

# Volunteer Manual

## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT VOLUNTEERS



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Jefferson County Department of Emergency Management  
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[www.jeffcoeoc.org](http://www.jeffcoeoc.org)

**IMPORTANT:** This manual is intended to summarize the general rights and responsibilities of non-paid volunteers registered as emergency workers. It is only a digest and may require reference to the full text for a more detailed interpretation. Copies of the reference material listed below are available at the Department of Emergency Management.

**APPLICABLE REFERENCES:**

- Revised Code of Washington (RCW), Chapter 38.52 – Emergency Management
- Washington Administrative Code (WAC) Chapter 118-04 – Emergency Workers
- Jefferson County Risk Management Policy, August 2011
- Jefferson County Emergency Operations Guide (EOG) 3.3.13 – Volunteer Identification
- Jefferson County Resolution 17-98 adopting a “Computer network, internet, intranet, electronic mail, and voice mail use” policy
- Jefferson County Personnel Administration Manual, 2006 (as amended)



# Jefferson County

## Department of Emergency Management

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### EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT VOLUNTEER POLICY

Revised March 19, 2012

**1. PURPOSE:** This volunteer policy manual outlines the rights and responsibilities of active volunteers of the various teams supported by the Department of Emergency Management (the Department). This volunteer policy manual is intended to clarify the relationship between the Department and our valued citizen volunteers to our mutual benefit and in the interest of our public safety mission.

**2. WELCOME:** *The Department of Emergency Management welcomes all volunteers.* Each volunteer opportunity is a big job and an important one for all of us who serve or live within Jefferson County. We are thrilled and thankful that many talented individuals have chosen to be a part of the volunteer cadre.

All volunteers are special. The time offered is a gift to our community. They bring unique talents, skills and energies into our disaster preparedness and emergency response programs. Helping them become a successful volunteer is the purpose of this handbook. It is important that their volunteer time with us pleasant, productive, and personally satisfying.

*We Love our Emergency Management*

**Volunteers!**



**3. VOLUNTEER POLICIES:** Regardless of the specific role performed during volunteer experience, there are rules, policies, regulations, procedures, and expectations that will govern their service. This is only a summary. *This guide is based on official county policies and elements of the law that may require additional interpretation in their original context.*

**4. NON-DISCRIMINATION:** Volunteers shall be recruited without regard to any individual's sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, marital status, medical condition, disability, or any other basis prohibited by local, State or Federal law. The Department will provide reasonable accommodation to qualified volunteers. Volunteers needing mobility or other accommodation must make these accommodation requests clear prior to their volunteer assignment. The Department reserves the right to limit its use of volunteers, adjust the hours of any volunteer or to otherwise adjust services as it deems fit in order to achieve its public purpose and policy safely and effectively.

**5. POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS ACTIVITY:** Participation in emergency operations is a non-traditional volunteer enterprise. Although the exposure to unnecessary risk will be avoided or

mitigated whenever possible, some emergency response and recovery activities are inherently dangerous. In addition, exposure of the volunteer to images and accounts of loss and trauma, and the other conditions typical to emergency operations, should be expected.

**6. SPECIAL INDEMNIFICATION DURING ACTIVE SERVICE:** Volunteers are entitled to certain protections while engaged authorized volunteer service. The purpose of this safeguard is to encourage volunteer service on behalf of the county without fear of personal liability. Jefferson County Department of Emergency Management will make every reasonable effort to support and protect our volunteers in return for the valuable time and expertise they provide which is so important to the success of the program and our public safety mission.

While engaged in emergency operations as a *Registered Emergency Worker* (including authorized training) Washington State Law<sup>1</sup> gives them certain rights. These include supplemental coverage of medical expenses for on-the-job injuries, replacement of lost or damaged personal property directly related to the volunteer activity, reimbursement for necessary fuel costs and tolls, and other compensation related to an in-service mishap. Coverage does not, however, cover acts of gross misconduct or negligence.

They may also be eligible for “defense” (indemnification and hold harmless) under the provisions of the county Risk Management Policy<sup>2</sup>. A *Documented Volunteer* means they are considered by the policy as a “quasi-employee”, with temporary rights and authority relevant to specific volunteer duties even though they do not receive wages. Eligibility for defense means they must be acting in good faith in the conduct of the lawful business of the county under the direction and control of the Department of Emergency Management.

