

# Spontaneous Volunteer Management System Module 1: Awareness

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**WRHSAC**  
Western Region Homeland  
Security Advisory Council



**Berkshire  
Regional  
Planning  
Commission**

# SUV Awareness Training

## Welcome and Introductions

## Safety Briefing

- \* Exits and Housekeeping
- \* Funding support provided by – WRHSAC

**Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council**

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Western Region Homeland  
Security Advisory Council



Special thanks to the agency hosting today's training!



## Goal of Today's Training:

- \* Provide an introduction to Spontaneous and Unaffiliated Volunteers (SUVs) and the tools available to manage these types of volunteers.

# The SUV Training Series

**Each Module builds on the previous one:**

- \* **Module 1: Awareness Level** for responders, agencies, organizations, elected officials, and volunteers - 15 min
- \* **Module 2: Operations Level** Just-in-Time (JIT) Training for Spontaneous and Unaffiliated Volunteers (SUV) and their Leaders, with a focus on operating a Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) – 1 hour.
- \* **Module 3: Management Level** for planners, volunteer team leaders and others planning for, and managing volunteers. The entire Spontaneous Volunteer Management System (SVMS) Toolkit is reviewed. Includes a mini Table-Top Training exercise to focus the learning – 2.5 hours.

# Module 1 answers these Questions:

- \* What are Spontaneous and Unaffiliated Volunteers (SUVs)?
- \* Why do we need SUVs?
- \* What are the issues with using SUVs?
- \* How do we get SUVs affiliated?
- \* What resources are available to help manage volunteers?
- \* What Next Steps should we consider?

# SUVs are...

- \* **Spontaneous and Unaffiliated Volunteers** are for the most part not connected to any recognized response organization. They are people who just show up to help.
- \* **Affiliated Volunteers** are registered, credentialed and trained by a known volunteer organization such as the Medical Reserve Corps or Red Cross. Ideally they wait to be deployed.

**Note: Not all volunteer organizations credential their volunteers, so check before using them.**

# Why Plan for SUVs?

- \* **They are Coming:** We know from experience that spontaneous and unaffiliated volunteers are going to appear at every major disaster.
- \* **They need Managing:** Managing these unaffiliated volunteers can take valuable personnel away from the actual disaster response.
- \* **It is Safer for Everyone:** All Hazard, pre-event planning around managing the many different types of volunteers can reduce the number of SUVs and allow for faster, safer and more effective use of all volunteers.

# And we Need SUVs.

SUVs can be an important addition to a response, if we are ready to safely manage them. We need SUVs for:

- \* **Large-scale/Prolonged Emergencies:** mass medication dispensing, mass evacuation, and mass sheltering are likely to require significant volunteer and private resources.
- \* **Special Skills/Cultural Competency:** for short, but critical time periods, disasters often require volunteers with special skills such as bus drivers, mediators, interpreters, mental health practitioners, and childcare specialists to supplement existing First Responder resources.

# Biggest Challenge when using SUVs:

- \* While most SUVs are people of goodwill who just show up to help;
- \* SUVs, unfortunately, might also include criminals, pedophiles, exploiters, and those who don't actually have the credentials they claim.

# Why not just use Affiliated Volunteers?

- \* The reality is that no community has enough responders and affiliated volunteers standing by waiting to manage a large scale disaster.
- \* Regional disasters such as hurricanes mean that Mutual Aid will be strained or not available at all.
- \* And research indicates that communities are more resilient if all types of volunteers participate in the response and recovery.

# Getting SUVs Affiliated Before the next Disaster

There are many volunteer opportunities in Western Mass where individuals can become affiliated, trained and credentialed. These include:

- \* **MaResponds** [www.maresponds.org](http://www.maresponds.org) - the State system for registering and credentialing all types of volunteers.
- \* **Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)** [www.wmmrc.org](http://www.wmmrc.org) – 17 Units
- \* **Disaster Animal Response Teams (DART)** – [www.wmdart.org](http://www.wmdart.org)
- \* **Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)** – MEMA/FEMA
- \* [www.citizencorps.fema.gov/cc/searchCert.do?submitByZip](http://www.citizencorps.fema.gov/cc/searchCert.do?submitByZip)

# Other Affiliated Volunteers Groups

- \* Volunteer Firefighters
- \* Fire Auxiliaries or Support Groups
- \* Police Auxiliaries
- \* American Red Cross
- \* The Salvation Army
- \* Faith groups and other community based organizations that have credentialed and trained volunteers.

