

DIOCESE OF STOCKTON
RISK MANAGEMENT ADVISORY

VOLUNTEERS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Risk Management Advisory is to provide assistance in the administration of volunteer programs so that related losses can be minimized. While the contributions of volunteers are vital to the operations of many Members of the Diocese, volunteer risk needs to be **actively managed** in order to prevent injury and preserve property.

VOLUNTEER RISK

The risks of loss presented by Volunteer operations include:

- ◆ Injury to the Volunteer (such as the result of a fall)
- ◆ Injuries to others (such as the result of an automobile accident or inadequate supervision of a child)
- ◆ Property damage (such as the result of defective workmanship)
- ◆ Public relations (such as from negative press resulting from a severe injury resulting from a flagrant safety violation)

BASIC RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

1. Take Control of Volunteer Operations

There should be centralized and local responsibility for and control of all volunteer operations. Every task or project performed by volunteers should be with the prior consent of a designated volunteer coordinator. **Volunteers should not be self-directed.** The volunteer coordinator should have the appropriate experience/training in order to direct the other volunteers in the task(s) being performed.

2. Select Volunteers with Care

There should be a formal process for selecting and assigning work to volunteers. The use of a volunteer application form should be considered. This tool can be used to help determine if a volunteer is desirable and if so where they might fit in (background check, life experience, special skills, etc.). The physical and mental capabilities of volunteers should be taken in to account when assigning work.

3. Formally Orient New Volunteers and Remind Existing Volunteers

Volunteers should be formally oriented including:

- Diocesan Safe Environment Program
- The need to be assigned work or receive approval before acting as a volunteer
- Restrictions on the scope of volunteer tasks (see following)
- Special rules with regard to transportation and vehicle use
- What to do and expect in case of accident
- Other topics as appropriate

Existing volunteers should be re-oriented at least annually.

4. Restrictions on the Scope of Volunteer Activities

Volunteers can effectively perform a wide array of services, however, certain tasks are best performed by trained staff or contractors. Consideration should be given to restrictions on volunteer services such as the following:

- Any activity beyond the physical or mental abilities of the individual volunteer.
- Volunteers under the age of 18 are children and must be continuously supervised by responsible adults. In addition, volunteers who are under 18 should not do any of the following:
 - Provide transportation or drive on a Member's behalf
 - Use ladders or work in elevated locations (such as roofs)
 - Use power tools
 - Lift/move heavy objects
 - Supervise other children
- Defining 'Elderly' in the case of volunteers is difficult, however, experience tells us that older people may be less able to lift heavy objects, are more prone to falls, etc. The age of the volunteer needs to be assessed when making work assignments. Elderly volunteers must be carefully screened when activities involve a high degree of risk such as:
 - Use of ladders or work in elevated locations (such as roofs)
 - Lifting/moving heavy objects
 - Performing strenuous tasks

The use of elderly volunteers to provide transportation or drive on a Member's behalf needs to be carefully considered.

- Volunteer Driving:

See Diocesan Transportation Policy

- Contractors that Donate Services:

Contractors that donate services must be treated in the same manner as contractors that are being paid for their services (i.e. insurance requirements).

- Analyze Job Requirements:

Before allowing volunteers to tackle a project, think about the hazards associated with the tasks.

- Ladders:

- No one under 18 years of age should be allowed to climb any ladder.
- Volunteers should not climb higher than 5 feet off the ground.
- Ladders should be inspected before each use.
- The manufacturer's directions for use (generally affixed to the ladder) must be strictly adhered to.

- Scaffolding, Platforms, Lifts, etc.

- Volunteers should be strictly prohibited from climbing or using any scaffolding.
- Volunteers should be strictly prohibited from operating or working from portable work platforms and personnel lifts (such as scissors lifts, boom buckets, etc.)

- Painting:

- Volunteers should not be allowed to use spray painting equipment.
- Volunteers should, in general, be restricted to using water based paints.
- Volunteers should be cautioned of the dangers regarding the use of paint scrapers or other sharp objects associated with the painting process.
- Protective equipment, such as safety glasses, masks, gloves, etc., must be used.

- Electrical and Structural Work:

Licensed, professional contractors should perform all electrical and structural work.

- Hand and Power Tools:
 - The use of power tools by volunteers should be discouraged.
 - No one under eighteen years of age should be allowed to operate power tools.
 - Parish owned power tools should not be used by volunteers.
 - Appropriate personal protective equipment must be worn. All volunteers operating any power tools must wear safety glasses.
 - Powder actuated tools should not be operated by any volunteer.
 - Volunteers should not operate pneumatic nail and staple guns.
 - The use of specialized power tools such as power augers, concrete saws, etc. by volunteers should be avoided.
 - The use of hand tools also presents a substantial exposure to bodily injury. Using common sense and protective equipment (such as safety glasses) are key to safe hand tool use.

- Powered Lawn and Garden Equipment:

Electric and gasoline powered lawn and garden equipment present potentially severe exposures to bodily injury. Generally, we recommend that volunteers not operate such equipment. If volunteers are allowed to operate powered lawn and garden equipment, follow the guidelines under “Hand and Power Tools”.

- Lifting:
 - It is extremely important that sufficient help is available when volunteers are moving any type of heavy or awkward objects. Mechanical lifting and moving aids should be used as necessary.
 - Children and seniors should not be allowed to perform heavy lifting.

- Rigging and Hoisting:

Operations that require special rigging and hoisting equipment should not be attempted by volunteer labor.

- Tree Trimming:

Except for light pruning, tree trimming should be performed by professional, licensed tree contractors only.

- Roof Work:

Volunteers should not work on or about the roof of any building.

- Security Services:

Volunteers should not perform security services for diocesan events. Utilize professional, licensed, insured security contractors.

5. Monitor and Supervise Volunteer Operations

Volunteer operations should be monitored and supervised to help assure that volunteers do not exceed the course and scope of their duties. It is important to gently redirect volunteers that work outside the bounds determined by the volunteer coordinator.