

# Volunteer Safety Orientation Handbook



**Gallagher Bassett Services, Inc.**  
**Risk Control Consulting Division**

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### **Volunteer Mission Statement**

1. Understand the assignment that you will be doing.
2. Accept training appreciatively, and contribute your knowledge, skills and experience.
3. Match your interest and needs to your assignment.
4. Work with continuity, listen for and report new insights about your assignment.
5. Discover the meaning of your particular assignment and apply to the total program of which it is a vital part.
6. Open yourself to opportunities for growth—in skills, empathy, self confidence, and responsibility.
7. Value your special two-way role as a community interpreter.
8. Contribute to the supervisor by self-evaluation and willingness to ask.
9. Give loyalty to your institution and its program.
10. Take pride in the volunteer's career. It pays handsomely in the treasures of the spirit.

### **What is a Volunteer?**

A volunteer is a person that:

- An agency appoints in writing to perform official duties;
- An agency appoints in writing to perform his/her service to the agency;
- An agency receives the primary benefit; and
- Works at an agency's request or consent under their direction and control.

The appointing agency has the right to direct control of the volunteer. The agency can control the results to be accomplished as well as the details and means by which the result is accomplished.

### **A Word About Risk Management**

Risk management is the name for a collection of techniques and procedures utilized by an agency to minimize the risk of liability and, in the event of a problem, to minimize the consequences of the problem. Please note: risk management cannot eliminate risk of liability; we live in a world that is filled with risk. Risk from accidents, injuries, etc., are uncontrollable to some degree. However, risk management can reduce the chances of the agency and volunteer liability to an acceptable level.

If, as some authorities suggest, a volunteer is a worker serving without **consideration**, then our organization, in utilizing volunteer services, should put substantially the same amount of work into locating and placing volunteers that we would put into locating and placing paid employees. Volunteers frequently have a highly public role on behalf of our organizations; they are the persons that individuals dealing with our organizations could see first and most often. You can manage several risks by effectively screening, evaluating, and placing volunteers.

### **Conduct**

As a volunteer, you represent our agency to other staff members, clients, and the general public. We trust you will conduct yourself in a professional and courteous manner at all times. We also ask that you report any questionable or suspicious behavior you observe to a supervisor.

### **Dress Code**

All volunteers should dress appropriately for their assigned service. This should include proper footwear as well as required safety equipment. If a particular piece of clothing is required, always be sure it is clean. When in doubt, please ask your supervisor or program coordinator.

### **General Safety Information**

The definition of an accident is an unplanned event that interrupts production or service resulting in bodily injury, property damage, or a loss of time. Below are 10 basic safety responsibilities which all volunteers must adhere to:

1. Promptly report to a supervisor all accidents and injuries occurring during your service time, no matter how minor.
2. Learn the right way to do your job. In most cases, it is the safest way as well. If you are not sure, ask a supervisor for further instruction.
3. Cooperate with and assist in the investigation of accidents to determine causes and corrective measures to prevent their reoccurrence.
4. Promptly report to a supervisor any and all unsafe actions, practices, or conditions you may observe.
5. Become familiar with and observe safe work procedures during the course of your activities.
6. Keep your area clean and orderly at all times.
7. Avoid engaging in any horseplay and refrain from distracting others.
8. Obey all safety rules and follow published work instructions.
9. Wear required personal protective equipment when working in hazardous operations or areas.
10. Arrive at work suitably attired for the service you will be expected to perform.

## **Personal Protective Equipment**

*Personal protective equipment does not eliminate the hazard!*

### **Hand Protection**

In order to protect against mechanical hazards, there are six steps a volunteer can follow. These steps are:

1. Be alert!
2. Use tools properly.
3. Never tamper with safety devices, such as guards or safety switches.
4. Disconnect power when adjusting, cleaning or repairing machinery.
5. Remove watches and rings. Do not wear gloves around moving machine parts.
6. Practice good housekeeping.

To protect against these environmental hazards, there are six steps a volunteer can follow. These steps are:

1. Know the hazards.
2. Be alert!
3. Wear proper hand protection.
4. Handle materials with care.
5. Carry loads through doorways with hands at the top and bottom of the load, not at the sides.
6. Practice good housekeeping.

