Effective Management Practices for Leading Disaster Volunteers

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Abstract

Disasters both natural and manmade have affected communities since the beginning of time. During these times, volunteers come to aid those affected and help the community get back to normal as quickly as possible. There are limited procedures and best practices used across the board for managing and utilizing volunteers during large scale emergencies. This paper argues and shows that having proper volunteer management and utilization plans and procedures allows for better community response and recovery capabilities during a disaster.

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Introduction

Off-duty police officer Steve Matthias went to the local Veteran's Hall in Petaluma wearing only jeans and a SFPD t-shirt to volunteer and see what he could do to help. It was October 2017, and the Northern California Firestorm had destroyed nearly entire towns forcing close to 100,000 people to evacuate. With many evacuation shelters already over capacity, the Veteran's Hall had been opened to combat the massive influx of sudden evacuees. Officer Matthias went inside and asked the first person he saw who the volunteer coordinator was to check in with. He was answered with "What's that? We don't have one. We just opened the doors to let people inside. Can you be it?"

Officer Matthias grabbed a clipboard and got to work telling others where to set up tables and cots and delegated roles and responsibilities among the other volunteers for checking in fire victims. It would be 12 hours until the American Red Cross arrived to relieve him so that he could go home and sleep for only 4 hours before being deployed with hundreds of other officers called in as mutual aid from across the state to help on the fire's front lines.

Natural and manmade disasters like earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, fires, disease, and terrorist attacks are a recurring threat in our world that impacts our communities. Everyone has some amount of risk for dealing with a disaster or an emergency in their lifetime. When the worst happens, it can bring out the best in people who want to help alleviate the suffering of others. Volunteers are a critical asset during disasters and play a pivotal role in helping victims and getting the community back to normal. It should come as a relief that emergency workers are normally helped by an army of volunteers who may be from the affected community or even come from across the country to help.

However, there are limited standard practices and procedures for managing and utilizing volunteers as seen in the above story. This can negatively impact emergency response and recovery efforts in many detrimental ways if volunteers are not handled properly. Having proper volunteer

management and utilization practices and procedures allow for better community response and recovery capabilities during and after a disaster takes place.

Literature Review

The question being looked into is "What are the best practices for managing and utilizing both organized and spontaneous volunteers during emergencies?" The question of how best to manage volunteers has probably come up in the setting of managing company employees or managing volunteers for non-emergency related fields like for political movements. However, there is limited research into managing volunteers for disaster specific scenarios.

One crucial understanding that must be made before moving forward is the difference between organized and spontaneous (also called convergent) volunteers. Spontaneous volunteers are people who come out of the woodwork saying that they want to help but are not part of any organized group or disaster relief organization. They are not expected and just show up to help. They may or may not have any specific training and don't have set jobs or duties. Organized volunteers belong to a group or organization who normally go through some sort of training and have specific jobs or duties who are activated and called upon to assist in the disaster effort.

An important concept that must be addressed and understood in order to successfully articulate findings in this report is FEMA's Whole Community Approach. The Whole Community Approach defined: "Whole Community is a means by which residents, emergency management practitioners, organizational and community leaders, and government officials can collectively understand and assess the needs of their respective communities and determine the best ways to organize and strengthen their assets, capacities, and interests. By doing so, a more effective path to societal security and resilience is built. In a sense, Whole Community is a philosophical approach on how to think about conducting emergency management." (FEMA,2011)

The topic of involving non-profits as well as defining which groups are included in that term are of the utmost importance. This aspect of the whole community approach is critical because non-profits are typically overlooked in planning efforts, which can result in a huge underutilization of resources. The majority of the emergency management profession is in agreement with this. (Knight,2019)

After conducting research, there seems to be some different categories of emergency/disaster responders that belong to the Whole Community Approach. The first are public safety agencies from the various levels of government. These can be local first responders like police, fire, and medical, mid-governmental level agencies like county and state emergency management agencies like Cal OES, or federal agencies like FEMA and the U.S. Coast Guard.

The next category of emergency responders are your Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). These can encompass groups like the American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, and Team Rubicon. The following category of emergency responders are private industry. Many people may be surprised to know that many large companies have disaster response teams. Just a few examples are United Airlines, Genentech, Chevron, Walmart, Disney, among others.

The last category of emergency responders come from the community. They may sometimes fall under another category, but sometimes they can be their own entity. Examples of this are Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), faith based institutions, and spontaneous/convergent volunteers. All of these categories will be discussed further along.

While conducting research, there was information about leading non-profit organizations and other topics of disaster response, but there was limited academic information on leading volunteers during disaster situations. Anthony Knight is the emergency manager of Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and a Chief Marine Science Technician in the U.S. Coast Guard who's also worked for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) doing emergency management.

He had the following to say about if managing volunteers during disasters has been an academic research question to his knowledge. "There have been many questions asked of a similar nature, however the focus has been slightly different. Many questions involve findings that provide justification for volunteer CERT programs as well as their high Return on Investment (ROI). However, there have been many questions regarding the value of the broader Whole Community Approach in emergency management."

My question has not yet been asked in a research setting regarding disasters. The closest question to mine regarding the Whole Community Approach that I found was, *How should private industry be integrated with government during a disaster?* (Morissey,2016). This question focuses on the private industry working with government but doesn't mention volunteers at all who may be part of a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) or another volunteer emergency group. The article does talk about the importance of integrating with public safety agencies in the event of a disaster and how large businesses respond to emergencies.

Questions similar to a point have been asked that are loosely related. *Are high school aged youth an untapped disaster resource?* (Black,2012) This article looks at a CERT team comprised of 4-H members, the training they went through, and how it has impacted them and their community for the better. This is incorporating another community group (4-H) into CERT but leaves out the private sector.

When people think of disaster response and volunteers, they may commonly think of the American Red Cross or the Salvation Army being that they are two of the largest disaster relief organizations in the nation. The American Red Cross serves survivors suffering from disasters by establishing shelters to provide temporary housing from the elements and gives food and other resources. (Jellets,2008)

The Salvation Army is able to come and work well during disaster situations because it integrates into the Incident Command System (ICS). This is an organizational structure with clearly defined roles and responsibilities and terminology used by all first responder agencies including police, fire, and medical, disaster management agencies like FEMA, and other emergency volunteer organizations. The Salvation Army provides meals, clothing, mental/spiritual services, and small grants. (Jellets,2008)

However, this does not mean that these mostly volunteer disaster relief organizations don't have their own problems that they have to deal with. A paradox exists where volunteers feel highly satisfied in the act of helping victims during disasters, but they can become dissatisfied when management practices get in the way of helping. This often causes some to drop out and leave the organization. (Smith,2017)

In addition, problems can arise when the leadership of these organizations abandon the organization's mission and goals. Sometimes rebuilding community trust is necessary where even removing the leadership is needed to develop an organizational culture change that promotes openness, change, and development. (Hunsaker,2007)

When looking at the existing literature, there seems to be a split between the academic side and the practitioner perspective. There was limited academic research into the overall tactics and strategy of volunteer management and utilization during emergencies. The closest I could find was the very limited research there was on CERT teams. (Connolly,2014) talked about how to create a CERT program on a school campus by gaining support from the school administration, students, and CERT trainers. The same article also discussed how to get funding and help.

The differences between rural and urban CERT teams was discussed by (Flint,2010). How to integrate CERT teams prior to a disaster was the topic of an article by (Carr,2015). This discussed how CERT pre-disaster integration relied on the available resources of that specific community, the team's leadership, the formality of the team's structure, and the general acceptance of CERT into the local emergency management system.

It's easy to tell when reading some of the peer reviewed sources that what they say is mostly theoretical. A lot of it sounds nice in ideal situations, but emergency response never happens when situations are ideal. When interviewing emergency management professionals, they commonly said that they "wouldn't do it that way because… and would instead do…" The perfect cookie cutter approach of academia makes practitioners shake their heads being that it's not realistic of situations they encounter in the field. (Knight,2019)

As discussed above, there has been a large amount of literature in the field of emergency management. As a growing profession with a value that is only recently being fully recognized, there has been a huge increase in the interest of researching various topics to determine the most effective practices to utilize in the field. However, a large majority of the current literature available is not from a practitioner's perspective. This leads to many gaps and artificialities that complicate obtaining detailed and accurate information. (Knight,2019)

To address this gap, my paper will take into account the field practitioner perspective in order to ensure there is accurate findings from a boots on the ground perspective to help bridge this gap.

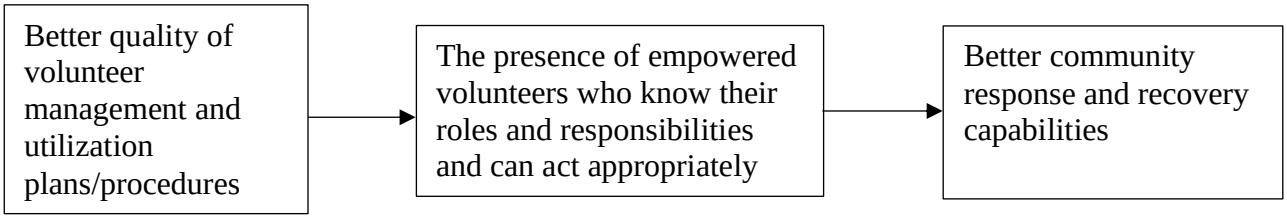
Theory

"When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. …' To this day, especially in times of 'disaster,' I remember my mother's words and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers – so many caring people in this world." -Mr. Rogers

With this in mind, it is important for the "helpers" to know what to do so that they can help as best they can. Proper management and utilization of both organized and spontaneous volunteers during emergencies greatly enhance community response and recovery capabilities during disasters.

My theory is similar to the "whole community approach" created and utilized by FEMA which tries to encompass other facets of the community commonly left out in planning and preparedness efforts prior to a disaster. However, volunteers need to be coordinated and managed well during and after a disaster. Some believe that untrained and uncoordinated volunteers can be a hinderance to the operational response by getting in the way of real emergency responders and cause issues if they get involved. (Knight,2019)

Below is a model of my theory.