**7. REGISTRATION AS A VOLUNTEER:** Registration with the Department is a prerequisite for protection. All volunteers are required to be registered with the Department before they start volunteering. The registration process includes filling out a Volunteer Application and familiarization with the policies outlined in this handbook. Important guidance for volunteer activity is found in Washington Administrative Code 118-04 (Emergency Workers). Each volunteer will be provided with a copy of the WAC and will receive orientation to the contents as they relate to volunteer activity. Volunteer candidates may also find a copy of WAC 118-04 in the Library of our web site ([www.jeffcoec.org](http://www.jeffcoec.org)).

**9. EMERGENCY WORKER CLASSIFICATION:** When registered as a volunteer they will receive a classification (general assignment) consistent with the scope of their volunteer responsibilities. Emergency worker classes used in this program are: Administration, Communications, General, and Public Education. They may be given more than one classification in the event the assignment is diversified. (There is a special set of additional qualifications for Search and Rescue emergency workers - see WAC 118-04-120).

**10. EMERGENCY MANAGER IS THE AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:** The Emergency Management Program Manger is the authorized official for registering emergency workers and ensuring certain workers meet basic qualifications as stated in the WAC. The authorized official may at his or her discretion impose more extensive and detailed criteria than specified in the rules.

**11. BACKGROUND CHECK:** Volunteers may be asked to submit to a criminal history check (applicable to those working with at-risk population groups, or who may have access to sensitive

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<sup>1</sup> RCW 38.52 and WAC 118-04.

<sup>2</sup> Jefferson County Risk Management Policy, August 15, 2011

information or restricted facilities). Disqualification for volunteer service based on the results of the background criminal history check is the responsibility of the Department authorized official. Disqualification for volunteer service may be appealed to the County Administrator.

**12. VOLUNTEER IDENTIFICATION:** All volunteers under this program will be issued basic identification as required by the WAC as an indication of their documented volunteer status. Completion of the required on-line National Incident Management System (NIMS) courses will be required for issuing advanced Homeland Security Emergency Responder Identification (ERID)<sup>3</sup>. The Leader of each recognized volunteer organization will provide the necessary records/certificates of completion to the Department for the issuance of an ERID.

Volunteer identification is the property of the Department, and will be returned to the Department upon termination of volunteer service. The display of a volunteer identification badge while engaged in official activities is recommended.

**13. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT EMBLEM:** The official tri-angle insignia of the Department of Emergency Management may be worn by members in good standing as a public indication of their volunteer service provided that such display does not disparage the reputation of the Department.



**14. PERIOD OF SERVICE:** Emergency workers are considered on duty (in service) when they are actively involved in a mission or training event authorized by the state Emergency Management Division (indicated by the issuance of a mission number) or other officially recognized business of the Department; and that activity is properly documented.

While engaged in eligible mission-related activity as an emergency worker (under the aegis of a state EMD mission number), they are entitled to the benefits and provisions of the law for the time and distance to travel to the duty station, performance of volunteer services, and reasonable time to return to their point of origin (portal to portal).

**15. REGULAR ATTENDANCE EXPECTED:** Once volunteer candidates are placed in a volunteer position, they become an important part of the team. Regular attendance at training, community service projects, and emergency activations are an expectation. If anyone wishes to cease being a volunteer at any time, they should notify a team leader so that they can process their departure appropriately. They will be required to surrender their registration card and any Department or team property in their possession at that time.

**16. TRAINING, DRILLS AND EXERCISES:** Volunteers will be periodically required to participate in training courses, procedure drills, and emergency response and recovery exercises. These are intended to help maintain proficiency or to develop new skills. Active involvement in training is an expectation, and has a bearing on volunteer status.

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<sup>3</sup> Emergency Operations Guide (EOG) 3.3.13.

**17. VOLUNTEER TIME SHEETS:** The Department maintains time sheets for each emergency worker. It is critical that volunteers locate the time sheet (check in) at each volunteer location and sign in so that a record of service is maintained. Check in is a part of eligibility for protection under the law. Volunteers will be considered “checked in” if they verbally report to the Emergency Operations Center (or net control station), enter their time and activities in a unit log or otherwise document activities in the records of the Department.

**18. PERSONNEL FILE AND TRAINING RECORDS:** The Department will maintain a file on each emergency worker that contains the volunteer application, training certificates, and any other documentation of volunteer activities. The results of a background check, if any, will not be included in the file and will be retained by the Sheriff’s Office. Volunteers may review the contents of their personnel file at any reasonable time by contacting the Department Program Manager.

**19. SAFETY:** It is the duty of documented volunteers to observe safe practices in all activities related to their volunteer service as articulated in the county safety and loss prevention program.

