

10 Essentials for Volunteers

The Salvation Army (TSA) Emergency Disaster Services (EDS)

Thank you for volunteering and being on location with us today! If you have been through our training class, the following information should be a review. If you are a new volunteer who has not had the opportunity to attend a training class, we hope you will do so in the near future.

Please read the following guidelines carefully and ask any questions that might arise. Your full understanding of these essentials will help us to serve our clients in a safe and meaningful manner.

1. Once you have donned the TSA (The Salvation Army) uniform vest, you are now a representative of the entire Salvation Army and as such your actions and words reflect upon the character of the organization. In the early stages of a disaster, there is a predictable level of chaos and uncertainty. Please be mindful, that these situations are always stressful so be careful to use only appropriate language.
2. Many of us feel strongly about our personal beliefs but as volunteers, we are here to serve, not to evangelize or impose our beliefs on anyone. The Salvation Army has many volunteers who are Christians, followers of diverse faiths, and those with no spiritual beliefs. The Salvation Army's strength is in its "*ministry of presence*".
3. There is a chain of command and the expectation is that you will adhere to it while you assist us as a volunteer. There is a Canteen or Facility Leader and possibly cooks and servers. Hopefully your Team Leader has been identified and introduced to you but if not, determine who is in that role. There might or might not be a head cook or shift cook who is the Team Leader or it could be the driver of the unit where you have been assigned.
4. Questions regarding serving, cooking and other functions should be directed to the Team Leader for the duration of the operation. One of the principles of our management system is that decisions are made at the lowest level of management in order to have decisions made quickly. It is inappropriate to go to The Salvation Army Incident Commander (person-in-charge) for questions on details such as, restocking, food preparation, etc.
5. Food safety is of utmost importance! Issues of cross contamination, storing, heating and preparing food, must be implemented according to the standards of the County Health Department where we are serving. We are here to serve our clients with food and hydration as if they were guests in our own homes. If you would not serve it to a house guest or eat it yourself, then don't serve it. Direct any questions about food use or disposal to the Team Leader. Protective gloves must be worn whenever handling unpackaged food products. You must wash your hands before putting on your gloves. If you handle anything with your gloves besides food or handle different types of food, be sure to change gloves. If you choose to smoke, please remove your Salvation Army vest and move away from the canteen or facility. If a Health Inspector arrives on the site, please refer them to the Team Leader. Be courteous and cooperative with their requests since they are our partners in food service.

6. Our role is not to judge who is served or how much they consume. If someone wants a larger portion of food or drink, provide it for them whenever possible. Whatever we have available is there for those we serve. Also, our clients consist of anyone that comes to us in need: victims, first responder's, news media, support personnel, telephone repair people, construction workers, etc. Any question as to quantities requested or needed should be directed to the Team Leader. If local authorities want to limit access to our services that's their decision, but it won't be a person from The Salvation Army who turns someone away. An exception might be when unattended children or teenagers need to be strongly encouraged to take only one drink and one snack at a time.
7. As a volunteer, please be flexible and willing to perform necessary tasks that might be assigned to you by the Team Leader. Dishwashing, emptying the trash, cleaning bathrooms and other "less glorious tasks" are all part of volunteering. If you are physically unable to perform an assigned task, notify your Team Leader. Keep in mind that your Team Leader has probably spent hours performing similar tasks in their time as a volunteer, so maintain a positive attitude. Also, report any accidents or injuries immediately to your Team Leader.
8. Please be mindful that in a disaster or any other event, each client's privacy and "stories" are to be respected. Do not pry! If a client chooses to talk about their own situation, they will do so but if not, soliciting such information could lead to unintentionally re-traumatizing the client. It is inappropriate to counsel or give advice so instead, be an attentive listener. Refer to clients as survivors of the disaster or responders, but do not use the word "victim." Victims are those who did not survive the event. If you suspect someone has immediate counseling needs, notify the Team Leader.
9. Media inquiries should ultimately be referred to your Team Leader. If you are asked to do an interview about why you are volunteering, you can choose to respond but keep this in mind. a) There is no such thing as "off the record." In reality, "off the record" translates into, "A spokesperson for The Salvation Army said..." b) Talk only about what you are doing as a volunteer and do not speculate or give your personal opinion about the efforts of local, state, federal government or other agencies. c) If asked how someone can help, suggest that they volunteer or make monetary donations to The Salvation Army.
10. Please remember to sign in and out and record your hours for each shift. Accurate tracking of volunteer hours and number of meals served are critical elements for evaluating our services in times of disaster.

Thanks you again for the time, effort, and kindness that you share with your team and all who might be in need of help!

Mission Statement: The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination.