



Volunteer Handbook



NOLA READY
CITY OF NEW ORLEANS





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Welcome,

On behalf of everyone at NOLA Ready, welcome and thank you for being a part of our team. You are joining thousands of fellow New Orleanians working to keep our community safe. This handbook is designed to enhance your volunteer experience and give you essential information on our volunteer policies, expectations and opportunities. Please take the time to review it in its entirety and refer back as questions arise. Feel free to contact the NOLA Ready Volunteer Team with any additional questions or suggestions. Your success is our success. We hope that you find volunteering with NOLA Ready Volunteer Corps to be a rewarding experience and we look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,

Shalini A. Persaud

NOLA Ready Volunteer Manager

volunteer@nola.gov





Introduction

HISTORY

The NOLA Ready Volunteer Corps was established in June of 2020 to support City hurricane response. Since then, it has expanded to bolster a number of short and long-term response efforts. The NOLA Ready Volunteer Corps operates under and is activated by the New Orleans Office Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (NOHSEP). In addition to our general volunteers, we also oversee the New Orleans Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), which brings together public health, medical, and behavioral health volunteers to supplement public health and emergency response in New Orleans.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the NOLA Ready Volunteer Corps is to build a culture of resilience, supporting emergency preparedness, response, and recovery efforts in New Orleans.

VISION

We turn compassion into action to help our neighbors access life-saving essential services, shelter safely, and gain hope in times of uncertainty. We are guided solely by need, prioritizing our efforts toward the most urgent situations and vulnerable communities. In every operation, we strive to be collaborative, adaptable, proactive, reflective and effective.



Volunteer Path

The majority of our volunteers are considered active members of the Corps. Active volunteers are expected to register through our online management system, Better Impact. This is where you will sign-up for shift opportunities, take most digital trainings, and view your hours and qualification accomplishments. We also work with some episodic volunteers, like spontaneous disaster volunteers.

ENROLLMENT

We accept volunteers from all backgrounds, but you must be 18 or older to join. You do not need any specialized experience or identification to join the NOLA Ready Volunteer Corps. Your enrollment is contingent only on filling out an application and agreeing to our volunteer policies. If you are a public health or medical professional interested in joining the Medical Reserve Corps, there are more robust requirements. [Check out the MRC sign up page to learn more.](#)

Follow these steps to join the NOLA Ready Volunteer Corps!

1. Visit ready.nola.gov/volunteer to find information about how to sign up using our volunteer management software, Better Impact.
2. Create a profile in Better Impact by filling out all required information.
3. Once you are logged in, you will be able to sign up for shifts, view your schedule, take online trainings, and report back to us.

If you are having trouble navigating the software, you can visit their [help page](#).

VOLUNTEER COMMUNICATIONS



We utilize multiple methods of communication to reach our volunteers. Due to the nature of emergency response, it is vital that we create redundancies and maintain flexibility. Our communication methods include:

Email – We send emails for urgent volunteer opportunities. In emergency situations, needs will often arise with little notice and it is important that you are consistently checking your inbox.

Volunteer Management Software – Scheduled trainings and volunteer opportunities will be listed in Better Impact.

Text Alerts – During large-scale emergencies that require an immediate response, we will send a NOLA Ready Volunteer text.

Webpage – The volunteer webpage can be found at ready.nola.gov/volunteer. This page houses general information about NOLA Ready volunteering and information about any current large-scale volunteer responses.

Portable Radios – During deployment, two-way radios may be used to facilitate contact.

Opportunities


There are numerous emergency operations which our volunteer corps can support. Because NOLA Ready volunteering is emergency and disaster based, volunteer opportunities are not regularly scheduled. Our volunteers will have opportunities to participate in preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery activities. These activities provide volunteers with training and experience. Examples of non-emergency activities include exercises and community-sponsored events.

Some NOLA Ready opportunities include but are not limited to...


- PET EVACUATION & SHELTERING
- SPECIAL EVENTS & MARDI GRAS
- PUBLIC HEALTH & FIRST AID
- FLOOD CLEAN UP
- DISASTER RECOVERY
- EMERGENCY SHELTER OPERATIONS
- CITY-ASSISTED EVACUATION
- HURRICANE CALL CENTER OPERATIONS
- VACCINE ADMINISTRATION
- PUBLIC SAFETY AND PUBLIC HEALTH EXERCISES

TRAININGS


NOLA Ready Corps volunteers can access trainings on-demand through their Better Impact portal or take advantage of the periodic live trainings available to volunteers. We also offer occasional opportunities to participate in certification courses through our partner agencies. Existing trainings include, but are not limited to:




Emergency Freeze Shelter Operations Training (STR 200) - Covers the Citywide Freeze Plan and how to help residents shelter during cold snaps.