The independent variable is a better quality of management and utilization plans and procedures for dealing with volunteers. This can be conceptualized with agencies and organizations having polices and training for dealing with the rush of volunteers that will come out to help during a disaster. The dependent variable is having better community response and recovery capabilities. This can be conceptualized in lives saved/lost, property damage, damage and recovery financial costs versus costs saved, as well as recovery time.

The mediating variable between the independent and dependent variables is the presence of empowered volunteers who know their roles and responsibilities and can act appropriately. These can be untrained individuals who spontaneously arrive to help or members from organized disaster relief groups like non-profits who may arrive to help like the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, or Team Rubicon.

A potential confounding variable that would affect both the independent and dependent variables would be the level and severity of the disaster. This would affect the entire situation but is impossible to predict beforehand and therefore was not included.

Possible moderating variables that affect the relationship between the independent and dependent variables are the location of a disaster and the demographics of those affected. This can definitely impact the amount and level of volunteer help available. However, this is a case by case basis and therefore was not included.

An example to how the location and demographics can play a role in getting help from volunteers was shown during the 1 October Las Vegas shooting. It was believed in the After Action Report (AAR) that many lives were saved due to it being a country music festival compared to let's say a rap or young pop artist performing. There was a large presence of off-duty police officers, firefighters, paramedics, and veterans present in the crowd being that that is a decent amount of their fanbase compared to other genera of music. This allowed for a decent size force of emergency, combat, and medically trained personnel to already be on scene when the shooting began minutes before on duty first responders were able to arrive and stop the carnage. (Matthias,2019)

They were able to help evacuate people, improvise tourniquets with their belts and purse straps to stop bleeding, and even grabs guns, body armor, and medical supplies from emergency vehicles by identifying themselves as first responders. It being a country music festival also proved useful being that there was an abundance of personal pickup trucks which were utilized by concertgoers to carry dozens and dozens of critically wounded victims to hospitals saving precious time when there weren't enough ambulances to deal with the hundreds of victims. (Matthias,2019)

Empirical Strategy

Proper management and utilization of both organized and spontaneous volunteers during emergencies greatly enhance community response and recovery capabilities during disasters. If volunteers aren't organized, trained, and given clear roles and responsibilities, they can actually act as a detriment to the overall emergency response. This could be if the personnel and resources aren't being utilized efficiently where you then have the same work being duplicated or work lacking in certain areas. Volunteers that aren't managed correctly could also pose a risk of getting hurt or being in over their head if they are faced with a situation that they shouldn't have been in.

Having better quality volunteer management and utilization plans and procedures through leadership and feasibility of tasks assigned will lead to empowered volunteers who know their roles and responsibilities and can act appropriately. Leadership can be measured by having or not having clear direction and prioritization of volunteers and tasks. Feasibility of tasks can be measured on the presence of using SMART goals. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based objectives. Their actions will lead to a more efficient response to disasters and better community outcomes. This can be measured by five criteria.

The first criteria defined is having increased mitigation of adverse impacts to life safety. This will be measured by an increase number in rescues with less loss of life and a decrease in major injuries. The second criteria defined is having less property damage. This can be measured by comparing the number of structures destroyed or damaged to the total number of structures that were at risk. The third criteria is having less financial loss. This can be measured by comparing the financial amount lost to the total amount of financial assets at risk of being lost. The fourth

criteria is having a shorter recovery time. This can be measured by comparing the recovery time with volunteers to a timeframe estimated without the help of volunteers. The fifth criteria is increased positive perception of response and recovery efforts. This can be measured by comparing positive and negative media attention.

For my paper, I will be conducting research using a mixed method approach by using interviews and document analysis. I have reached out to approximately 30 people I know in the emergency management community and conducted interviews. These people work for local municipality/county, state, federal, private, and nonprofit sectors of emergency management both in the United States and abroad. This will give a broad overview of different perspectives and unique experiences being that each comes from a different background and does a slightly different job in emergency management.

I asked about how their agency/organization deals with emergencies and if/how they manage volunteers. I then asked relevant follow-up questions but allowed them to speak freely and give examples about how they've seen things work or not work well. I had a notepad and pen and wrote notes. Afterwards, I compared the notes from the various interviews and found the common themes or practices that were present in multiple interviews. These I considered my best practices.

I also conducted a document analysis. This included scholarly sources from academic libraries and journals as seen in the literature review. It also included various news articles, case studies, professional emergency and disaster management website sources, and other relevant documents that were useful to the topic.

I chose this type of study because I feel like the answers are already out there. They're just not organized together in one document. I already knew many contacts in the field through my own job and volunteer experiences with public safety, so I thought that interviews wouldn't be too difficult to schedule. I chose to add in the document analysis because this would help widen my scope.

Findings:

Starting a Disaster Volunteer Group

"Passionate volunteers will run a program better than you, but it's up to you to guide, direct, sponsor, and help maintain it." – Nathan Rainey

When starting a brand new emergency response organization for volunteers, it's important not to just take another group's plan. You need to modify the program for your own community according to Harpreet Jaswal. She served with the Canadian Red Cross and has started a volunteer emergency response team for the municipality of Richmond, British Columbia.

The next thing an organization needs is values. They keep the team focused on completing the mission and completing it ethically. Straying from these values can hurt an organization's credibility according to Harold Brooks who served with the American Red Cross (ARC) for 45

years and was the CEO of the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter before being promoted to Vice-President of International Services for ARC. Having a code of conduct is important to not put your program in jeopardy according to Nathan Rainey. He works for Palo Alto's Office of Emergency Services and leads their CERT program.

Many people I spoke with stated that having clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and expectations of roles and responsibilities are crucial for an emergency response organization as well as being able to enforce them. (Rainey,2020)(Denny,2020)(Mesic,2020) Some of these include: no self-deploying, no hero complex, staying within your scope of training, not breaking chain of command, having a positive attitude, and attending necessary trainings and meetings.

Bryan Parent was a board member for the Los Angeles Neighborhood Council representing the Hollywood Studio District. His focus was on community engagement and public preparedness working with first responders, NGOs, and other community stakeholders. He gave the example of why following SOPs are necessary when an aggressive CERT team responded to a house fire. CERT members ran into the burning home to save animals when the local fire department was already on scene dealing with the situation and told them not to. He said that the hero complex puts people at unnecessary risk, steps on toes and undermines local government protocols, and strains relationships with first responders.

A disaster response group needs to have some sort of structure or organization with specific positions and a chain of command of who reports to whom. Utilizing the Incident Command System (ICS) is a good way to do this. This is important for accountability and efficiency. Most people in the emergency management field agree with this. (Brooks,2020) (McKenna,2020) (Lucier,2020)

Disaster response groups need to be able to be autonomous and able to work independently from any government direction. Coordinating with government when possible is important, but needing handholding to work is not good because public safety will probably be too overwhelmed to stop and direct groups on what to do. (Lucier,2020) Frank Lucier served in the San Francisco Fire Department for 24 years and was the creator of San Francisco's Neighborhood Emergency Response Team (NERT) after the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake. He gave the following example of why emergency groups need to be autonomous.

In 1994, Los Angeles County was rocked by the Northridge Earthquake. Local CERT teams had been told to go to a park as a staging area and wait for the fire department to come and give roles and work assignments. The fire department never came. They were so busy that nobody was able to leave the enormous volume of emergency calls to go talk to volunteers. Lucier said that this was a teaching moment for NERT on being able to work autonomously.

A prominent split I found while researching disaster response groups was if they should be kept at the local level or not. Nathan Rainey who leads Palo Alto CERT states "The best volunteer groups are at the local level." This is because they know the local neighborhood and community. This may mean local streets and efficient travel routes for supplies or who in the community might need more help like those with access and functional needs. There's also a sense of local pride with a vested interest in seeing that their community is resilient. This is why San Francisco's NERT

is broken up into neighborhoods and has emergency training specific to San Francisco. The ideas come from the neighbors, and they are empowered and have the authority to tell the fire department and local emergency management office what they need.

However, Harpreet Jaswal brings up some good points on why regional teams may be the way to go. It helps with mutual aid, saves on resources, and there are standardized trainings and practices. It also allows for volunteers to be able to have more of an opportunity to get experience dealing with emergencies if there's a larger area they can respond to. This might also allow them to experience opportunities that they might not normally get to in their local community. An example could be a disaster volunteer from a landlocked city that's able to be deployed to a location with rivers that have flooded.

Sandra Firpo is the Emergency Services Specialist for San Mateo Consolidated Fire Department. She serves as the CERT Coordinator for a newly joint CERT program that encompasses CERT teams from the cities of San Mateo, Foster City, and Belmont in California. She says that creating a regional team has allowed teams to learn the best practices from each other and share valuable skills and knowledge that they might not have had had they never combined together. There is still a sense of local community pride though that members from each city have.

An interesting example of a grassroots regional disaster response team is the story of the Central Texas Disaster Action Team (CTDART). According to Andrea Forte who is the Planning Section Chief of CTDART, the program was created out of the failed CERT program near Ft. Hood, Texas. Despite CERT being funded by the local city, it had a bad reputation for volunteers having a hero mentality and going rogue. Nobody wanted to work with them, and eventually it collapsed in 2016. However, many local veterans in the Ft. Hood area knew they needed some sort of disaster response group, but they couldn't restart CERT with its negative connotation locally. Out of this, CTDART was born.