In addition, the Department segment of the program will consist of 1) periodic training on the requirements of WAC 118-04 regarding Emergency Workers, 2) documented compliance with basic volunteer responsibilities, 3) periodic dissemination of appropriate safety literature, 4) maintenance of related training records, 5) incorporation of a discussion of unsafe practices as a regular agenda item in volunteer training, and 6) inclusion a safety and risk assessment element in all written Incident Action Plans.

**20. REPORT ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS:** Documented volunteers have a duty to immediately report any accident or incident which a reasonable person would expect to result in the eventual filing of a claim or suit.

**21. PERSONAL TRANSPORTATION:** Volunteers are responsible for securing their own transportation to and from their volunteer assignment. (They should consult a tax advisor regarding possible deduction of volunteer mileage.) On occasion, volunteers may be authorized to use County licensed vehicles. In this case they will comply with County policy for the use of such equipment (including completion of a standardized course in driver safety, and possession of a valid driver’s license in good standing).

**22. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT EXPECTED:** The Department’s policy on anti-harassment stipulates that all volunteers are expected to accomplish their work or service in a professional and business-like manner. Volunteers are expected to treat each other with respect and common dignity. Harassment includes unsolicited remarks, gestures, or physical contact; displays or circulation of written materials or pictures derogatory to either gender, racial, ethnic, or religious groups or individuals; or basing personnel decisions on an volunteer’s response to sexually-oriented requests.

**23. SEXUAL HARASSMENT:** Sexual harassment is unwanted, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct which has the effect of creating an offensive, intimidating, degrading or hostile work environment, or adversely interferes with or affects a volunteer’s work performance. Sexual harassment is improper and illegal, and is grounds for immediate dismissal.

**24. WORKPLACE VIOLENCE:** The Department will not tolerate acts of violence committed by regular employees, hourly workers, or volunteers while on Department property or while performing Department business at other locations. Any unlawful act of violence committed by employees, volunteers, members of the public, or others while on Department property or while using

Department facilities or equipment will be prosecuted as appropriate. Violent actions or threats committed by employees or volunteers will not be tolerated or ignored.

**25. DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE (PROHIBITED BEHAVIOR):**

- Is physically assaultive
- Consists of communicated or reasonable perceived threat to harm another individual or in any way endangers the safety of an employee/volunteer;
- Would be interpreted by a reasonable person as carrying potential for physical harm to an individual;
- Is behavior, or action, that a reasonable person would perceive as menacing;
- Involves carrying or displaying weapons, destroying property, or throwing objects in a manner reasonably perceived as threatening; or
- Consists of a communicated or reasonable perceived threat to destroy property.

**26. USE OF DANGEROUS WEAPONS:** Volunteers **may not carry weapons** while involved in Department activities. Possession of a dangerous weapon while engaged in any official volunteer activity including sanctioned training, or emergency operation under a State Emergency Management Division mission number, is prohibited.

**27. INTERNET ACCESS – COUNTY NETWORK:** Volunteers may have occasional access to County computers in the course of official volunteer activity. County computers can only be used for Department business in accordance with Jefferson County Resolution 17-98. This includes electronic mail, internet access, and other such uses. A copy of “*Computer Network, Internet, Intranet, Electronic Mail, and Voice Mail Use*” is available at the Department of Emergency Management. Any non-business use, including internet access, is prohibited. They may be given a username and password for access to County computers. Each volunteer is responsible for maintaining password and network security.

**28. DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE:** Volunteers are expected to show up to their volunteer assignments free of alcohol, drugs, or other controlled substance. The Department may terminate any volunteer for possessing, consuming, selling or using alcohol, drugs or other controlled substances during volunteer hours, or in any manner which impedes performance. It is a violation of the requirements of WAC 118-04 to be involved in any volunteer activity while under the influence of alcohol.

**29. WAC 118-04 COMPLIANCE PROCESS:** Volunteers operating under any Emergency Management recognized programs, and covered under emergency worker rules, will comply with the provisions of WAC 118.04. Compliance will consist of:

- Being provided with a copy of WAC 118-04 (or access to a copy) upon completion of volunteer registration.
- Completion of an (annual) briefing on the content of the WAC as it applies to the volunteer unit or program.
- Completion of a familiarization exam as documentation of the annual awareness briefing.
- Adherence with the basic volunteer responsibilities articulated in WAC 118-04.

**30. BASIC VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE IN SERVICE:**  
Emergency workers will be responsible to certify to the authorized official that they:

- Have not been using any medical prescription or other drug that has the potential to render them impaired or unable to carry out their emergency assignment.

