



## **LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE VOLUNTEER HOST SITE RECOMMENDATIONS**

*The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) provide this information as a resource for those wishing to utilize volunteers for disaster response. We hope this information results in meaningful service opportunities. Neither the ELCA nor LDR assumes liability for your participation in any of these opportunities. Please follow all recommendations and restrictions from your local or state emergency management agency and community health departments to stay up to date with any changes. Any forms or use of equipment or facilities should be discussed with and/or reviewed by your legal counsel or insurance provider.*

### **Facts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

- Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is thought to spread mainly from person to person.
- Recent studies indicate that people who are infected but do not have symptoms likely also play a role in the spread of COVID-19.
- There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 infection.
- **The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.**

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/index.html>

### **General Guidelines**

1. Consider using local volunteers (i.e. volunteers who do not require overnight accommodations away from their place of residence) as a best practice. Housing for volunteers will require specific protocols to be established before those volunteers can be scheduled.
2. Stay up to date with local and state health department and CDC recommendations.
3. Post volunteer safety and site protocols, such as handwashing procedures or physical distancing practices, visibly and in multiple locations, and update them as necessary.
4. Ask volunteers to avoid gatherings as much as possible for two weeks (14 days) prior to and during their trip to help limit potential exposure.
5. If a volunteer needs to leave the site for any reason, they must notify a group leader first – no exceptions. Individuals going off-site should be required to wear a mask and take necessary physical distancing precautions while away.
6. Request that each volunteer have their own thermometer to check their temperature daily while on-site.
7. At the beginning of each workday, require every volunteer to check and report their temperature.
8. Develop a procedure for volunteers to self-quarantine. If the volunteer is staying at a host site, they will need to stay in a designated “quarantine room” until other arrangements off-site can be made. If a volunteer exhibits COVID-19 symptoms, the volunteer team leader and/or volunteer coordination team should contact the local health department immediately. Every person that the symptomatic volunteer



has encountered will need to be notified so they are able to take appropriate steps, which may include self-quarantining.

9. Think outside the box on possible funding streams, grants and partnerships to support various types of projects and/or payment for contractors or other professional services.

### **Before Volunteers Arrive**

1. Communicate with volunteer teams prior to their arrival, especially if your area changes travel, shelter-in-place or other guidelines that would affect their trip.
2. Ask volunteers to begin monitoring their health and temperature two weeks (14 days) prior to their arrival.
3. Volunteers should cancel if, in the two weeks (14 days) prior, they have experienced a fever of 100 degrees F or more or been in contact with anyone who has been diagnosed with or is presumed to have COVID-19.
4. Volunteers should cancel if, in the two weeks (14 days) prior to their arrival day, they have been around anyone who has traveled outside their state/country or to an area that has been considered a COVID-19 "hot spot."

### **After Volunteers Arrive**

1. Volunteers should sign an agreement stating that they will abide by the site rules — especially those pertaining to COVID-19, such as checking one's temperature daily and utilizing required personal protective equipment — and acknowledging that they have not participated in any disqualifying activities prior to arrival (such as visiting hot spots, attending gatherings, or whatever the current recommendations may be). In composing the agreement, consult your legal counsel and insurance provider.
2. Volunteers should submit their forms, including their release of liability, prior to being assigned any task(s). The release of liability should include the volunteer's acknowledgment that they may encounter people who are infected with COVID-19.
3. Volunteer coordinator or site coordinator should develop a plan in the event that a volunteer develops a fever of 100 degrees F or greater during the trip.
4. Volunteers should clean and sanitize any tools, equipment, coolers or water coolers prior to loading vehicles and upon arrival at the volunteer hosting or work site.

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

1. Ask volunteers to bring their own cloth face masks, recommending one or two masks for each day they plan to work. They should also bring sealable plastic bags to store soiled masks.
2. Depending on the assigned tasks, volunteers may need a variety of PPE in addition to their face masks. Have a good supply of the specified PPE. For example, latex gloves, N95 masks, Tyvek suits, goggles, heavy boots and work gloves will be needed for demolition/muck-out work.



## **Handwashing**

1. Post detailed handwashing procedures in multiple locations.
2. Hand cleaning is essential and washing facilities must be available at project locations and host site(s). Hot water is preferable, but some projects may have only cold water. Provide paper towels for drying hands and a location for disposing of the trash.
3. Provide hand sanitizer of at least 60% alcohol in multiple locations at the project and host site(s) and ask volunteers to bring their own supply of hand sanitizer (60% alcohol).