The program is roughly 70% veteran and first responder run and 30% public who commonly have family who are veterans and public safety. It is a non-profit and non-jurisdictional organization that is grant and donation funded and is self-insured. They were able to get local buy-in which was crucial with working with other cities and counties by becoming NIMS compliant and having local emergency managers be in the group which gave them credibility. (NIMS compliant means being able to work and fit under the National Incident Management System)

What started out as a CERT-like program that focused on light search and rescue, first aid, and setting up shelters grew into a unique disaster response organization that took on more and more responsibilities. During Hurricane Harvey, members who were trained in NIMS worked in the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) augmenting overwhelmed EOC staff. After seeing issues with spontaneous volunteers and donation management during Hurricane Harvey, they created a branch for volunteer and donation management to set up volunteer reception centers. Later on, they became the local Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) for their region in Texas leading the coordination of all other volunteer groups. They even have mutual aid agreements with other NGOs, government agencies, and local CERTs. They've most recently formed a Virtual Operations Support Team (VOST) to help during disasters with technology.

Emergency response teams need uniforms. They need proper protective equipment (PPE) if they'll be working out in the field and the necessary gear. CERT gear typically consists of gloves, a green helmet, a dust mask, goggles, knee protectors, a green reflective vest, and a green CERT labeled backpack to put it all in. Having identification cards for them are also important. (Lindbolm,2020)(Rainey,2020)(Firpo,2020) According to volunteer firefighter Rick Christ, "People feel taller and proud like they have a duty." Uniforms make them look official to the public. IDs show that they're legit, trained, vetted, and certified.

In order for an emergency response team to be effective, it must have credibility. You need local buy-in and recognition from your local jurisdiction. As mentioned above, being NIMS trained and compliant is very helpful in building credibility. Having local emergency managers and first responders be part of your team also helps in gaining recognition. Sometimes rebranding is necessary to change a negative reputation of an old program as seen in the above CTDART example. (Forte,2020)

No matter the program, funding it will be necessary. This can come in various ways. Sometimes, it may be from city or government funds. Other times, it could be grants from various government entities or other organizations. The other option is financial donations. Funding pays for background checks, training, gear, and insurance. (Lindbolm,2020)(Forte,2020)

Due to the type of work disaster response teams engage in, liability is something that needs to be addressed. Most people interviewed said that the easiest and best thing to do is to swear in emergency volunteers like CERT members as Disaster Service Workers (DSWs). This covers them for liability and workman's compensation. Rich Eisner remembers swearing in city workers with a loyalty oath over the phone who were in San Francisco from Oakland during the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake because the Bay Bridge was down. He said that it's important for CERT and other emergency volunteers to know that they're only covered when they've been activated as a DSW. They are not covered as DSWs if they self-deploy to help their own community without the disaster activation. However, they can be covered under the Good Samaritan law as long as they stay within the scope of their training. This doesn't cover workman's compensation if they get hurt though. (Halleran,2020) NGOs commonly will have their own insurance to cover members.

Part of covering liability and risk is vetting your volunteers. Depending on your organization, this can be done a couple different ways. Brian Lindbolm retired from the San Ramon Police Department, led their CERT program, and has been with the Contra Costa County CERT program in Martinez for over 10 years. He said that usually, the police would vet would-be volunteers using the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) to see if they have a criminal history. The issue with CLETS is that it only checks crimes committed in California. To check the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC), one should use the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS).

Only law enforcement and certain government agencies have access to this system though as the information is not public. He said that California law now requires them to use Live Scan which costs $49 if the person is going to deploy to a disaster outside of their jurisdiction. Live Scan checks people through NCIC. NGOs will typically pay an outside company to do a background check on would-be volunteers as part of their onboarding.

Once you have a new program up and running, it needs to grow. Programs will grow when people feel like there's flexibility, that the leaders have their backs, they get recognition, and people feel good about what they're doing. (Lopes,2020) The typical recruitment cycle is: recruitment, onboarding, ongoing engagement, and demobilization. (Jaswal,2020) Leading and maintaining a disaster volunteer group will be further discussed in the paper.

Leading a Disaster Volunteer Group

"You can lead a volunteer anywhere they want to go." -Ron Mesic

People volunteer for different reasons. "'I want to help people.' Yea, but there are plenty of other ways, so why this way?" Rick Christ asks people wanting to join his volunteer fire department. Reasons commonly include: required volunteer hours, getting training for themselves or for family, maybe they faced an emergency in their past and didn't know what to do, experience for their resume, the adrenaline rush, wanting to be a hero, wanting something completely different from their day job, the camaraderie and friendship, it's an interest, or a yearning to belong to something. Rick Christ adds, "There are few exceptions that rival the feeling of helping someone near death or the rush of putting out a fire or finding a lost kid in the woods."

Every person I interviewed said that everyone has a reason for volunteering and to find that reason. Tarina Colledge said, "You can't give them a good volunteer experience unless you know their 'why'. Recognizing what the volunteer wants to gain in their experience will ensure longevity in their volunteer relationship." Brian Lindbolm added, "Volunteers want to help, but they're unique. You can't order them, you can only ask, and you can't fire them." It's up to us as leaders to sell them on a mission and inspire them.

It's important not to treat volunteers different "just because they're volunteers" compared to paid emergency responders. (Wilson,2020) (Christ,2020) This disrespects and demoralizes them. Rocky Lopes who served with the American Red Cross and is the president of his local volunteer fire department said that volunteers are professionals in their own right. They're not amateurs; treat them as equals. Rick Christ added that "There is no difference in ICS between paid and volunteer. Volunteer firefighters are still professional firefighters. They perform the same standard of duty. Opposite of professional is amateur, and I'm not an amateur. I'm a volunteer."

The next important task is finding the right roles for volunteers. Everyone I interviewed said that it's important to identify their strengths and weaknesses and capitalize on that. It's important to take their interests into account as well. Some are willing to use their professional skillsets to help the group. Others may want to do something completely different from their nine to five job. Some people are people-people, and some are not. (Firpo,2020) (Halleran,2020) (Lopes,2020)

Bryan Parent said, "Everyone wants to be the person with the chainsaw, but nobody wants to man the radio." Find a role that balances the needs of the mission and personal goals of the volunteers. Don't make volunteers do the same job over and over again if they're bored of it. Ask if they want to try something else; some won't complain even if they're bored. (Lopes,2020) It's

also important not to sideline or give people "lesser jobs" if they're capable of filling other roles. (Wilson,2020) Pat Halleran added, "Don't give people busy work just to make them do something, they'll spot that easily and not feel valued and then leave. Give them something that's actually meaningful and explain why."

In addition, people need to understand the job description before they sign up to volunteer. You can't hold people accountable if they didn't know what they were getting themselves into. Harpreet Jaswal gave an example of an internet application issue on their city's website that has funneled ill-suited people to their emergency response program who then drop out after realizing what it actually is. The volunteer portion of the city's website would list the various volunteer opportunities where people would just click the boxes that sounded interesting. Then volunteers would show up to the emergency response program where only then would they begin to learn about the program and what it entailed in their onboarding process. This caused many people to quit. She believes that it's important for would-be volunteers to know what they're getting themselves into before they sign up as to not waste everyone's time.

Harpreet also adds that people need to know if they're capable of filling the role. It may not be ideal to have an elderly person in a position that requires intense physical labor. Nor would it be smart to have a young volunteer who doesn't have a driver's license and car if they need to respond to a disaster location at a moment's notice. What all volunteers need to understand with the job is that emergency volunteering is different than other forms of volunteering. You are dealing with crises and that includes all of the emotions that come with that. Not everyone can handle that.

When you have your volunteers, it's important to communicate clearly with them while also balancing not to micromanage them. (Wilson,2020) (Lopes,2020) (Firpo,2020) Patrick McKenna added that it's not just yelling commands, but making sure people actually understand what you're saying. Kyle Childers and Pauline Perry, who lead Genentech's First Alert Team, said that if a volunteer isn't showing up to things, they'll try to figure out why and see if they can help. Sometimes it could be talking to their supervisor and explaining the value and need of having the volunteer be able to attend trainings and how it can benefit their workplace.

It's important to communicate clearly and not assume anything. Sandra Firpo gave the story of a CERT volunteer who was dealing with sick family. The CERT leader wanted to help take some of the load off, so some of her duties were delegated to other volunteers. The volunteer got upset because she thought she was being demoted for not doing well enough. The CERT leader then apologized and explained that she was doing just fine and that it was out of good intention trying to help her during the difficult time.

Rocky Lopes brought up the importance of listening to your volunteers. "Recognize that you do not know everything; be humble. Accept criticism and learn what WE can do better. Don't be the paid guy who walks in telling all the volunteers what to do. It's very demeaning. Don't be the only one talking, and don't just tell them what to do; collaborate with volunteers to come up with a game plan. It's how you build commitment to success."

Volunteers get annoyed when they tell you, the Incident Commander, or the event leader what can be changed or done better in the future in the After-Action Report (AAR), but nothing changes or gets better, and you run into the same issues again. Ron Mesic has volunteered with CERT and the Michigan Volunteer Defense Force. He gave the example of a marathon that they were helping work in the command post and in the field.

He said that they had requested the event organizers get more space blankets and give them to volunteers along the route for injured runners to prevent hypothermia and listed it in their AAR. However, while the event organizer had purchased thousands of space blankets for the finish line, they refused to give any to volunteers along the route. They didn't understand or accept that some runners would finish before the finish line. Emergency volunteers had to wait with hypothermic injured runners for 30-40 minutes until help was able to come due to poor radio discipline that had also been addressed in the AAR.

Ron Mesic adds that it's important for the event manager to listen to your volunteer coordinator to learn what your team's capabilities are. Some team members may be trained as EMTs or in search and rescue, but you'll never know if you don't listen or ask. In addition, not all volunteers may have an equal amount of training, so the expectations of them need to be clear.

While coordinating with the event manager, make sure to fully understand what your team is getting into before helping. Ron described a time when his CERT team was asked to help support an event called Elderfest. They thought it was supposed to be an event for the elderly that showcased resources available in the county. They believed they would be helping with directing traffic, conducting welfare checks, and doing first aid if needed. The event was actually a political rally for an elected politician. This gave the appearance that CERT endorsed said politician which caused issues. Ron's advice is to make a logistics form that must be filled out by the event organizer that explains what the event is, what it'll be like, what it entails, and what specific things do they want CERT doing. If the answers meet your group's qualifications, then you can help with the event. If the event is different than what the organizer said that it would be and you're burned, you leave the event.