# Coordinating Volunteer Groups

## Community Organizations Active in Disasters (COAD):

- \* Connecting organizations and businesses to the local emergency response system is the mission of the COAD.
- \* In Western Mass we have two COADs, one in the Pioneer Valley and one in Berkshire County.
- \* To connect to the COADS, call MEMA (Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency) or DPH (Department of Public Health) Emergency Preparedness Coordinator.
- \* **Next Step:** Connect with and support a COAD before the next emergency, to ensure access to organizations that have affiliated volunteers and other private resources.

# Disasters and Volunteers

## **We know:**

- \* Volunteers will just show up at disasters.
- \* The bigger the disaster, the more volunteers will self-deploy in the first few days.
- \* We need volunteers/SUVs in many disasters; we need their skills, equipment, supplies, and their connections.

# Key Elements to Managing SUVs:

1. Stay ahead of the surge and don't let SUVs overwhelm your response. "It's usually easier to ramp down than ramp up."
2. Have your Public Information Officer (PIO) immediately release holding messages to manage public expectations, donations and spontaneous deployments.
3. The more organized your response appears, the fewer SUVs are likely to just show up.
4. Appoint a Volunteer Branch Director to manage SUVs as soon as it is apparent that volunteers will be needed or will arrive.
5. Open a Volunteer Reception Center (VRC)– either virtual or physical - to manage the flow of volunteers as soon as possible.

# Resources for Managing SUVs

There are several useful resources available to help communities manage volunteers of all types:

- \* The Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council, (WRHSAC) provides this **SUV Training** series
- \* The Council also has a **SUV Tool Kit** with planning materials online at [www.wrhsac.org](http://www.wrhsac.org)
- \* In addition several other groups have online volunteer management tools: United Way's Get Connected, Points of Light, Recovers.org and others.

# SVMS Tool Kit: Work Flow Example

## NEED

## ACTIONS

### Activation

Large event triggers spontaneous volunteers



Activate the VMS at appropriate level: I, II or III

Volunteer Management Staffing Need



Appoint SVMS Director/Assign COAD Liaison to EOC

Volunteer Messaging and Public Information



Develop and disseminate messages

### Operations

Volunteer Management and Coordination



Level II/III Activate Volunteer Reception Center (VRC),  
phone bank, and call center

### Recovery and Demobilization

Reassess need of volunteers



Continue operations as needed

Complete all records



Thank volunteers and encourage affiliation

# Pre-Event Planning is Key:

By preparing now, you can effectively use valuable unaffiliated volunteers during the next emergency:

1. **COADs:** Build connections with organizations with trained, affiliated volunteers such as those in the COADs.
2. **MRC/CERT:** Encourage community leaders and volunteers to become members of affiliated organizations.
3. **VRC:** Identify potential Volunteer Reception Centers and leaders that can manage and process large numbers of volunteers.
4. **SVMS:** Identify an online/virtual spontaneous volunteer management system and have it ready to launch.
5. **Practice:** Create SUV plans, train & practice them during drills and planned events.

# Next Steps

- \* **Volunteer:** Encourage community members to become affiliated with a recognized volunteer organization before the next disaster.
- \* **Planning:** Update local and regional all hazard plans to include strategies for managing all types of volunteers and donations.
- \* **Preparedness:** A final reminder, prepare yourself, your family and your organization for emergencies by having a plan, making a kit and staying informed.

# Questions?



***Have a Plan. Build a Kit. Stay Informed.  
Volunteer!***

For copies of training materials and handouts  
[www.wrhsac.org](http://www.wrhsac.org) – Preparedness Projects

For more Information on preparing for emergencies:  
[www.westernmassREADY.org](http://www.westernmassREADY.org)

[www.wmmrc.org](http://www.wmmrc.org)

[www.mass.gov/MEMA](http://www.mass.gov/MEMA)

[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

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