To protect hands against irritating substances, the volunteer can take four steps, including:

1. Keep hands clean.
2. Wash often and use approved cleaners.
3. Use gloves appropriate to the hazard. (Choose the proper glove for the job.)
4. Practice good housekeeping—properly store substances.

### Eye Protection

There are four important rules that a volunteer must remember in order to properly protect his/her eyes from workplace hazards. These rules are:

1. Make sure the personal eyewear equipment fits correctly.
2. Maintain it properly. Clean the eyewear protection on a regular, if not daily, basis.
3. Wear it! The eyewear protection will not do anyone any good unless the employee wears it.
4. Know what to do in an emergency. The volunteer should know the location of eyewash stations in his work area as well as the location of the first aid kit.

### Foot Protection

Foot injuries are probably the easiest type of injuries to protect against. A volunteer who utilizes the appropriate foot protection, such as a non-slip shoe, will be protected against most foot hazards.

### Hearing Protection

OSHA regulations require that hearing protection be available to workers where noise is above 85 decibels over an eight-hour period. OSHA regulations further require that hearing protection must be worn by all workers exposed to 90 decibels or more over an eight-hour average day.

For our comparison purposes, the following are commonly encountered noise levels:

- Normal conversation is commonly reported at greater than 60 decibels
- Manual machinery—80 decibels
- Drill press—95 decibels
- Power saw—110 decibels
- An area near a jet plane taking off—145 decibels

Personal hearing protection can protect the volunteer against these noise exposures. There are three types of hearing protection, which include earplugs, canal caps, and earmuffs.

### Head Protection

OSHA standards require the use of hard hats when there is a possibility of injury from falling or flying objects.

### Reflector Vests

A last consideration is to protect yourself while working in a right away or involved with traffic control. In addition to appropriate placement of signs, you should also wear a reflector vest to provide the maximum warning to motorists.

## **Your Healthy Back**

The basic safe lifting techniques, which all of you should attempt to use whenever possible are:

- Focus on the task. This means to simply plan and take your time. Think about what you're going to lift, move or transfer, where you are going to take it, how far, if there is a better way, if it is within your physical capability or if assistance with the lift is needed.
- Tense your stomach muscles. Remember to involve these muscles because when we don't, it is the weak back muscles we end up injuring.
- Bend at the knees. This helps to bring the item into our work zone.
- Move closer to the load. Keep the load as close to you as possible. We have much more strength and endurance when we are close to the object we are trying to work with versus stretched out in front of it. If you stretch your arms out in front of you, you can feel the extra stress that can be put on your lower back.
- Lift with your legs. Use the strong leg muscles to do the lift rather than the weak back muscles.
- Turn with your feet. Again, remember to prevent the twist and lift combination by making two steps out of one.

### **MATERIAL HANDLING BASIC GUIDELINES**

To reduce the potential of injury from lifting/carrying tasks, do the following:

1. Identify and review job task requirements that involve lifting/carrying where heavy or awkward objects or weight are involved. Examples include:
  - Painting – can require lifting/carrying large ladders, 5 gallon buckets that can weigh 40- 60 lbs., awkward postures, etc.

- Trimming trees/landscaping – can require similar handling of ladders, hand or chainsaws, hauling debris, lifting trailer hitches, heavy cans of fuel, etc.
  - Floor maintenance – handling of heavy buffers, vacuums, buckets with water, heavy containers with chemicals, etc.
2. For the identified jobs/tasks - Reduce the “manual material handling/lifting” efforts of the identified tasks above to reduce strain to the lower back, shoulders, etc by:
- Rule of thumb: Locate, place and/or store any item that must be manually handled, between knuckle and shoulder height. Apply this to any item at any storage area, and when feasible, also in the field. This will minimize stooping and bending of the back and strain on the shoulders and neck. Knuckle to shoulder height is considered the optimum handling range.
  - Do not store heavy materials above shoulder height. (Handling material above the shoulder height requires great strength and increases the potential for strain/sprain-type injuries.)
  - Again - Do not store heavy materials directly on the floor. In the field, try to apply the same concept - Think ahead where materials and equipment can be placed to reduce lifting from the floor/ground. (Handling loads below knuckle height results in deep bending and awkward lifting.)
  - Provide temporary stands on which materials can be placed to bring the working height of the worker up to around waist level for the lowest item. (Handling materials at waist height will eliminate the bending and lifting and the risk of back injuries.)
  - Install and use more permanent shelves, racks, tables, etc., in any storage area, to place work or materials on, as indicated above, vs. the floor. (This will also add storage space and improve housekeeping.)