Next, Harold Brooks talked about how leaders need to know what volunteers are going through in the field. Harold remembers being the paid suit from the American Red Cross visiting a local chapter asking them questions about what they did. A volunteer then invited him to come out on a disaster call with them if he really wanted to know what they did. Harold agreed and was then responding to an apartment fire later that day. Harold described that it's one thing to know your organization's mission statement but another to live it and see it in action. It gives a totally different perspective to disaster work when you have the boots on the ground experience and see what it's really like. Never forget or lose touch what the people on the front lines are going through. They are the ones who make your organization what it is.

Other things to keep in mind while leading a disaster team are the following. Be flexible and adaptable and expect the unexpected. (Lucier,2020) Expect that many of your own volunteers may be impacted by the disaster and not able to help as they take care of their own families. (Colledge,2020) Never activate all your volunteers at once as you need reserves for the possible shifts. (Firpo,2020) You absolutely need safety briefings before volunteers start doing anything.

You also need a demobilization plan, so volunteers know they can't just leave when they get tired or think they're done. (Jaswal,2020) Have a daily debrief to capture "gaps and greats" at the end of each day to discuss what can be improved and what went well. (Colledge,2020) If something goes south, address it, but finish on a positive. You don't want people thinking they did a bad job. (Wilson,2020) Lastly, leaders need to be able to change when the neighborhood changes. Your organization needs to reflect this by welcoming change. You need diversity of opinion and perspective. (Christ,2020)

Maintaining and Retaining a Disaster Volunteer Group

"Volunteers don't have free time. They're choosing to be there away from their family and hobbies. It's their most precious time, their time and a half." -Rick Christ

Nearly everyone I interviewed said that volunteer retention is the hardest part of leading a volunteer emergency team. Patrick McKenna said, "Treat every volunteer with respect and acknowledge them because they are sacrificing to be here." Ron Mesic added, "How you treat them will determine if they'll want to volunteer again for you."

Praise, thank, appreciate, and take time to celebrate your volunteers continuously. This could be in the form of awards, certificates, stripes, and thanking them even for minor things. Rick Christ said, "We don't get paid in money, but we do get paid in thank-you's, the experience of getting to be in a parade, and resume building." Rocky Lopes added that "Recognition grows loyalty. They'll stick with you during tough times." Rocky would even write articles about his team of volunteers so their family and friends could read about them in the local newspaper. Kyle Childers & Pauline Perry also wanted to point out to "Emphasize the carrot over the stick."

Something that both San Francisco's NERT and Genentech's First Alert Team do is have a graduation ceremony with cake and certificates for their volunteers after they finish their training. (Lucier,2020) (Childers & Perry, 2020) Frank Lucier said "Treat it like it's the only thing they've ever graduated from and the only diploma they've ever been awarded. It motivates and gives them a sense of purpose." He's even seen some people cry when they graduated because they felt so empowered and their family was watching.

There are many ways to show appreciation for your volunteer team. One example that Janet Wilson would do with her emergency team was have pizza and a movie night after the last shift of the month. Kyle Childers said that after Genentech's big yearly emergency exercise, the team will have a barbeque with some beers. They also do an awards ceremony once a year with refreshments and snacks to celebrate their team.

He also added that if your group can afford it, having nice top of the line equipment and allowing your volunteers to go to extra trainings that interest them makes them feel like you're investing in them and that they're appreciated. After a long day of hard work, Team Rubicon will come back together, clean and get everything ready for the next day, and have their daily debrief to capture what went well, what was challenging, what can be improved upon the next day, and highlights from the volunteers' experiences. Once that's done, and only when every single person

is back at their Forward Operating Base (FOB), they raise the "beer flag" and have a beer together to relax and bond. (Colledge,2020)

Another way to retain volunteers is to utilize them for different events (even if it's not the big disaster they trained for) to prevent them from getting bored and leaving. This utilizes their skillset in a less stressful environment so they can become for confident in themselves and in their team. It also practices some of the skills they learned so they don't forget them. (Forte,2020) (Firpo,2020) (Halleran,2020)

Some of the many examples I heard were using CERT volunteers for looking for missing Alzheimer's patients, directing traffic at local parades and graduation ceremonies with police, delivering meals to quarantined people during COVID-19 after putting on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), doing damage assessments of buildings in their neighborhoods after a storm, shadowing in an EOC and helping augment the staff, and even searching through a large park with police for a knife that had been used in a homicide, knocking on doors asking neighbors if they saw anything suspicious, and then telling police to go interview the people on their list.

Next, have a system that requires volunteers to be involved at meetings and trainings but not where they have to take so much time where it overburdens them and they drop out of the program. Brian Lindbolm who has been a part of Contra Costa County CERT for the last 10 years and led a team uses the following training refresher model.

Volunteers must undergo a 20 hour CERT basic training just to join CERT. They're supposed to attend one and a half hour trainings once a month and come to at least one of two disaster drills offered annually. However, many volunteers drop out after two to three years. For those who stop showing up, their CERT program requires inactive volunteers to either: a. repeat the 20 hour CERT basic training, b. participate in a yearly disaster exercise as a team member, or c. attend a 4 hour CERT curriculum review.

Many people I spoke with voiced frustration that volunteers don't always take the program seriously or show up to activations or trainings. Frank Lucier said, "They need to know that they have a responsibility to show up and help being that their name is on a list. They are expected to come because people are counting on them. It gives them a mission." Harpreet Jaswal echoed this in her interview.

One unique thing that disaster volunteers may face compared to other volunteer programs that aren't emergency focused is disaster fatigue. Disaster fatigue is when someone's altruism, or concern for the wellbeing of others, is stretched to the breaking point. (Jones,2020) This might happen during a large disaster or emotional ordeal during an emergency, but it can also happen over a course of time where multiple disasters occur in succession slowly pushing the volunteer (and paid professional emergency workers) to their limit. This can negatively impact disaster volunteers by making them feel depressed, anxious, cynical, or just not having the same eagerness and intensity to go help and serve others during a disaster.

It's important to allow, encourage, and require volunteers to take physical and mental breaks. There may be the volunteer who says that they can do another 12 hour shift, but requiring

them to take a break and repower may be the best thing for them and the community at large who's impacted by the disaster. (Eisner,2020) (Denny,2020)

Kevin Denny who responded to hurricanes with the American Red Cross had a story from Hurricane Sandy in New York. A local community college had been designated an evacuation shelter. The American Red Cross and the college's police recruits helped facilitate the influx of evacuees staying there. The ordeal lasted for several days. Kevin recalls there being a room for volunteers to go to to be able to relax, vent, cry, hug, and talk with fellow volunteers out of view from the evacuees. This allowed volunteers to be able to take breaks and recompose themselves before going back out to deal with the evacuees in the shelter. More information on disaster fatigue and psychological first aid will be in the Training portion of this paper.

Part of maintaining a volunteer group is holding volunteers accountable. Lack of doing so can make your program toxic and even be a liability if left unchecked. This was echoed by most people interviewed who led emergency volunteer teams. There are various issues that volunteers may have or develop that need to be addressed.

Volunteers who get into trouble with laws should be removed from the program. Obviously, there can be some leeway. Cases should be looked at on a case by case basis. Low level crimes from several years ago might be able to slide depending on your program's code of conduct and standards. However, more serious crimes should be cause for concern and termination. Your volunteers are supposed to be upstanding members of society helping others. Volunteers committing crimes are a threat not only to fellow volunteers and those you serve but to your organization's reputation as whole.

The next potential issue is the hero complex. This is particularly dangerous as it can put the volunteer and others at risk. While those who exhibit this type of behavior aren't necessarily bad people, they need to be identified and made aware of the proper procedures, why they're important, and the consequences if they refuse to follow them. Normally, it's a volunteer who's just very energetic and eager to help. They may get bored if they're not staying busy. You should learn to control their eagerness and make sure they have relevant tasks to do to feel like they're helping. (Childers & Perry,2020)

Another issue commonly dealt with is people not showing up as discussed earlier. Kyle Childers who also serves on California Task Force 3's USAR team which deploys nationally said that many people want to be on the specialized team. However, everyone needs to understand that it's not just deployments across the country that you sign up for. It's also prepping gear in the warehouse, going to trainings, and doing logistical work. He says, "You either put in the time, or you don't deploy."

Volunteers who interact negatively with others are also an issue. "Everyone has an attitude" points out Rich Eisner. Rick Christ added, "If you're a jerk, I won't enjoy being in an ambulance with you, but if you're nice and friendly, I'll drive all the way to Detroit with you." If you as a leader witness negative interactions from volunteers, you should interject and correct it immediately. In the example of volunteers getting upset with members of the public for not

following their directions when they're trying to help, you should notify the police or your local emergency management office and move on. Volunteers can't get hung up on this.

If you're having behavioral issues with a volunteer, you should have meetings with them to discuss the issue. You should then give them an opportunity to change their behavior. If they continue to act poorly despite your warnings and chances, or if they've done a serious offence, you may have to consider terminating the volunteer from your program.

While terminating volunteers is very rare and the last case scenario, it sometimes does happen and needs to be done for the health of your program. Brian Lindbolm can only recount two volunteers he had to terminate in a ten year span of running CERT. One was a volunteer who lied about having a criminal history on their background check. The other was a volunteer who had anti-police sentiments and made the program toxic. This person always made negative and derogatory comments towards police despite the CERT meetings commonly being held in a police station and CERT working directly with police officers on activations. Frank Lucier only recounts one instance where a volunteer was kicked out from San Francisco's NERT program. A volunteer got into an argument with another volunteer during a training scenario and pulled a gun and threatened the other before fleeing.

