

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. What kind of work might volunteers do?

A: Volunteers will be assigned duties based on critical need. Assignments may range from assisting law-enforcement Agencies with security, transporting and distributing food and water, conducting search and rescue operations, providing counseling service, hiring and assigning critical personnel, planning for continuity of DoD operations, and coordinating a myriad of relief efforts.

Q2. How long will volunteers be deployed?

A: We anticipate 14-day to 30-day assignments for volunteers. Other length periods might be negotiated and accommodated. When you are deployed, you should pack for a minimum 30-day stay. See questions below for further information about the timing of deployment.

Q3. How will volunteers know they have been accepted?

A: FEMA will contact volunteers who are accepted and tell them when and where to report for training.

Q4. Where will volunteers be trained?

A: Most pre-deployment training will be conducted at FEMA's Orlando Florida training facility. See the attached information for more details about how to get to the National Emergency Training Center training facility. Additional information is at the end of the questions, titled, "Information on the FEMA Orlando Facility Florida Long Term Recovery Office (FLTRO)."

Q5. Will I be able to return home between training and deployment?

A. If a volunteer has stayed longer than thirty (30) days, s/he may travel round-trip to visit home, for which FEMA will reimburse the donating agency.

Q6. What is the duty status for persons who volunteer?

A: The employee volunteers should be maintained in regular duty status. They **are not** on excused absence or any leave status. Volunteers will be issued a hard copy T&A card at their field site. The FEMA supervisor on-site will sign the volunteer's time card and it should be returned to the volunteer's agency timekeeper. It will reflect both regular hours of work and overtime. The overtime can be charged back to FEMA. Further payroll instructions for recovering overtime costs from FEMA will be provided. Regular hours and AUO or LEAP are charged to the employing agency. If the donating agency has a mechanism for tracking or estimating regular pay also, it may be prudent to do so, in case Government costs of the recovery effort are requested at a later date.

Q7. Do you have guidance on preparation of travel authorizations?

A: The employing agency, not FEMA, should prepare the travel orders. Travel orders for volunteers should be open-ended and assume a minimum 30-day deployment. The employing agency should pay for travel to the training site, usually Orlando, Florida. FEMA will handle travel arrangements post-training.

Additional information on travel cost reimbursement and travel expenses post training will be provided to the volunteers at the time of the training in Orlando.

Q8. What can you tell me about the travel arrangements?

A: Volunteers who are flying in for training should purchase a one-way ticket to Orlando, FL, and arrange for ground transportation to the FEMA training site located at: 100 Sun Port Lane, Orlando FL, 32809.

Volunteers should be put on open-ended travel authorizations (minimum of 30 days). Travel for all volunteers following training will be coordinated with the FEMA travel service (1-800-537-1064). FEMA will provide the funding codes and accounting information, including the vouchering of travel claims, once they are placed into the system.

FEMA will determine assignment destinations following training in Orlando and will arrange for transportation from Orlando to the volunteers' assigned locations.

Q9. May I drive to Orlando for training, rather than fly?

A. Driving to the Orlando training may not be a wise choice as volunteers generally return home from the site to which they are deployed. FEMA travel is usually only one-way.

Q10. How will I get to my assigned destination?

A: FEMA will determine assignment destinations and will arrange for your transportation from Orlando to your assigned location.

Q11. How does the reimbursement for volunteers' travel work? Should the donating agency put the employee on travel orders?

A. The volunteer employee uses his/her Government travel card while volunteering for disaster relief. When the employee arrives at the Orlando training site, s/he will be given claim forms for reimbursement. The employee will also be advised concerning procedures for scheduling any future travel which will be done through the FEMA travel service. The donor agency will process travel reimbursement following normal procedures and will be reimbursed by FEMA. The agency should put the employee who is volunteering on open-ended travel orders for thirty days, though the volunteer may return home sooner.

Q12. Will the volunteers be given any type of special identification?

A: Yes, volunteers will receive FEMA badges and FEMA T-shirts (organizational clothing).

Q13. I'm a Federal law enforcement officer. Should I bring my weapon and badge and credentials?

A: No, please do not bring weapons if you are reporting as a FEMA volunteer. You should bring your agency identification.

Q14. Will the volunteers receive any sort of immunization?

A: FEMA will arrange for immunizations at the Orlando deployment site.

Q15. What happens if a volunteer is injured and needs to file a Worker's Compensation claim?

A. A FEMA on-site supervisor will assist the volunteer with his/her claim, and the volunteer will file the claim with his/her donating agency for processing. Costs will be borne by the donating agency and are not reimbursable through the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF).

Q16: Are DoD employees who volunteer to assist in recovery efforts from Hurricane Katrina, and who sustain job-related injuries or illnesses while engaged in such work, covered for workers' compensation purposes?