3. Increase the use of Material Handling Equipment-Use hand carts/trucks, dollies, and maintenance trailers, golf carts, tractors, hoists, etc., to handle materials vs. lifting and carrying by hand.
  - Use special dolly trucks for moving large furniture such as desks, etc.
  - Push rather than pull handcarts.
  - Do not overload handcarts by placing materials above the handle or by carrying excessive weight.
  - Submit a request to management for additional hand carts/trucks, etc. if there are not enough.
4. If Manual Handling is unavoidable, reduce the quantity of “stuff” (parts, equipment, cans, boards, sand, etc.) to be manually lifted to reduce the weight of the load and the risk of injury.
5. Clear the path of travel before carrying to avoid tripping/falling over materials, equipment, etc. (Good housekeeping.)
6. Raise or lower the height of the work surface/table or workbench, etc., so you are in a comfortable “neutral” posture when working, whether standing or sitting.
7. Ask for help. Use “Team Lifting”, two or more people to lift heavy or awkward items, when you see the object is more than you can handle.
  - Before Team Lifting any job, especially if carrying items up a flight of stairs, decide who will be the “leader” and how to call out instructions.
  - When Team Lifting and carrying a heavy load up a flight of stairs, place the strongest person at the bottom/rear.

## **Hazard Communication**

The goal of hazard communication is to provide training to all persons who are assigned to work with toxic substances in the workplace. The use, handling, and storage of toxic substances can affect the safety and well-being of the environment and general public. The law specifically addresses the following five major parts:

- Required posting and record keeping
- Material Safety Data Sheets
- Appropriate labeling
- Employee training
- Fire safety requirements

To work safely with a chemical or substance on a routine, daily basis, we suggest you become familiar with the following three areas:

- Health hazards-how will it hurt you?
- Use, care, storage-how do you work with it?
- Emergency procedures-what do you do if there is an incident?

You can work safely with toxic substances if you do not allow a route of entry. Chemicals and substances enter your body by:

- Inhalation-breathing
- Absorption-skin
- Ingestion-eating

To prevent these exposures and routes of entry, the following safety rules are suggested:

- Personal hygiene techniques-always follow good hygiene prior to break or lunch periods.
- Personal protective equipment-always use the appropriate personal protective equipment as provided by your agency.
- Separate work areas from break areas.
- Be familiar with the Material Safety Data Sheet and follow all safety rules.

## **Vehicle Orientation**

Always inspect the vehicle according to established rules. If the vehicle is found to be unsafe or damaged in any way, report it immediately to the supervisor.

Safety belts must be worn at all times. This is a state law as well as an agency regulation.

If you are involved in a motor vehicle accident, always notify the police and a supervisor, as soon as possible. Remain calm and offer assistance; however, do not claim responsibility for the accident. Always demonstrate good driving habits and courtesy as you represent your organization.

Be familiar with the operation of the communication system within your vehicle. This includes compliance with FCC regulations. Keep all communication brief, concise, and relevant to department operations.

Never back heavy equipment where visibility is difficult or mirrors are required unless you have checked behind the vehicle or a spotter is outside to guide your vehicle.

Report any agency-owned equipment needing assistance due to mechanical failures or accident to a supervisor immediately. The use of other vehicle equipment to tow or push a movable or disabled vehicle is prohibited.

In order to operate agency vehicles and equipment, you must have a valid driver's license of proper classification on your person at all times, which complies with state restrictions. You must also complete any driver training prescribed by the agency.

Six Driving Conditions:

1. Weather extremes: Your following distance should be increased and speed decreased in rain, snow, ice, fog, etc.
2. Traffic: Rush hour and congested roadways make for congestion and hurried drivers. You should set the example!