- Are not under the influence of or while using narcotics or any illegal controlled substance.
- Are not under the influence of alcohol.
- Possess a valid vehicle operator license if they are assigned to operate vehicles.
- Will adhere to all applicable traffic regulations
- Will comply with all other requirements specified in this volunteer manual.
- Are mentally and physically fit for their assigned duties.
- Checked in with the appropriate on-scene official or otherwise report as required

**31. CONFIDENTIALITY OF SENSITIVE INFORMATION:** Any information pertaining to criminal investigation, identification of criminal suspects or disaster victims, related medical information, their addresses, internal planning, draft plans or documents, bulletins or news releases not cleared by command, the content of in-house briefings, overheard conversations or radio traffic, or unconfirmed speculation will not be released to the public or discussed with persons not directly involved in the operation unless cleared in advance by the on-scene authorized official and/or identified incident command.

**32. NIMS COURSES REQUIRED FOR BEING ISSUED AN ERID:** The following free online NIMS courses are the minimum required for qualification of an advanced Emergency Responder Identification:

- ICS 100b. – Basic Incident Command System
- ICS 200b – ICS for Initial Action Incidents
- IS 700a – National Incident Management System
- IS 800b – National Response Framework

**33. FILING A CLAIM FOR COMPENSATION FOR INJURY:** The Department will provide forms for personal injury claims. That form must be completed by the Department, the claimant, and the attending physician. Additional documentation may include accident reports, mission logs, ambulance and hospital bills, receipts, medical reports, and other information helpful in describing the extent of the injury, and the circumstances under which the injury occurred. The Department will process their claim through the proper channels.

The county Risk Management Committee (RMC) will determine the appropriate track to take with their claim (Emergency Worker compensation or Documented Volunteer eligibility). You may be required to submit additional information by the RMC necessary for investigation.

Emergency Worker (mission-related) claims over the amount set by RCW 38.52.220 may require convening a compensation board.

**34. PERSONAL INSURANCE MAY BE PRIMARY:** No protection offered under the mission-related provisions of the law will replace other state mandated insurance coverage required for personal vehicles. In the event of a medical emergency or loss/damage to personal property personal insurance will be considered primary.

**35. IMPORTANT LIMITATION:** If involved in an incident that could lead to a claim the volunteer should not make an admission of liability to any person; or discuss incidents that have led or could lead to a claim, lawsuit, or complaint against the County with persons who are not employed by the County.

**36. FILING A MISSION-RELATED CLAIM FOR PROPERTY LOSS OR DAMAGE:**

The Department will provide forms (Form EMD 086 – Property Loss or Damage Claim). All claims must include receipts and documentation.

**37. ELIGIBILITY FOR COVERAGE AS AN EMERGENCY WORKER:**

- The person with the injury or loss is a registered emergency worker.
- They have been activated by an authorized official (under a state EMD mission number).
- They have reported to or were in the process of reporting to the authorized on-scene official (checked in).
- The injury or loss was reported to the Department as soon as possible after occurrence.
- The injury or loss was the direct result of performing the volunteer assignment.
- The claim for injury or loss is accompanied by the proper original documentation.
- The injury or loss was not caused by willful misconduct, gross negligence, or bad faith of the claimant.

**38. MISSION-RELATED FUEL, TOLL, AND FERRY EXPENSE**

**REIMBURSEMENT CLAIMS:** Fuel, toll, and ferry reimbursable expenses will be considered if the volunteer is participating in an actual activation outside of Jefferson County, the mission lasted longer than twenty-four hours, the mission required the emergency worker to drive more than one hundred miles during the course of the mission. Training events and special projects are not eligible for reimbursement. Original receipts must accompany the claim. Use Form EMD-036.

**39. STANDING AND APPLICABILITY:** A volunteer performs a role with the Department of Emergency Management without expectation of remuneration or compensation beyond that provided by law or county policy. Volunteer status with the Department does not include any job rights or responsibilities or expectation of privileges beyond their duties as an unpaid volunteer. Volunteers understand that they serve at the will of the Department and may be dismissed at any time with or without cause.

**40. COUNTY PERSONNEL POLICY:** Nothing in this manual is intended to supersede or replace the applicable provisions of the Jefferson County Employee Manual such as ethics and conduct, use of county vehicles, on duty use of drugs or alcohol, possession of firearms, or anti-harassment policies.

**41. PROCEDURES FOR DISPUTE:** If the Department takes an action against any volunteer for violation of any these volunteer policies, up to an including termination of volunteer service or denial of a claim, they have the option of appeal to the County Administrator. The findings of the County Administrator are final.



Robert W. Hamlin, Program Manager  
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