

**SAN DIEGO POLICE DEPARTMENT
PROCEDURE**

DATE: JULY 17, 2019

NUMBER: 8.21 – CRITICAL INCIDENTS

SUBJECT: USE OF VOLUNTEERS IN CRITICAL INCIDENTS
AND DISASTERS

RELATED POLICY: N/A

ORIGINATING DIVISION: TRAINING/EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

NEW PROCEDURE:

PROCEDURAL CHANGE: **NO CHANGES**

SUPERSEDES: DP 8.21 – 08/02/2016

I. PURPOSE

This Department procedure establishes guidelines for the utilization, assignment and types of volunteer services available in both major pre-planned or emergency critical incidents, as well as disasters.

II. SCOPE

This procedure applies to all members of the Department.

III. BACKGROUND

The use of volunteers by the San Diego Police Department has proven to be extremely valuable. During critical incidents or disasters, however, the use of volunteers in these potentially hazardous situations must be carefully considered. There are four categories of volunteer resources available to assist Department members.

- A. Internal – established programs within the Department’s Volunteer Services Division:
1. Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol (RSVP);
 2. Volunteers In Policing (VIP); and,

3. Crisis Intervention.
- B. External – established volunteer organizations outside the Department:
1. American Red Cross;
 2. Animal rescue;
 3. Amateur radio;
 4. Community Emergency Response Team (CERT);
 5. San Diego Imperial Volunteer Organization Assisting in Disasters (SDIVOAD); and,
 6. Sheriff's Department volunteer search and rescue.
- C. Spontaneous volunteers – those people who come forward during or after a critical incident or disaster to volunteer their assistance.
- D. Short-term volunteers – those people who volunteer for one-time special events or one-day programs. For security and liability concerns, the Department does not generally use short-term volunteers.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Critical Incidents

In many incidents, volunteers can perform a variety of support duties increasing availability of sworn officers for critical incident missions. The decision to utilize volunteers at the scene of a critical incident rests with the Incident Commander. In determining whether to use volunteers, the Incident Commander should consider the following points:

1. The degree of danger that the volunteer(s) will face;
2. The skills of the volunteer(s); and,
3. The ability to provide close supervision of the volunteer(s).

B. Use of Internal Volunteer Services

1. The use of Department volunteers should be consistent with their training, skills, physical limitations, and equipment.

2. When Department volunteers are needed in a critical incident, the Volunteer Services Sergeant should be contacted.

C. Use of External Volunteer Services

1. There are a wide range of volunteer organizations that will typically respond to critical incidents or disasters. These groups include the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, animal rescue teams, amateur radio organizations, CERT, SDIVOAD, and the Sheriff's Department volunteer search and rescue.
2. The Incident Commander should facilitate the response of these organizations, while at the same time ensuring that the response efforts of the emergency services organization are not delayed or interfered with by these groups.
3. It is recommended that each responding volunteer organization provide an agency representative at the Incident Command Post site to facilitate coordination and enhance communications.
4. Requests for assistance from these organizations should be coordinated through the Critical Incident Management Unit/Homeland Security, which can be reached at (619) 533-6541 during normal business hours. Outside of normal business hours, the Critical Incident Management Unit can be contacted through the Watch Commander's office at (619) 531-2205.

D. Use of Spontaneous Volunteers

The decision by the Incident Commander to use spontaneous volunteers should be one of last resort. The benefit must significantly outweigh the potential liability.

1. Spontaneous volunteers present a unique liability to the agency utilizing them. Factors contributing to that liability include:
 - a. Lack of information on past training or skills;
 - b. Lack of information on an individual's criminal background;
 - c. Unknown motives;
 - d. Unknown health issues; and,
 - e. Lack of a uniform or equipment.
2. If a decision is made to utilize spontaneous volunteers, the Incident Commander shall assign a supervisor to:

- a. Oversee their assignments;
 - b. Maintain detailed tracking and monitoring of volunteers;
 - c. Ensure that individuals are physically capable of carrying out assignments;
 - d. Ensure that individuals have the necessary equipment, materials, and/or supplies to carry out assignments; and,
 - e. Ensure that the volunteers thoroughly understand the mission, safety issues, and accountability requirements.
3. The Department's Field Interview form (ARJIS-1) is used to record personal information on the volunteer. The second copy should be given to the volunteer as an "Identification Card." The phrase "SDPD VOLUNTEER" should be written in the "Remarks" section.

V. MANAGEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

Responsibilities of Volunteers

- A. Extensive use of volunteers would not routinely occur during the initial phase of an unplanned critical incident. However, the use of volunteers will increase as the incident continues. If utilized, volunteers will remain under the direction and control of the Volunteer Services Office.
- B. During a major critical incident, it is the responsibility of police volunteers who become aware of the event to immediately contact their supervisor, duty station, or the Volunteer Services Office to determine if they are needed. If the volunteer is unable to contact his/her supervisor, duty station, or the Volunteer Services Office due to a telephone outage, widespread destruction, or other emergency condition, they should report to the nearest operational police facility.
- C. The use of volunteer personnel is critical in many pre-planned events and in later stages of a critical incident. The use of volunteer personnel will be coordinated through the Volunteer Services Office. Volunteers reporting for duty will report to their duty station.
- D. When there is a need for volunteer personnel and the Department Operations Center (DOC) has been activated, the Volunteer Services representative will coordinate and prioritize the need for volunteers and fulfill the request.