A: It depends. DoD employees who received official approval to volunteer in recovery efforts, and who are granted administrative leave during such time, are generally covered under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) for all activities related to those recovery efforts, including not only injuries sustained during these efforts but occupational diseases that may be incurred as a result of exposure to hazardous substances. DoD employees who volunteer to assist in recovery efforts but who do not receive official DoD approval for such work would be covered under FECA only if they perform work for a Federal agency that has the authority to accept the services of volunteers (the Department of Veterans Affairs, for example).

Q17: What benefits are available for DoD volunteers who sustain job-related injury or illness while engaged in recovery efforts from Hurricane Katrina?

A: With a few exceptions, the full range of benefits payable under FECA are available to volunteers, including wage loss benefits, medical treatment, schedule awards, rehabilitation, *etc.* Volunteers are not eligible for Continuation of Pay, a benefit under FECA by which Federal employees receive their regular salary for up to 45 days following a traumatic injury. Wage loss benefits for volunteers are paid at a rate determined by the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP), which may vary significantly from the employee's salary.

Q18: Are private citizens who volunteer their services to DoD agencies covered under workers' compensation?

A: Yes, they are covered for all activities related to the services that they perform, including not only injuries sustained during these efforts but occupational diseases that may be incurred as a result of exposure to hazardous substances. Because they are volunteers, they would not receive Continuation of Pay, but are eligible for other FECA benefits, including medical benefits as well as wage loss at a rate determined by OWCP. Such costs would be billed back to the DoD agency that accepted the services of this individual.

Q19. Some employees have no Government ID. Is this an issue for FEMA? Does this prevent employees from volunteering?

A. No, this will not prevent an employee from volunteering. If an employee has been identified by his agency and reported to FEMA as eligible to volunteer, the employee does not need a Government ID.

Q20. Does FEMA perform any sort of medical screening prior to deployment to a field location to determine if volunteers are fit to perform the work assigned?

A. No, FEMA does not perform a medical screening, though FEMA does provide any needed inoculations, such as for tetanus, prior to deployment to the field. If a FEMA volunteer trainer sees that a volunteer will clearly not be up to the physical demands of the volunteer assignment, it might be possible for FEMA to deploy the volunteer to less arduous tasks. It is presumed that the donating agency and the volunteer believe the volunteer is fit for the duties associated with the volunteer work.

Q21. Why are series, grade and skills not requested for volunteers? Is there some sort of skills screening done in Orlando, or elsewhere?

A. The volunteer's skills will be sorted out in Orlando, prior to deployment to the field. The volunteer will be assigned duties that are of critical need and these may not be directly related to the type of work in which the volunteer is regularly employed.

Q22. What phone number can agencies or volunteers' families call to contact the volunteer in case of emergency? What phone number can a volunteer call for more information, after s/he has been reported by his/her agency as eligible to perform volunteer work?

A. 1-866-896-8003

Q23. Will FEMA supervisors certify volunteers for hazard pay? Is hazard pay subject to reimbursement through the Disaster Relief Fund?

A. Volunteers to FEMA under this program will not be put in situations that would warrant hazardous duty pay.

Q24. May a volunteer travel to and from his/her FEMA volunteer duties, for a home visit?

A. If a volunteer has stayed longer than thirty (30) days, s/he may travel round-trip to visit home, for which FEMA will reimburse the donating agency.

Q25. What costs are covered by FEMA?

A. FEMA will reimburse agencies for overtime, Sunday pay, shift/night differential, holiday pay, travel costs and per diem, \$15 per week for phone calls, and \$15 per week for laundry. The donating agency continues to pay the employee's base salary. Donating agencies should keep records of these expenses to ensure proper reimbursement by FEMA.

Q26. Do Federal volunteers get FEMA Federal badges?

A. Yes. All persons who volunteer will receive a FEMA badge.

Q27. How long can a volunteer expect to be away from home?

A. Volunteer service will typically be for 30 days. Shorter or longer periods of service can be negotiated and accommodated.

Q28. If a volunteer would like to partner with another agency volunteer, can FEMA accommodate "buddies"?

A: Yes. Buddies can be deployed together – just let them know at Emmitsburg.

Q29. After my name has been reported as a volunteer, if I should have questions about my deployment, who can I contact?

A: You may refer your questions to your agency POC, or to FEMA at 1-800-440-6728. Please call FEMA **only after FEMA has accepted you as a volunteer and has contacted you.** The FEMA number may also be used by your agency, or family and friends for emergencies once you are deployed as a FEMA volunteer.

Q30. What living and working conditions should I expect?

