
- Versatility
- Exclusive/Single Use Space
- Community Familiarity
Set-up Considerations:

- Capacity
- Clear, straight paths between stations
- Signage, signage, signage!
- Bottlenecks and mitigation strategies
- Reception – snacks, water, seating
- Customer service – greeters, guides
- Separate space and processes for homeowners and volunteers
Welcome Desk
Orientation and Registration

Volunteer Interviews

Agency Match / Service Opportunities / Task Assignment

Volunteer Identification (IDs, Wristbands, etc.)

Safety Briefing And PPE

Exit to transportation or field team leadership

Volunteer Enters
VRC Roles

- VRC Manager
- Homeowner Coordinator
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Agency Liaison
- Project Coordinator
- Safety Officer
- Communication Coordinator
- Logistics Officer
- Data Tracking/Call Center Coordinator
- Field Team Leader
- Interviewer/Credentialing Specialist
- Receptionist/Greeter
VRC Roles

• A lot of these VRC roles can be taken on by volunteers
  – Greeter
  – Receptionist
  – Data Entry
  – Interviewer
  – Assignments
  – Credentialing

• Putting spontaneous volunteers in various VRC roles frees up trained volunteers

• Spontaneous volunteers get some training in VRC operations
VRC Roles

IMPORTANT

• Every disaster is different
• Some disasters require all roles to be filled, others only need a few
• In most small-scale disasters, you will take on multiple roles
• Your role(s) will probably change as the disaster response progresses. Be flexible
Process

How should volunteers:

• Register – *In person at the VRC*
• Be vetted – *Volunteer interview and ID check*
• Be transported – *Preferable if possible*
• Be identified – *Wristbands with date on them*
• Be organized – *Sent out in teams*
• Be overseen in the field – *Accompanied by a team leader*
• Be safe – *Given safety briefing and PPE at VRC*
Virtual VRC

- Web-based platform to manage and communicate with spontaneous volunteers

Components of a virtual VRC:
- Web page banner
- First message
- Call center
- Opportunities
- Links to social media
Demobilizing the VRC

- Criteria for demobilizing
- Documentation
- Return of borrowed property
- Cleaning and restoration
- Disaster stress management
- Hot Wash/evaluation
- Plan revisions
- VRC Go-Kit maintenance
- Pass data to LTRC’s
Emergency Response Team

Demobilizing the VRC

VRC
- Homeowner Coordinator/Project Coordinator
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Unskilled Volunteers
- Mass Care, Debris Removal, Temporary Repairs

LTRC
- Disaster Case Management
- LTRC Volunteer Coordinator/Committee
- Skilled Volunteers/Construction Coordination
- Financial Assistance, Building Materials, Individual Assistance, Furniture
VRC as a Springboard to Recovery

Emergency Response Team

Resources
- Virtual Individual Volunteers & Groups
- Affiliated Group Volunteers
- Spontaneous Volunteers & Convergent Groups

Coordination System
- COAD/Emergency Management
  - Response: Donations & Volunteer Coordination Team (DVCT)
  - Recovery: Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC)

Linkage Mechanism
- Call Center/Web Sites VRC/EVC
- Matching & Scheduling Function

Action
- Volunteer Assigned to Organization
- Community/Government Requested Projects
- Team Leader Supervised Incident Specific Projects
Documentation and Recognition

• Retain Volunteers
• Encourage Affiliation
• Federal Reimbursement
• Valuation of Volunteer Time
• Increased perceived value of an organization
Operational Forms

- Volunteer Sign In/Sign Out Form
- Volunteer Intake and Waiver
- Group Volunteer Intake and Waiver
- Homeowner Intake and Waiver
- Other Opportunities Request and Waiver
- VRC Safety Training Sign In
- Safety Briefing
- Donations Intake/Receipt Forms
What’s at Stake

FEMA Recovery Policy: RP9525.2

“Donated resources used on eligible work that is essential to meeting immediate threats to life and property resulting from a major disaster may be credited toward the non-Federal share of grant costs under the PA program. Donated resources may include volunteer labor, donated equipment and donated materials.”
What’s at Stake

Donated resources have **Dual Value**:  
1. Free labor  
2. Monetary value attached to each hour of volunteered labor, each piece of donated equipment, and each donated material (under certain categories of work).
What’s at Stake

Standard Federally Declared Disaster
• Federal cost share = 75%
• Non-Federal cost share = 25%

Ideally, the monetary value of donated resources are used to pay for the entire 25% of non-federal cost share.
Case Studies

Perryville Tornado
Spring 2017

• Initial deployment of 8 AmeriCorps Members
• 7 Days
• VRC at Perry Park Center
• Intake, Registration, Assignments, Safety Briefing, Staging Area, Homeowner Intake, Point of Distribution, MARC
• 2,130 Volunteers served 17,040 Hours clearing 40 properties of debris
Case Studies

Perryville Tornado
Spring 2017

- VRC Intake conducted by ACSTL
- Convoy of Hope team leads
- County Commissioner debris plan
- Red Cross commodity distribution
- Catholic Charities of Southern Missouri initiated MARC
- Briefing/Debriefing with EMA
- University of Missouri Extension
Case Studies

Oak Grove Tornado
Spring 2017

- VRC initiated by ACSTL
- VRC staffed by United Methodist
- Convoy of Hope – POD/Team Lead
- Catholic Charities initiated MARC
- United Way/211 Assistance
- New Life Church
- 380 Volunteers registered for 3,040 Volunteer Hours
Case Studies

Missouri Flooding
Spring 2017

- ERT Deployment: 8 members
- 3 Days of VRC Activation
- United Way Partnership
- VRC at St. Louis County Police Office
- Intake, Registration, Safety, Assignment
- 994 Volunteers served 2,841 Hours
Missouri Flooding - Sandbagging

Spring 2017

• Registered Volunteer Intake & Numbers

• Worked with local municipalities, County Commissioner, and Public Works for Eureka and Valley Park, and St. Louis County OEM, Eureka Downtown, Lion’s Club

• Coordinated flood level survey with volunteer, supplies donated by County, machinery with National Guard, labor supported by Police Department, feeding supplied by The Salvation Army
Case Studies

Missouri Flooding - Sandbagging
Volunteer Management Plan

- Purpose, Assumptions, and Policies
- Guidance for Community Organizations
- Post-Disaster Public Education Strategies
- VRC Activation Procedures
- Post-Disaster Public Messaging Strategies
- VRC Operations Plan
Conclusions

• VRC layout, VRC positions, and overall VRC structure may change depending on the needs of the event

• The overall goal remains the same: Meet identified needs with donated resources in a safe, documented, efficient, and coordinated way.