While not a behavioral issue, Harold Brooks discussed some issues that the American Red Cross is facing with recruitment. Most of their volunteers are elderly or retired people who have the time to give. However, they might not always be capable of doing tasks that require physical labor. They are also an at-risk category for disease which we are seeing currently with COVID-19. This has drastically limited the amount of American Red Cross volunteers capable of deploying to emergencies. The younger generation is needed to become volunteers, but they tend to be a challenge to recruit as they usually live busy lifestyles and have other commitments.

In addition, people want to volunteer episodically (when the big disaster happens), not permanently for the more common everyday emergencies in their communities. Due to this, they don't go through training prior to a disaster which is what is needed to be able to help on those bigger disasters that they want to help out with.

One potential option to address this concern is if there was legislation that required employers to allow their employees volunteer time. This would be similar to how United States federal law requires employers to allow their employees to leave work and not be penalized if they are in the military reserves. This could help bolster volunteer ranks. The issue would be figuring out if compensation would be needed for the employers. However, this then makes it not really volunteer. Australia has an example of a volunteer system in their country that allows people to leave work to volunteer during a national emergency which will be addressed more in the Cultural Diversity section of this paper. (Wilson,2020)

Harold Brooks thought that maybe redefining how and when volunteer trainings are done could help increase the number of disaster volunteers in the ranks. Having trainings in the evenings after work, on weekends, in shorter segments, or even online may allow for more younger people to join as these tend to be times when they have some available time.

The last thing important to maintaining a volunteer program is identifying and developing future leaders in the program. This was repeated my numerous people interviewed. You need to create a culture of creating volunteers. Use experienced volunteers to mentor the newer ones. People who were volunteers are better at leading volunteers. (Childers & Perry,2020) Give volunteers some authority on leading and figuring out what the program needs.

Rick Christ said, "You're never more than a year from your program's collapse if you can't identify and foster future leaders." He gave an analogy of a fire chief stuck in a pipeline. If the fire chief remains chief forever, people below them will not think that they can ever become the chief and go elsewhere to try to promote and become a leader. You need to allow people to advance into leadership roles. Rocky Lopes added, "You're developing volunteers who will lead programs long after you leave." However, it's also important to remember that volunteers are a fluid staff who come and go.

Training

"Teaching volunteers theory is much different than actual field training. You must connect the two." -Harpreet Jaswal

If you train volunteers, they won't be (or have a much lower risk of being) victims. In the deadly 2017 Puebla Earthquake that impacted Mexico City, many untrained civilians tried to go in and search through damaged and collapsed buildings only to become hurt and killed themselves. This is why training is so important. (Halleran,2020)

Volunteers should be able to upscale to be able to fill the positions above them and laterally so that if someone goes down, another person can jump right in and take over. You should give the necessary training to do so to your entire team if possible. (Wilson,2020) Rick Christ added that each organization must have standards of training. They should be relevant and relate to the job, not things that are trivial that don't serve a purpose. Make sure that every job has some sort of training. They represent your organization. It's a liability if they're not properly trained. (Firpo,2020)

FEMA has standardized CERT training, but other organizations need to figure that out themselves. The public expects and deserves the best; your team must train and strive to reach that standard. It's important to practice disaster exercises outside of the classroom to work out the kinks before game day. (Denny,2020) (Jaswal,2020) While it's important to have consistent trainings to not lose skills and stay connected with program, you need to maintain a balance as to not burn people out. (Lucier,2020)

When interviewing people, everyone said that the top thing that disaster volunteers need training in (or more training in) is understanding NIMS and ICS. That allows for better organization and makes missions run smoother. The basic trainings needed are IS-100 and IS-700. IS-200 and IS-800 are good trainings to get afterwards. These trainings are free and available online at on the FEMA training website.

The next most common thing that volunteers need more training in is disaster psychological self-care and first aid. (Parent,2020) (Colledge,2020) This allows for better community service and is more sustainable for your team. Tarina Colledge said, “It takes absolutely nothing for a volunteer to traumatize a survivor.” Understanding how to talk to a disaster victim/survivor who’s lost everything is absolutely critical. It’s just as critical though to be able to recognize if you or another volunteer are suffering from disaster fatigue sometimes called compassion fatigue.

Team Rubicon has a wellness team that assists volunteers who may be struggling internally. The American Red Cross also has trained volunteers in psychological first aid who help volunteers and survivors. Tarina Colledge said there are online resources at disasterready.org and The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. There are even mobile phone apps that can assist volunteers in talking about different types of disasters with those who have experienced a horrific ordeal. She discussed the app “Help Kids Cope” that was developed by UCLA that tells you what to do in case of various disasters and how to explain what’s going on to kids of different age groups. The self-help option can be used when talking to adults.

Tarina Colledge added that disaster volunteers should be familiar with their organization’s values as well as the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability. This is based on the United Nations’s four humanitarian principles. They are: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. Knowing about these principles improve a volunteer’s understanding of the humanitarian mission and therefore better their response to helping in disasters.

Pat Halleran mentioned that CERT (along with other volunteer emergency teams) should be trained in staffing Points of Distribution (PODs) for distributing disaster relief supplies to the public. Volunteer emergency teams will most likely be put in charge of helping with this task being that first responders will have other more critical jobs to focus on. Others said that volunteers should get more training in how to triage injured people, first aid, light search and rescue, and how to use a fire extinguisher effectively.

Pat Halleran added that it’s important during training to get first responders and emergency volunteers familiar with each other before a disaster. Police and firefighters sometimes tend to be suspicious and skeptical of outsiders or people claiming to be first responders. During the Woolsey Fire that burned near Malibu in 2018, a CERT team was responding to help but was stopped at a checkpoint by a Los Angeles County Sheriff’s deputy and turned around. While this was very degrading to the CERT team, it was because the sheriff’s deputy simply didn’t know who the group of people claiming to be emergency workers were.

A common practice is having trainings in community rooms at police and fire stations. This allows for first responders and volunteers to mingle and learn each other’s names and faces as well as their capabilities. Sometimes firefighters would invite volunteers past the community room into the rest of the fire station to share pizza. Police officers have also been known to sit in between calls and listen to the trainings with volunteers over cookies and share stories. These simple examples help build trust between first responders and volunteers which is critical when they work together in the field. (Halleran,2020)

Lastly, your program should always try to reinvent processes and make things better and more efficient when possible. As long as you stick to your organization's values, you'll do good. You should strive for better but know that nothing will ever be perfect. That's okay. (McKenna,2020)

Technology

Incorporate tech where possible, but expect it to fail and have redundancies." -Tarina Colledge

Technology can be a powerful tool in disaster response efforts. However, technology can be finicky in normal low stress environments let alone high stakes emergency situations. Expecting there to be technological issues and planning ahead of time on how to address these with your team is critical. Telephone lines tend to "go down" during big emergencies when everyone is using them at once causing the lines to be overcrowded not allowing everyone simultaneous use. In addition, certain disasters can compromise communication lines like power outages, fires, cyber intrusions, and a host of others. This is why having redundancies is so important.

Some forms of communication that may be used during emergency activations with your team are landline or hardline phones, mobile phones, radios, satellite phones, ham radios, email, social media, and even whistles and airhorns for distress signaling. Spray paint can be used to mark structures and roads as cleared or too damaged to enter. Colored ribbons or pieces of tape tied to trees, street signs, or structures can be used to signal direction of movement or what's been cleared already or even attached to people when triaging patients. Megaphones and loud speakers can be used to address groups, and even runners can be invaluable in relaying critical information back and forth between field teams and Incident Command Posts (ICPs). (Rainey,2020)

San Francisco's NERT has traditionally had members taught in using ham radios to be able to communicate. Each neighborhood has at least one ham radio operator who can communicate with ham radios located at each Battalion Chief fire station and the city EOC. In the event that NERT members found an injured person who required more medical attention than they could give in the field, they could call an ambulance over the ham radio by coordinating with the local fire station.

During the 2016 Horse River Wildfire, near Fort McMurray in Alberta, Canada, communication was especially difficult. With it being Alberta's largest ever wildfire evacuation, Tarina Colledge, who served as an Emergency Management Coordinator, described the immense challenge. Only 2000 lines were available for mobile phone users, so that was over capacity when they evacuated 88,000 people. The power started going out in parts of the region due to the fire destroying power poles and powerlines. This took out telephones, internet, and Wi-Fi in many areas. Evacuation orders were sent out through Twitter using data which still worked in some parts.

While 800 evacuees filled a single shelter, eventually the fire spread, and evacuation center volunteers left to go evacuate their own families who were now at risk. This caused the number of evacuation center volunteers to dwindle drastically. At one point, Bryce Bodner, an emergency social services volunteer who was helping at the evacuation center working with Colledge who was in the Regional EOC, was told he had 30 minutes to come up with an evacuation plan to get

elderly and disabled people out of the shelter to safety at a secondary evacuation center 45 minutes south.

He asked Colledge to text him a photo of the ICS organization chart they had in the EOC. He then went around the shelter and started picking random evacuees who were calm and helping others and gave them ICS roles. "You are now my operations section chief. You are logistics. You are…" He told them to come with him and what needed to be done. By the end of the wildfire, nearly 1.5 million acres had burned, 3244 structures were destroyed, 88,000 people were evacuated, but not a single life was lost from the fire.

While technology can be finicky at times, it is still a great resource that should be utilized when possible. Andrea Forte who works with the Central Texas Disaster Action Response Team (CTDART) talked about their newly created Virtual Operations Support Team (VOST). It was first set up by the younger members who were older teenagers to gather open source intelligence from the internet in their Area of Responsibility (AOR). It was used to see what rumors were circulating online to support agencies' Public Information Officers (PIOs) to get accurate information out to the public. It was developed after some Texas wildfires to track where people were seeing fires. VOST would be able to see what people had posted on social media and drop pins on a GIS map and incorporate weather information. This information was then shared with fire departments for their situational awareness to get ahead of the fire.