Intro to Sheltering (STR 100) - Introduces volunteer roles during emergency shelter activations.




FEMA Incident Command System (ICS 100/200) - Provides the context for citywide emergency management and the use of ICS within initial response.




Flood Clean-Up Training with NOLA Tree Project (FLD 100) - Discusses how to remove waste, muck and gut homes after severe flood events.




FEMA National Incident Management System (NIMS 700/800) - Outlines a comprehensive approach to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the effects of incidents.



City-Assisted Evacuation Volunteer Training (CAE 101) - Explains the role of volunteers during a mandatory evacuation of New Orleans.



HIPAA Confidentiality Training - Explains how to protect confidentiality and personal information during emergencies.



Intro to Vaccine Administration Training (VAC 100) - Outlines the City's plan to distribute COVID-19 vaccines and the roles and responsibilities of medical and non-medical volunteers on site.

- **Cultural Competency Training**
- **Responding to Domestic Violence**
- **Accessibility Training**
- **Pet Evacuation and Sheltering**

What to Expect When Activated

Emergencies are unpredictable and fluid and situation you are responding to may change quickly or may change multiple times. The scope of our response may change, additional agencies may become involved, and volunteer work may be increased or reduced during a shift. We ask that you remain flexible and have a positive attitude. We are all here to help meet the needs of vulnerable neighbors during hard times.

PREPARATION

For NOLA Ready shifts, we recommend that volunteers prepare a kit of supplies that may be needed based on the assignment. The three most important things are that you dress for the weather, wear comfortable closed toed shoes and bring a water bottle – you'll be on your feet much of the day during emergency operations. Other optional supplies which may be helpful include:

- Sunscreen
- Hat or Sunglasses
- Bug Spray
- Medications
- Cell Phone
- Cell Phone Charger
- Snacks
- Notepad and Pencil
- Laptop (if appropriate)

ORIENTATION

Volunteer shifts typically begin with an on-site briefing that covers the emergency a hand, city response, role of official personnel, volunteer roles, safety info, instructions, and other useful information. Please arrive on time to scheduled volunteer shifts in order to participate in orientation and have your questions answered promptly.

FEEDBACK

We greatly value the feedback of our volunteers. However, we ask that you do not raise feedback with First Responders or City staff on site. Amid emergency response, your insights may be lost or directed to the wrong personnel. Please submit all suggestions with us after your shift via email to volunteer@nola.gov. Having a record of feedback allows us to better create sustainable change.

HOURS

We are happy to certify community service hours. Just ask!

Being Disaster-Ready

We want to remind you that you must be feeling well and thinking clearly in order to help others. Disasters are stressful for everyone affected, and we never want our volunteers to sacrifice their personal well-being. In this section, we have outlined a couple of important resources to help you prepare for emergencies.

FAMILY FIRST SAFETY PLAN

Here are some general tips for creating a [family first safety plan](#). We recommend taking the time to review our safety plan guide in its entirety.

Create a Disaster Supply Kit

Disasters can happen anytime and anywhere. Your family will cope best by preparing for disaster before it strikes. One way to prepare is by assembling a Disaster Supplies Kit. Here are some basics you should stock for your home:

- water - enough packed in plastic containers for both drinking and sanitation
- food - non-perishables requiring no and little or no water
- first aid supplies
- clothing and bedding
- tools and emergency supplies - be sure to include extra batteries

Gather enough of each of these supplies to last your whole family three days.

Meet to Discuss a Disaster Plan

Before disasters strike, it is important that all of your family members are on the same page. Create a plan that includes extra considerations for children, elderly, and pets. Then, practice and maintain your plan. A few sample activities for your checklist might be:

- Establish a meeting point outside your house in case of emergency.
- Post emergency numbers in a common area.
- Show each family member how and when to turn off the water, gas, and electricity at the main switches.
- Check if you have adequate insurance coverage.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF WHILE VOLUNTEERING

Responding to disasters is both rewarding and challenging work. Stress prevention and management is critical for responders to stay well and to continue to help in the situation. We have pulled some recommendations from the [CDC's Guide for Emergency Responders](#).