A: You should be prepared for the "worst case" scenario of primitive living conditions similar to a war zone. Clean water for cooking, bathing, laundry, and toilet facilities is in very short supply. You should not expect to bathe or do laundry as often as you do at home. Toilets may be "port-a-potties" or latrines. You may live in a tent and expect to share sleeping quarters. Electricity may not have been restored so expect to do without lights, refrigeration, air-conditioning, computer access, recharging cell phones and similar amenities. Expect to "rough" it, as this is a disaster area. You must realize that you may see corpses. Animals as well as people were displaced, so you may encounter semi-wild/wild animals such as pets that were separated from their owners, as well as snakes, rats, nutria, deer and others.

Q31. Can government contractors volunteer to go?

A: Government contractors should not volunteer under this program. Contractors are encouraged to check with their employers for information on any relief efforts that may be sponsored by their employers.

Q32. Is psychological preparation included in the training and does FEMA provide for post-deployment de-briefing?

A: Yes. There is both pre-deployment and post-deployment support for volunteers.

Q33. How will an agency know when its volunteers are deployed?

A: When volunteers reach the Orlando mobilization site, their contact information will be entered into the FEMA database. When the volunteer is deployed, the donating agency will be notified. As this process may take a matter of days, agencies may want to request that the volunteers alert their supervisors prior to their deployment. FEMA is also willing to provide lists of deployed employees to agencies upon request; these may be requested by your Agency POC. Questions about deployed employees or emergency contacts may be directed to FEMA at 1-800-440-6728.

Information on the FEMA Orlando Facility Florida Long Term Recovery Office (FLTRO)

Volunteers should not contact FEMA directly. Agency points of contacts will forward volunteer information to FEMA. FEMA will contact volunteers as they are needed for deployment and when a training date has been set. We anticipate that rotations of employees will be needed for some time; therefore volunteers should understand that they may be contacted in the near term for immediate deployment or they may not be contacted for some time based on the number of volunteers and the need.

FLTRO:

Starting Monday, September 12, 2005, all pre-deployment training will be conducted at FEMA's Orlando Florida training facility.

Address: 100 Sun Port Lane, Orlando FL, 32809
Telephone: 407-858-2000

Airport:

There is 1 major airport within driving distance:

Orlando International: distance 15 miles; travel time 30 minutes (approximate)

Travel:

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Lodging:

Hotel	Location	Phone #
AmeriSuites	Augusta Drive	407-240-3939
AmeriSuites	I-Drive	407-370-4720
Embassy Suites	Airport	407-888-9339
Fairfield Inn		407-888-2666
Fairfield Inn	Universal	404-345-9073
Fairfield Inn	Buena Vista	407-938-9001
Florida Mall Hotel		407-859-1500
Hampton Inn		407-888-2995
Hampton Inn	SOBT	407-859-4100
Hawthorn suites	Seaworld	407-351-6600
Hawthorn suites	Universal	407-581-2151
Hawthorn suites	Downtown	407-597-5000
Hawthorn suites	Airport	407-438-2121
Hilton Grand Vacation		407-239-0100
Holiday Inn		407-851-6400
Homestead Suites		407-829-2332
Homewood Suites		407-328-0067
Hyatt		407-825-1234
Marriott	Downtown	407-843-6664
Marriott	Courtyard	407351-2244
Marriott	Airport	407-851-9000
Marriott	Grand Lakes	407-206-2300
Peabody Orlando		407-352-4000
Residence Inn	Airport/Universal	407-226-0288
Residence Inn	Buena Vista	407-465-0075
Residence Inn	Seaworld	407-313-3600
Sheraton		407-240-5555
Sheridan Suites		407-240-5555
Springhill Suites	Universal	407-345-9073
Wyndham		407-351-2420

Packing for Deployment: If you have these items at home, bringing them will save you buying them later in Orlando. Most of these items are **recommended** if you are doing work in the disaster area, such as community relations or outreach.

1. Personal clothing for hot, humid weather to include hiking socks and sturdy shoes/boots (especially if you will be doing community relations work).
2. Personal hygiene/toiletry items (limited supplies in the disaster areas)
3. Extra supply of prescription eyeglasses/contacts/sunglasses
4. Personal prescription medications/vitamins
5. Inoculations record – especially tetanus
6. Back pack
7. Whistle – communication in field

8. Flashlight with batteries (take extra batteries)
9. Hat for sun protection
10. Insect repellent (containing DEET or Picaridin)
11. Sun screen – at least SPF 30
12. Multi-purpose knife/tool (put in check-in luggage)
13. Light weight Rain gear
14. Cell Phone (with car charging adapter) and/or calling card
15. Emergency contact information
16. Soap, liquid, anti-bacterial and Hand Sanitizer and wet wipes
17. Lip balm with sunscreen protection
18. Snacks such as nutrition bars, crackers, etc.