Dealing with Spontaneous/Convergent Volunteers

"Volunteers can be a blessing and a curse." - *Rich Eisner*

Unaffiliated volunteers who show up spontaneously to a disaster site to help (also known as convergent volunteers) pose significant challenges. Commonly there is little to no coordination with those running the disaster response; they may get in the way of first responders and actual disaster workers; there could be duplication of work which wastes time and resources; there's rarely accountability of who they report to; if something bad happens to them then nobody will know. Pretty much, they're going rogue.

During the 2018 Camp Fire in Butte County, California, convergent volunteers came out in droves. Ryan Soulsby, who leads Butte County's Animal Services recalls some of the issues. Butte County already had a County Animal Response Team (CART) called the North Valley Disaster Group. They are a trained, certified, vetted, disaster group that has PPE and coordinates under Unified Command using ICS with the local emergency management office and fire department. Their mission is to go in and rescue trapped animals. However, during the Camp Fire, resources were low and CARTs from other parts of California were still responding. This created a void that convergent volunteers from social media tried to fill themselves.

While their hearts may have been in the right place, it didn't come without problems. Some convergent volunteers who came from out of the area took matters into their own hands. Despite being instructed not to enter certain locations, some convergent volunteers forcibly entered people's property against orders causing vandalism to private property and taking animals that didn't need to be rescued.

Another issue was when convergent volunteers rescued some cats behind the fire line. They brought them to the nearest animal shelter, but it was closed. They didn't coordinate with the local authorities on where to bring the animals. They then brought the animals to another shelter in a completely different county. This caused issues when the owner couldn't locate her animals after being told that they had been rescued. In addition, there was a time where convergent volunteers tried charging pet owners "a rescue fee" to get their animals back. This was accused of being extortion and a ransom for getting illegally held animals back.

Harpreet Jaswal talked about a convergent volunteer group called Mission Possible that raised unique challenges during the 2013 Southern Alberta Floods which greatly impacted the town of High River, Alberta, Canada. They were a group of good willed and intentioned people who were ready, willing, and available to help with the response.

The challenge was that they were a grassroots organization that were untrained, unvetted by the town, lacked PPE, didn't conduct safety briefings prior to conducting work, and often moved forward with certain tasks which weren't aligned with the overall response objectives and priorities. For example, at one point, the emergency services agencies had closed three dangerous neighborhoods that had been flooded. Convergent volunteers from Mission Possible disobeyed the orders, went in, and then became trapped and hurt themselves having to call 911 for first responders to come help. This took valuable resources away from the disaster response and also compromised the safety of all involved. (Jaswal,2020)

What also became an issue was when local businesses started joining the group, sometimes creating a conflict of interest. There were reports of people who owned certain businesses that could provide services (i.e. lumber, cleaning, restoration, trades, etc.) to disaster victims who would then try to make business deals while being there supposedly to help under the guise of a disaster responder. Some unlicensed and even counterfeit companies joined the group claiming to be able to rebuild peoples' homes who would then take advantage of the situation and steal their money without providing any service.

A different example though of a grassroots group of convergent volunteers who have evolved their organization is the Cajun Navy. What began as a group of random civilians with an eagerness to help their neighbors using their personal boats to conduct water rescues in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina has now become an official non-profit organization. They are conducting trainings for their rescuers and their own dispatchers, creating standards and expectations, and coordinating with local government emergency management agencies under ICS. They have been able to go from an unaffiliated convergent volunteer group to the beginnings of a trained affiliated disaster relief organization capable of coordinating under Unified Command and ICS.

Dr. Stephen Baruch said, "The amount of post disaster volunteers can be overwhelming." Brian Lindbolm added that it can be difficult to get to know spontaneous volunteers and be able to vet and know how best they can help. That's why it's important to have a strategy or plan in place for dealing with spontaneous volunteers. This was echoed by many people interviewed.

Many people interviewed were against using spontaneous volunteers when possible. Sandra Firpo who leads CERT teams believes that utilizing pre-existing and trained disaster response teams is the way to go. She said, “Have you been trained and in a group? No? Go do that during blue skies.” While experts like Firpo agree that it’s best if volunteers already belong to a disaster response organization pre-disaster, they say that you will always get spontaneous volunteers and therefore should have a convergent volunteer plan.

In the event that you encounter convergent volunteers, don’t turn them away, but instead direct them towards a Volunteer Reception Center (VRC). VRCs should be established as soon as possible during a major emergency. VRCs are used to offer resources, organize convergent volunteers, collect their contact information and skillsets, and vet them. The worst thing you can do is send volunteers away feeling unappreciated. Then they may decide to go rogue and try to help in the disaster by themselves which can get them into danger and hurt. At the VRC, get their contact information and say you’ll reach out. If there are too many convergent volunteers, take their information and say you can probably use them and that you’ll reach out when the need arises that meets their skillsets. You’re not guaranteeing that they’ll be called, but it comes across better, and they’ll leave thinking that you respect and appreciate their eagerness to help. (Forte,2020) (Firpo,2020) (Lindbolm,2020)

At VRCs, you should also have a plan for donation management. Expect large amounts of donations to be dropped off by people without asking for it. Some of it may be needed, but other things may just be bags of items that people are trying to get rid of that won’t serve a purpose to you. It’s important to have a plan for addressing if you’re accepting donations and if so, what you’re accepting. Proper protocols should be that you request specific donations through your PIO to notify the public what’s needed and where to drop it off.

All people interviewed stressed the importance of vetting volunteers. Brian Lindbolm talked about how it can be difficult to vet spontaneous volunteers when you can’t get to know them. Andrea Forte said that you can do expedited vetting though by using a VRC. While some people running the VRC will be doing more administrative intake procedures, there should be members from the local police department there with a computer who are able to vet volunteers for felons and sex offenders using NLETS.

While it’s important to check volunteers for criminal histories, it’s also important to check their credentials and licenses that they may claim to have. Andre Forte mentioned a story during a Texas wildfire where a woman claimed to be a nurse and was administering medications at an evacuation shelter. Days later when the American Red Cross took over the shelter and started vetting people, they found out that the nurse was really a 19 year old girl wearing scrubs who was falsely claiming to be a registered nurse. Rich Eisner brought up a similar example during the Loma Prieta Earthquake where people claimed to be experts at search and rescue but didn’t belong to any group or have any training.

Using convergent volunteers may open you up to liability. Rich Eisner mentioned how many states have a Good Samaritan law that legally protects people who try to help others as long as they act reasonably and don’t do anything that they’re not trained to do or that’s negligent. However, Marsha Hovey & Anna Swardenski, who both work in Santa Clara County with CADRE

(their local equivalent of VOAD), claim that you can actually swear in convergent volunteers as DSWs. They were the only ones during interviews who brought up this idea.

When it comes to tasking, try to find volunteers who best fit with the specific roles you have based on their skillsets and background. On the flip side, don't put people in some roles if they don't qualify for certain jobs and instead place them in other roles that they can do. An example is not putting a sex offender in charge of the daycare center. However, maybe you can have them loading supplies into trucks while properly supervised if your organization or agency allows them to be a volunteer. Another example would be not having a person who is elderly or has access and functional needs doing a task that requires intense physical labor. Make sure to pair two or more convergent volunteers with at least one trained volunteer. The ideal span of control is five to seven per every leader. (Lindbolm,2020), (Forte,2020), (Hovey & Swardenski, 2020)

One way that convergent volunteers can be vetted and tasked is if local or state entities have a program and website for people to register. California has the California Volunteers Office of the Governor. It collects peoples' contact information, vets volunteers, and looks at credentials for certain positions. It then works with NGOs to help provide staffing. Volunteers may be helping with call banks, contact tracing, handing out water bottles, etc. (Eisner,2020)

That is a much different model of a state-run volunteer program than another organization called the Michigan Volunteer Defense Force which falls under the Michigan Department of Military and Veteran Affairs. It was created under the same authority as the Michigan State Police was and reports to the Governor. They are a trained military-like emergency volunteer force (different from the National Guard) to help serve Michigan in the event of war but have luckily not been utilized for that and have instead been used for other types of emergencies and for disaster relief and support operations. However, this is not for convergent volunteers. (Mesic,2020)

Cultural Diversity

"Understand that every area has its own local culture (and baggage and politics) when deploying to another area." -Rocky Lopes

Sometimes communities may distrust 'outsiders' like FEMA or Red Cross. (Denny,2020) In the aftermath of the Ft. McMurry wildfire in Alberta, Canada, Team Rubicon was first not invited or welcomed to come help. The Canadian local government EOC didn't know who they were and didn't think that they needed the Americans coming in to rescue them.

Eventually, the impacted local food bank needed help sorting cans, but the entire town had been evacuated. First responders were asked to volunteer, but they didn't have the time to due to working the wildfire. Team Rubicon was then invited to come and help the food bank including their meat locker where everything had turned rotten due to power loss. Team Rubicon volunteered to clean it out. They donned hazmat suits and Self-Contained Breathing Apparatuses (SCBAs) and went in. The local EOC saw pictures of them working and realized their worth as an valuable resource. They even asked Team Rubicon to stay longer than the team had originally planned on staying, and the EOC tasked them with being the sole NGO in charge of ash sifting and goods recovery. (Colledge,2020)

When deploying to a new area impacted by a disaster, it's important to have locals the impacted population trusts be integrated with your outside team who's visiting as to not upset the local population. You need that local community respect and cultural insight when deploying outside of your home region. Expecting the same language, food, housing, SOPs is not going to happen (Denny,2020) (Lopes,2020)

Different places operate differently. Canada doesn't use ICS everywhere. Systems are province specific (Colledge,2020) NGOs may operate differently in other countries too. The Japanese Red Cross works in hospitals and not in mass care and sheltering like in the United States. (Eisner,2020) The Canadian Red Cross only responds when requested unlike the American Red Cross which are auto-dispatched to housefires. This is because in Canada, there is no national regulatory agency for emergency management. In the province of British Columbia, personal disaster assistance is provided by volunteers in the emergency support services program which is a provincial program that is implemented by local governments. Some municipalities contract this to the Canadian Red Cross. (Colledge,2020)

Rocky Lopes described a learning moment when he was deployed from Washington D.C. to Puerto Rico in 1989 for Hurricane Hugo. He said that his team went in 'guns blazing' telling everyone what to do. He was then pulled back a bit by the local ARC chapter and told how they handle things locally. He said that eventually he learned Spanish from a native Puerto Rican because he knew that he'd come back to Puerto Rico for future hurricanes which ended up being true. That same year, Lopes was deployed to the Loma Prieta Earthquake in California. He noticed that his SOPs weren't being followed to a T. He asked his local counterpart why they were not following his instructions all the way and was told that the locals had a more efficient way that they used for their neighborhoods. He learned to listen before telling.