Preparing for a Response

- Learn as much as possible about your role.
- Keep realistic communication goals with loved ones.
- If you have preexisting mental or physical health conditions, plan to continue your treatment plans and monitor new symptoms during an emergency.

During a Response

- Work in teams when possible.
- Look out for signs of burnout and secondary traumatic stress.
- Utilize coping techniques like taking breaks, eating healthy foods, exercising, and using the buddy system.

Remember:

- It is not selfish to take breaks.
- The needs of survivors are not more important than your own needs and well-being.
- Working all of the time does not mean you will make your best contribution.
- There are other people who can help in the response.

Afterward

Once you have completed your response activities, be sure to address any health or stress issues that need monitoring or may arise. Seek support from your family or your supervisor, if possible, or get follow-up care from your personal doctor.

Program Policies

CODE OF CONDUCT

The NOLA Ready Volunteer Corps is committed to maintaining a safe environment for its volunteers. When acting on behalf of the NOLA Ready Volunteer Corps, volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner. The following are examples of conduct unbecoming of a volunteer and are not intended to be all inclusive. Other actions not listed herein but deemed immoral, indecent, obscene or discrediting to the program could result in dismissal. Any of the following events should be reported directly to the NOLA Ready Volunteer Coordinator.

- Sexual harassment
- Physical or verbal aggression
- The use or possession of illegal substances
- The use of alcohol during working hours
- Falsification or misrepresentation of credentials
- Discourteous or disrespectful language including profanity
- Violation of safety rules
- Performance of unsafe work practices
- Threatening, intimidating or coercing of others
- Divulging confidential information, or information protected by HIPAA
- Misuse, damage or destruction of property

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Membership is voluntary, and this relationship may be terminated at any time for any reason. As stated in the Code of Conduct, volunteers will be dismissed for inappropriate behavior and may be reported to the appropriate authorities for more extreme ethical violations.

PHOTO RELEASE

I understand that NOLA Ready Volunteer Corps staff may use my likeness (captured via photo, audio, and/or video) for the purposes of trainings, publications, and/or recruitment. I understand that these materials will become the property of NOLA Ready and will not be returned.

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I understand that the NOLA Ready Volunteer Corps, including its employees/volunteers/assignees/affiliates, has a legal and ethical responsibility to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of individual information, protected health information, or information related to or held by NOLA Ready or NOHD, including obligations to protect and safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of such information. I understand and I agree that:

- I shall not access or view any information other than what is required to do my job. If I have any question about whether access to certain information is required for me to do my job, I shall immediately consult the NOLA Ready Volunteer Coordinator.
- I shall not use or disclose, orally, in writing, electronically or otherwise, any personal information including social security numbers, telephone numbers, street/e-mail addresses, etc. or information related to or held by NOLA Ready or NOHD.
- I shall not discuss or reveal any personal information or information related to or held by NOLA Ready or NOHD in an area where unauthorized individuals may hear or see such information, even if specifics, such as an individual's name, are not used. I understand that possible areas to keep in mind include, but are not limited to, hallways, elevators, cafeteria, public transportation, restaurants, and social events.
- I shall not make inquiries about any information for any person or party, including, but not limited to, any family member, a friend, a third party, an employee or associate of NOLA Ready or NOHD, who does not have proper authorization to access such information.
- I shall immediately return all property, including, but not limited to documents, and ID badges to NOLA Ready upon termination (with or without cause) of my volunteer assignment/affiliation with NOLA Ready.

Any violation by me of these guidelines may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of any volunteer assignment/affiliation with NOLA Ready and/or suspension, restriction or loss of privileges, in accordance with NOLA Ready's policies, as well as potential personal civil and criminal legal liabilities. I have participated in the HIPPA Confidentiality Training, understand the material and agree to abide by this law.


MEDIA AGREEMENT

Social Media - Volunteers do not have to be NOLA Ready advocates with their personal social networking accounts. You are in charge of your own online presence. If you are interested in demonstrating your commitment on your personal social media, we ask that you follow the Code of Conduct. When affiliating yourself with NOLA Ready, behave respectfully. Do not violate the privacy of those around you and do not post any identifying information via text, photo, or video. The only pictures you may post are of fellow volunteers and staff with their express consent. Feel free to repost NOLA Ready social media. Remember, everything is on the record.