3. Light: Be alert to poor visibility which can be affected by dusk and dawn, street lights, weather or the condition of the vehicle lights. Always be sure they are operable and clean.
4. Roads: Either an unfamiliar route or the actual road surface can also affect your ability to control your vehicle. Be extra alert in construction zones.
5. Vehicle: Always ensure your vehicle is safe for operation.
6. Operator: This could be the most uncontrollable factor due to the variety of drivers out on the roadways. Be alert to those who are distracted or appear intoxicated. Report any unsafe condition you may observe to your supervisor.

#### **Electrical/Flammable/Fire Safety Guidelines**

- Grounding of electrical tools and machines is one of the most important factors in the control of hazards of low voltage electricity.
- Electrical extension cords with portable electrical tools and appliances should be of three-wire types.
- Grounds are never to be removed from the extension cords.
- Electrical extension cords should be used for temporary power only.
- Never utilize an electrical extension cord to provide permanent power. Instead, report it to your supervisor so alternative arrangements can be made.
- Always inspect electrical extension cords prior to use to ensure the insulation is intact.
- Do not overload electrical outlets. If there is an inadequate number for the operation, report it to your supervisor immediately.
- Lastly, if you do encounter a fire, be prepared by knowing the location of the nearest fire extinguisher and pull alarm.
- Be sure you always notify the fire department immediately and warn others in the area so evacuation can be started.
- If you feel the fire is manageable, contain it by using the approved fire extinguisher as trained by your supervisor.
- Remain calm and near an exit. Always report even a small fire to your supervisor so appropriate follow-up can be done.

### **Hand and Power Tools**

1. Select the right tool for the job.
2. Keep tools in good condition.
3. Use tools in the right way.
4. Keep tools in a safe place.

### **Ladder Safety**

These include three basics:

1. Select the right ladder for the job based on the type, size and construction.
2. Ensure safe placement through utilization of safety feet, a level surface, and not overloading or overextending.
3. Ladders should be periodically inspected to maintain safe operating condition. Defective ladders should be tagged and placed out of service. A report should be submitted to your supervisor and ladders should never be repaired.

### **Emergency Preparedness Plan**

Your agency has developed a written emergency preparedness plan including specific response and potential hazards. This may include such emergencies as weather, medical, building, or threats of terrorism and Workplace Violence. All volunteers must be aware of the written plan and follow the direction of the staff. If you are unclear of your specific response, please ask a staff member. Always remain calm and report any potential hazards or suspicious behavior to a staff member.

**Sample Volunteer Waiver of Liability Form**

**VOLUNTEER PROGRAM  
ASSUMPTION OF RISK AND RELEASE WAIVER**

By signing the Assumption of Risk and Release, the individual named below wishes to participate as a Volunteer and recognizes that there are risks of damage or injury arising from this service or from other activities (including travel) that may be associated with participation in our volunteer program. By his/her signature below, the participating individual voluntarily agrees to assume and/or incur all risks of loss, impairment, damage or injury of whatever kind, including death, that may be sustained or suffered by participation in this volunteer program whether or not the result in whole or in part of acts or omissions, negligence or other unintentional fault of the agency. In addition, the participant (including his/her heirs, assigns and personal representatives) agrees to release, hold harmless, and indemnify the employer or its affiliates from and against any claims, demands, actions, causes of action, lawsuits, expenses, or losses (including attorneys' fees) on account of property damage or personal injury (including death) arising out of or attributable to the individual's travel to or participating in any volunteer program. This Assumption of Risk and Release Waiver applies to the employer, officers, directors, managers, agents, faculty, staff, students, volunteers, employees, advisors and/or representatives. The undersigned acknowledges that he/she has read and understands this document.

Executed as of this \_\_\_\_\_ day  
of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_.

**Participant's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of parent or guardian (if participant is under 18 years of age):** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Orientation Checklist**

- Mission Statement
- What is a Volunteer?
- A Word About Risk Management
- Conduct
- Dress Code
- General Safety Information
- Personal Protective Equipment
  - Hand Protection
  - Eye Protection
  - Foot Protection
  - Hearing Protection
  - Head Protection
  - Reflection Vest
- Your Healthy Back
- Hazard Communication
- Vehicle Orientation
- Electrical/Flammable/Fire Safety Guidelines
- Hand and Power Tools
- Ladder Safety
- Emergency Preparedness Plan
- Sample Volunteer Waiver of Liability Form  
Date \_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Member Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Notes**

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