While it's important to understand the cultural differences of the communities you're serving, it's also important to understand the cultural differences amongst volunteers and their learning styles. Frank Lucier was giving a NERT train the trainer class to a Native American group. However, he said that they refused to pay attention, participate, be engaged, and instead talked the entire time to themselves. He stopped the class and asked why they wouldn't stop talking and pay attention to the class. They answered that in their culture, it's negative and bad to discuss disasters. After learning this, Lucier adjusted and restructured the program a little to spin it from talking about disasters to instead talking about resiliency which worked. He said that you can be flexible and adaptable while still maintaining SOPs.

Kevin Denny brought up an example he encountered while deploying with the American Red Cross to disasters. He said that the Southern Baptist volunteers were very hard workers. However, they would stop working and go back to their hotel rooms for a while. He later learned that every day, they would take a two hour break for bible study. He said that you should know who can do what and everyone's limitations, so you can plan accordingly on what resources are available and when.

Don't underestimate someone's potential as an emergency volunteer just based on your first impressions. You might find a rock star volunteer from someone you didn't expect. Having

different sized people, women, different ethnicities, different backgrounds, and various languages are all valuable to a team because you don't know what you're going to run into and what might be needed. (Childers & Perry, 2020)

Janet Wilson discussed the need for women being on disaster response teams. Wilson was the first female emergency crane driver in Australia in the 1990's. She was the first and only woman to join the emergency response team for the company Rio Tinto which provides mining and smelting services in rural Australia. She had to add an 's' to all of her certificates because they only said "Mr.". She was also a volunteer for the local rural fire brigade and the West Australia Ambulance Corps. She worked her way up in private sector emergency response and has lead volunteer emergency teams at rural job sites in the Australian outback hundreds of miles away from any town with government first responders.

She said that sometimes there's a lack of credibility in female emergency responders. She said sometimes there would be pushback from some of the men on the team. She overcame the issue by perseverance and strength. She said that it's important to stand up for yourself and know what you're doing. She added that she was able to prove herself by getting in and getting dirty next to the men during emergency calls and training. She added the value of her vice-captain stepping up and backing her up if there was ever pushback. She thought that it was less about empowering women and more about educating the men that women were capable of doing the same job. She says that times are changing positively with more women in the emergency workforce but that there's still work to be done.

She added the importance of having women on emergency teams. She said that with more women going into riskier jobs that were traditionally dominated by men, they are more likely to encounter female patients than when it was all males in those dangerous jobs who got hurt. She said that while emergency response teams might just strip the pants off a burned male patient at a job site, they would try to use blankets to cover a female patient who's been burned as the situation requires more sensitivity. She added that if they're responding to a Muslim female patient, men aren't even allowed to go into the room to treat her. Only female medics can.

While cultural differences can be at the personal level, they can also be at the national level of how society thinks of disasters. Japan is prone to earthquakes, and therefore has much more of a mindset regarding disaster preparedness, so much so that they even have preparedness sections in department stores. (Halleran,2020) The Los Angeles Fire Department even traveled to Japan in the 1980's to learn how their government was planning for disasters, neighborhood evacuations, damage assessments, and treating an influx of patients in hospitals. (Halleran,2020)

However, there are some strong cultural differences in Japan regarding disasters. Japan is very good at earthquake fault modeling, seismic predictions, and other scientific tasks regarding earthquakes. Disaster response is more narrowly defined and dominated by the fire department. In the United States, emergency management is more broadly defined and uses more of a social science approach using ICS and incorporating multiple groups like fire, police, health, economics, city and regional planners, and NGOs. (Eisner,2020)

In addition, Japanese culture values and places great importance on respecting and following orders and rules. Initiative is not valued or encouraged. In the 1995 Kobe Earthquake, soldiers were called in to help search for and rescue survivors. The soldiers had been told to wait at their staging area until the bell tower struck the hour. Despite injured people screaming for help in collapsed building across the street, the soldiers would not move until it was time to do so. (Lucier,2020)

Another similar example was during the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake and tsunami that crippled the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. School principals would not make the decision on whether or not to evacuate schools until they had been authorized to do so by higher level government. It was so ingrained into them to follow their set rules that initiative was not allowed. The delay in evacuating was deadly and many people lost their lives. (Eisner,2020)

Japan lacks a culture of volunteering. Evacuation shelters aren't run by volunteers. Instead, evacuees just take care of themselves and their immediate dependents in the shelters and leave when they want. (Eisner,2020) After the Kobe Earthquake, Japan sent their fire chiefs to the United States to learn about creating volunteer disaster relief groups. They visited the American Red Cross headquarters in Washington D.C., the Los Angeles Fire Department to learn about CERT, and the San Francisco Fire Department to learn about NERT. While in San Francisco, a Japanese fire chief asked if citizens wanting to volunteer was a big thing in American culture. The leader of NERT said that neighbors helping neighbors was pretty common. The fire chief was taken back and said that it wasn't common in Japan, and that in Japan, people only take care of their immediate relatives. (Lucier,2020)

Coordinating with NGOs

"The first first responders are the community and community organizations." - *Rich Eisner*

Community members have the most relevant and up-to-date information from what they see in their communities before first responders and government ever show up. You should coordinate with other disaster groups before a disaster to learn what their capabilities are as to not step on toes or duplicate work unnecessarily. Establish relationships early in advance with other stakeholders. "You don't want to be passing out business cards the day of the disaster." is the most common quote from nearly everyone interviewed in emergency management. (Eisner,2020) (Lindbolm,2020) (Rainey,2020) (Parent,2020) (Denny,2020) (Colledge,2020)

Kevin Denny talked about how during the Lake County Firestorm of 2015, help from relief organizations flooded the region, but poor coordination made the response not as efficient and seamless as it could've been. Nearly everyone interviewed stressed the importance of coordinating with your local VOAD/COAD. Each NGO needs to have their own liaison to coordinate with the VOAD. (Jaswal,2020) (Parent,2020) The VOAD then has a single representative in the EOC to coordinate with the other stakeholders through the Liaison Officer. (Hovey & Swardenski,2020) (Lucier,2020) (Eisner,2020)

Kevin Denny added that VOAD/COAD groups need to coordinate better with having a common terminology to avoid confusion. This can be done by having all disaster groups (NGOs,

private, & public) be well versed in coordinating using ICS/NIMS. (Lucier,2020) (Forte,2020) (Eisner,2020) (Denny,2020) VOAD/COADs need to make this training mandatory because not all groups fully understand what ICS and NIMS are.

Something that can help NGOs and other disaster groups coordinate better is being part of disaster exercises to meet other local agencies and NGOs. This allows volunteers to put theory and lessons into practice (Firpo,2020) (Denny,2020) In November of 2019, San Mateo County helped host a statewide health medical exercise.

They converted the San Mateo Event Center into an evacuation center with role-players pretending to be evacuees and injured people. Police, Fire, EMS, many different CERTs, County Public Health, the Humane Society, and the National Guard all participated. All groups were ICS and NIMS trained and were able to use common terminology. Cots, a feeding area, registration area, medical treatment area, and security were all set up with a hotwash done at the end of the exercise to learn what went well and what could be improved upon. Volunteers said it was great to be able to put theory into practice. (Firpo,2020)

Lastly, if the government ever runs into red tape during a disaster, NGOs can commonly fill that need. (Jaswal,2020) Patrick McKenna said that NGOs like the American Red Cross can be used as a diplomatic tool when government isn't trusted. ARC has a fleet of approximately 340 Emergency Response Vehicles (ERVs) spread across the country that serve as a national resource to disasters. They don't have any emergency lights, and must follow traffic laws, but they are registered as emergency vehicles which allows them to get past roadblocks.

During wildfires near San Diego in 2007, the California and U.S. Government had a standoff with a local Indian reservation. Local authorities had issued a mandatory evacuation order for parts of San Diego County with roadblocks set up to prevent people from going back into evacuated zones once they had left. The local tribe refused to leave stating their sovereignty and stayed in their casino. However, there were local migrant farm workers who lived in trailers on the reservation. They needed food but couldn't leave the reservation because if they did, they wouldn't be allowed to reenter the evacuated zone to reach their homes and feared losing their jobs.

The local tribe stood firm, refusing federal and state disaster relief services to enter the reservation. After much negotiation, Governor Schwarzenegger was told that the reservation would allow four American Red Cross ERVs to enter the reservation. Upon driving onto the reservation, the local tribal chief blessed the land and the ARC volunteers who were in the ERVs. He stated that only their crews and no other volunteers from ARC would be allowed to come and go from the reservation because they had received the blessing. ARC delivered lifesaving supplies every day to the migrant farm workers for over two weeks. (McKenna,2020)

Working with the Private Sector

You also have private entities who have emergency response teams comprised of volunteers. These private emergency teams are also overlooked and can offer enhanced response and recovery capabilities. According to Beth Dowdle-Anchondo, United Airline's Safety Supervisor at the San Francisco International Airport hub, United Airlines has a "go team"

comprised of hundreds of United employees spread throughout the country who volunteer to undergo specialized training to be able to respond to aviation emergencies as a collateral duty.