Communication with the Press and Outside Agencies - Staff and volunteers should not speak to the media or outside agencies, however the media may speak to evacuees, shelterees, or others receiving services. All requests for information from representatives of any news media or publication should be referred to the NOLA Ready Team. If a supervisor from NOLA Ready is not present, direct inquiries to communications@nola.gov.

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS: VOLUNTEERS IN GOVERNMENT (VIGOR) HOLD HARMLESS AND LIABILITY AGREEMENT

As a volunteer, I understand that I will not be paid for my services nor will I be considered an employee or agent of the City of New Orleans (“City”). I understand that I am covered by the City’s Accident and Death Insurance for Volunteers in Government (VIGOR) for these services. I will not be eligible for the City’s worker’s compensation insurance program nor its unemployment or health insurance benefits programs. I will act only in the capacity to which I have been trained and/or in the duty assignment I have been provided by the VIGOR coordinator. If I have specialized training not related to my volunteer activities, and choose to use this unrelated training while on duty as a volunteer, I recognize that the City is not responsible for my actions. Notwithstanding the foregoing, I will perform my duties with prudence, diligence and in a responsible manner. I further understand that the City will not hold me responsible for any damage I may cause to City property or to the third parties or their property as a result of my assistance. I agree that I shall be liable for any intentional wrongful acts or gross negligence I commit while serving as a volunteer. The City will not be held responsible for any criminal acts that I may commit while volunteering. I also understand that any sponsoring organizations associated with the volunteer activity are not affiliated with the City of New Orleans and are not City departments, agencies, boards, commissions, or City nonprofit 501 (c) (3) organizations.



This Release and Waiver of Liability, (the “**Release**”) executed by “**the Volunteer**” in favor of the City of New Orleans, their directors, officers, employees, agents, consultants, insurers and representatives, successors, and assigns (the “**Released Parties**”).

The Volunteer desires to engage in activities related to being a volunteer (the “**Activities**”). The Volunteer agrees to waive any claim against the Released Parties under the following terms:

ACTIVITIES: The Volunteer understands that Activities may include, but are not limited to: supporting on-site emergency operations by assisting with check in, registration, triage, greeting, answer phones, clerical duties, filling out forms, moving heavy objects, logistical support, and otherwise supporting emergency operations. The Volunteer understands that he/she may decline to perform any activity for any reason.

REPRESENTATIONS: Volunteer represents that he/she is at least 18 years of age and agrees to advise the City of New Orleans representatives of any preexisting conditions that would preclude involvement in any activity.

LIABILITY: Volunteer, for him/herself and his or her legal representatives, spouse, heirs and assigns, does hereby release and forever discharge and hold harmless the City of New Orleans, it’s agents, consultants, insurers and representatives, successors and assigns from any and all liability claims and demands of whatever kind of nature, either in law or in equity, which arise or may hereafter arise from Volunteer’s Activities with the City of New Orleans.

AUTHORIZATION FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT: Volunteer authorizes the City of New Orleans response personnel, in its best judgment, to make decisions on Volunteer’s behalf in case of an emergency. Volunteer hereby releases and waives any claim whatsoever that arises because of any medical treatment received in connection with Activities with the City of New Orleans.

ASSUMPTION OF THE RISK: The Volunteer understands that the Activities may include work that may be hazardous to the Volunteer, and acknowledges they are assuming all risk of injury in connection with such Activities.

INSURANCE: The Volunteer understands the City of New Orleans does not carry or maintain health, medical, disability or Workers Compensation insurance coverage for any volunteer. The Volunteer agrees to be financially responsible for any injury or illness related to Activities with the City of New Orleans.

PHOTOGRAPHS, VIDEO, AND AUDIO: Volunteer does hereby grant and convey unto the City of New Orleans all right, title and interest in any and all photographic images and video or audio recordings made by the Released Parties during the Volunteer’s Activities with the City of New Orleans including, but not limited to, any donations, proceeds, or other benefits derived from such photographs or recordings.

GOVERNING LAW: Volunteer expressly agrees this Release shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with Louisiana law and City of New Orleans Ordinances. **SEVERABILITY:** Volunteer agrees that in the event that any clause or provision of this Release shall be held to be invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, the invalidity of such clause or provision shall not otherwise affect the remaining provisions of this Release.

Thank you for joining us.
We are stronger together.



CONTACT INFORMATION

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volunteer@nola.gov

Twitter: [@nolaready](https://twitter.com/nolaready)
Facebook: [NOLA Ready](https://www.facebook.com/NOLAReady)
Website: ready.nola.gov/volunteer