## **Hosting Site and Meals**

1. Food must be prepared and served with face masks and latex gloves (outside groups providing food must do the same). Develop a food safety protocol checklist, following your local area's recommendations. Post this checklist, provide an orientation to all volunteers working in this area and update the checklist as needed per local health department requirements and restrictions.
2. Food preparation must incorporate physical distancing of six feet between workstations
3. Buffet-style food service is strongly discouraged.
4. All hard surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized every two hours.
5. Family units\* should be limited to a maximum of five people and should remain together the entire time, including breaks and meals.
6. Staff and volunteers must wash their hands with soap and hot water when arriving or returning to host site.
7. Volunteers must maintain proper physical distancing of at least six feet in common areas. Ask volunteers to refrain from gathering or hanging out in high-traffic areas: restrooms, kitchen and dining facilities.
8. Sleeping quarters should be grouped by family unit\* or separated by dividers to meet six-foot physical distancing requirements.
9. Tell volunteer(s) that they need to contain their personal items neatly and bring plastic bags for soiled clothing.
10. All areas will need to be routinely cleaned and sanitized, daily. The volunteers can assist in this, being required to disinfect all hard surfaces in the sleeping areas and bath/shower rooms. Disinfectant wipes and sprays will need to be provided for the volunteers' use.
11. Volunteers should be requested to bring their own toiletries, towels, and washcloths.
12. Encourage volunteers to bring their own bed linens, pillows, and cots/air mattresses. If beds/cots are provided the volunteers should strip their bed linens and place in provided container or plastic bag. When a plastic container is used, it must be sanitized after every use.

## **Work Sites**

1. Recommend the client(s) have alternative housing available while work is being done on their residence, if possible. If the client cannot secure alternative housing, try to secure funding for a time-limited hotel stay or other alternative housing.
2. When completing interior repairs on a client's home and alternative housing cannot be obtained, secure the areas being repaired with plastic and tape them off.



3. When using power tools, assign the power tool to one person for the workday.
4. All shared work tools should be disinfected at the end of the workday. If power tools must be shared, disinfect between users. **Always unplug power tools before disinfecting them** and use disinfecting wipes rather than aerosol sprays.
5. Personal protective equipment used on site — such as gloves, N95 masks and/or hardhats — will be assigned to an individual and remain with that person the entire time (volunteers will be responsible for keeping track of their own PPE).
6. When working on job sites outside the family unit\*, plan work to include physical distancing according to state and local requirements (currently six feet apart).

### **First Aid and Emergency Planning**

1. Develop a risk management plan that addresses safety, possible accidents, and natural and human-made disasters.
2. Stay current with any recommendations from your local and state health department that may change.
3. Develop sheltering/evacuation plans for the volunteers under your supervision in the event of natural disasters common to your area.
4. Supply a first-aid kit in areas where volunteers/staff are working or meeting.
5. Provide fire extinguisher(s) for kitchen and sleeping areas.

### **After Returning Home**

1. Require volunteers to continue monitoring their temperature daily for two weeks (14 days) after volunteering, and immediately notify the volunteer point of contact if any volunteer experiences COVID-19 symptoms or a temperature of 100 degrees F or higher.
2. Thank your volunteers for their service. The more a volunteer feels valued, the more likely they will be to continue/return.
3. Continue to communicate with the volunteers on what is still needed or has been fulfilled.

### **Suggested Supplies**

Hand sanitizer (large containers to refill smaller bottles)  
Hand soap  
Disinfectant spray  
Disinfectant wipes  
Trash containers  
Trash bags in various sizes  
Sandwich or freezer bags in various sizes  
Extra cloth masks  
Forehead noncontact infrared thermometer  
Extra thermometers  
Tissues  
Paper towels  
General rags for cleaning



**Lutheran Disaster Response**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

Disposable latex gloves  
Variety of cleaning gloves

Lutheran Disaster Response is the disaster response program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). In the United States, LDR represents 65 ELCA synods and 30-plus LDR-affiliated social ministry organizations across the United States.

\* A **family unit** is defined as immediate family members volunteering and traveling together or individuals that are members of a volunteer team arriving in the same vehicle. In most instances these individuals will eat and work together at the same site. We recommend that the team size be three to five individuals, which will permit safe physical distancing.



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