If a United Airlines flight or any flight part of Star Alliance (a group of international airlines who have a partnership) were to go down in the United States, United's emergency plan and go team would be activated. If the aviation emergency happened in another country, the nearest Star Alliance airline would deploy their emergency team to respond and deal with it until the affected airline could make it there. Every airline who conducts operations within the United States, be they domestic or international, is required to have an emergency management plan. (Dowdle,2018)

United Airlines has a prepped and ready Boeing 737 or 777 always on standby at their main hub and headquarters at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport fully stocked with emergency supplies. If there ever was an emergency callout, they can have the plane in the air responding to anywhere in the country with a couple hundred trained United employees and gear within four hours of the call. Each passenger on a downed flight would be assigned two United go team volunteers who would work in 12-hour shifts doing whatever the passenger and their family needed. (Dowdle,2018)

They have been utilized to work and coordinate with first responders, the affected airports and community, as well as the American Red Cross who has been delegated by Congress since 1996 to have the authority to work with hospitals to gather limited passenger information regarding numbers and types of injuries in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). The go team also works to reunify families, help with paperwork, set up hotels and travel for those affected passengers and their families, and even get new things that may have been lost on the flight like glasses, shoes, clothing, and prescription medications. United go team volunteers have even been known to take their passengers to movie theaters, buy them a glass of wine, or just sit and comfort them to try to get them to feel better. (Dowdle,2018)

Another example of a private company who has a volunteer emergency response team is Genentech. Genentech is a leading biotechnology company in South San Francisco. They create pharmaceuticals and cures for many of the world's diseases and ailments and are on the cutting edge of cancer research, stem cell research, and DNA research. They too have their own volunteer emergency response team called the First Alert Team to keep their employees and facilities safe. Their headquarters campus is over 235 acres large with over 60 large buildings including 2 daycare centers with over 700 children, has a fleet of approximately 40 busses with a nearby harbor and ferry network, and over 15,000 employees who come to work every day (Wimmer,2019).

Volunteers are taught first aid (with over 40 team members being trained Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs)), hazardous materials response where they don large enclosed bubble suites, how to use a Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), confined space awareness for dealing with structural collapses, about utility emergencies, how to integrate with first responder operations, and even how to put out a fire with a fire extinguisher (Wimmer,2019).

In Australia, the mining and smelting company Rio Tinto has their own emergency teams. Their job sites in the Australian outback can be larger than 45 miles by 15 miles and over a day's drive from any town with government first responders. Their emergency teams have the same

standards and capabilities as local first responders. Government and private emergency teams sometimes work together during incidents. (Wilson,2020)

An example was when two cars crashed with four patients being injured. The local fire department only had two ambulances and called the goldmine asking them to dispatch two of their ambulances. Then if the company needs a helicopter to evacuate a hurt employee, the government will deploy theirs. During rural wildfires in Queensland, New South Wales, the government will call the private fire brigade to assist. There's an agreement between companies and the Australian government which allows employees to leave indefinitely with full pay to volunteer to help their country during a state emergency. The company will even donate half of their fire engines and ambulances to the help with the state emergency. (Wilson,2020)

During California wildfires, companies like Comcast and AT&T will send teams to disaster sites to get communication systems back up and running. PG&E has field teams who respond to emergencies like downed powerlines and gas leaks. They also work with emergency management agencies when they believe that power needs to be shut off preemptively to prevent wildfires and work to turn it back on when they think it's safe. (Knight,2019)

Disney even has their own emergency management teams around the world to keep guests safe. Each park has its own emergency manager and emergency operations center where they can see what's going on at other parks around the globe. Disney corporate has their own emergency management department too. Parks have their own fire departments and security teams who work closely with law enforcement. (Knight,2019)

According to the Public Affairs Council, private industries are playing a critical role in helping people during recent disasters. "Coca-Cola is donating 25,000 cases of water, milk, sports drinks and other beverages to people in areas affected by Hurricane Harvey, and another $4.3 million to help with disaster relief after Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico and the Mexican earthquakes. Anheuser-Busch is providing 155,000 cans of water to Harvey victims and 310,000 to those hit by Hurricane Irma. General Mills is making available more than $500,000 in "shelf-stable, ready-to-eat" food donations to Harvey victims. Johnson & Johnson is donating 25,000 hygiene kits stocked with soap, shampoo, toothpaste, and other toiletries for Harvey relief efforts. New York Life is providing 20 pallets of food for Harvey sufferers, and Clorox is distributing truckloads of bleach and Glad bags. Amgen has pledged $3 million to support Maria relief efforts."

Companies can conduct philanthropy and aid in causes they want to. However, some companies allow their employees to go out and make a difference in the world themselves. Probably no company out there is more supportive of volunteering than the technology giant Salesforce. Kerry Rodgers is in charge of Salesforce's West Coast Engagement and Philanthropy Programs. While Salesforce employees get paid time off to volunteer with any organization they choose, their system for volunteering can serve as a model for other companies to enact something similar.

Salesforce has a culture of volunteerism which the leadership supports. Each employee is allocated 56 hours (7 days) of Volunteer Time Off (VTO) per year. At the beginning of each year, every employee meets with their manager and discusses their goals for the year. They go over a

model called V2MOM. It stands for: Vision, Values, Methods, Obstacles, & Measures. Employees are encouraged to put their yearly volunteer goals into this as well. At the end of the year, employees meet with their managers to see how their year's goals went. (Rodgers,2020)

Rodgers said that it's important for companies to have a trusting and open relationship with the non-profits they volunteer with. Ask what they need and how you can help them achieve their goals and objectives. Ask what number of people works for them, the timing, etc., and understand that they have their own logistical model. You need to respect their organization and how they operate. You can't come in and just take over with your company's volunteers. (Rodgers,2020)

While many companies volunteer to help their communities, sometimes outside volunteer emergency teams can actually help companies. San Francisco's NERT and Bay Area CERTs have helped train private companies and businesses in emergency preparedness and response. (Lucier,2020) (Halleran,2020) Some examples have been Chevron, Visa, Gilead, and even local business that want to be trained like mini CERTs. San Francisco's NERT has even translated their safety and preparedness classes for locals in the City's Chinatown District. This is a major perk of having neighborhood based teams. By training companies, you're able to make people an emergency resource while at work and at home.

Lastly, Marsha Hovey & Anna Swardenski mentioned the California Resiliency Alliance. It acts like its own VOAD but includes private businesses and can coordinate with emergency management agencies. It shares information, tools, and resources between public and private sectors.

Changing Societal Attitudes

"We need to get the general public into a preparedness mindset" -Bryan Parent

If you can train your local citizens, they are able to be survivors and helpers instead of becoming victims. People should know basic first aid, light search and rescue, how to use a fire extinguisher, how to turn off utilities, and to check their immediate family, then immediate neighbors, and then their neighborhood. (Lindbolm,2020)

Frank Lucier adds, "You're giving them not just training but an education in safety." During the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake, the local news media told everyone to turn off their natural gas. Ten minutes later, they corrected their statement saying to only turn off your gas if there was a gas leak. Hundreds of thousands of people had turned off their gas already and were now unable to turn it back on. This created a new issue with many people being out of gas for months having to wait on utility crews to come and restart their natural gas mains. (Lucier,2020)

Lucier says, "The hardest paradigm to break is that nobody is coming to help. There is no longer 911." Bryan Parent adds, "People need to understand that they're in a crisis and that it might be up to them to help and be self-sufficient before help can arrive, sometimes days. Set expectations that the fire department won't send a fire engine to every call."

Sandra Firpo mentioned, “It’s important for Americans to learn that donating anything and just dropping it off can cause issues because it goes into a big pile and takes people to sort it when they could be doing and helping with something else. Only donate what’s requested and gift cards to a reliable organization that you are familiar with, preferably one with disaster experience.” Butte County was inundated with donations, many of which weren’t things that were even requested. They still have locations filled with useless donations that were never used that they now need to figure out how to get rid of. (Soulsby,2020)

Miscellaneous

According to Sandra Firpo, “Communities that recover the best are the ones with social connectiveness.” It’s important to keep city pride during a disaster. Examples of this are seeing Boston Strong, El Paso Strong, Sonoma Strong, etc. There should be pride in the community impacted and pride in the emergency response teams coming to help. Firpo adds that every disaster affects you in three ways: physically, emotionally, and financially. Physically can mean that you’re injured or that your home is displaced. Emotionally can mean how you feel or even spiritually. Financially is the cost of things lost.

Marsha Hovey & Anna Swardenski brought up the importance of having a “turn key operation” ready beforehand, so you’re ready to activate the plan when disaster strikes. Tarina Colledge added that planning and operational readiness go hand in hand but that the event never matches the plan, ever.

Conclusion

While disasters can negatively impact lives, property, and the environment, there will always be those who come to answer the call for help. It is vital to know how to manage and utilize volunteers both organized and spontaneous to help augment first responders and disaster relief services. Proper management and utilization of volunteers during emergencies are critical. If volunteers are organized, trained, and given clear roles and responsibilities, they can greatly enhance community response and recovery capabilities during a disaster.

This document has the potential to be a useful strategy of best practices and a guidebook for use in the fields of emergency response and volunteer management. It would be another tool in the toolbox that can be utilized for better decision-making in emergency situations where time is of the essence and where clarity may be limited. While comprehensive, it’s not to say that this document is fully complete. There are most definitely things that were missed, lessons learned that were unintentionally left out, or best practices not discovered while conducting my research and interviews. I hope that emergency management practitioners and those involved in disaster relief operations with volunteers add and contribute to this important field of knowledge with their own thoughts, ideas, strategies, lessons learned, and best practices. We are one team, one fight!

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