

**SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS
ACTIVE IN DISASTER**

RESPONSE/COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

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July 2011

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RESPONSE/COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to describe how the activation/communications function will be administered by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (SEPAVOAD) during times of local disaster. The plan includes general standards of performance as well as lists of resources for communicators. While we are aware of the importance of external communications, the focus of this plan is upon the internal communications of SEPAVOAD.

B. Scope

This plan encompasses the geographic area in the purview of the Southeastern Task Force which includes these five counties in Southeastern Pennsylvania: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia.

II. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. General

In order for SEPA VOAD to work effectively, it is necessary for us to have free-flowing avenues of communication between local responders with knowledge of needs and SEPA VOAD with knowledge of resources. Once needs are known, they can be referred to Authorized Member Organization Representatives (AMORs) who in turn can activate their resources to respond to the needs.

The persons involved in this communication loop are those on the SEPA VOAD Executive Committee:

- a) 5 Elected Partner agency members.
 - President
 - Vice President
 - 3 Council Members
- b) Human Services Workgroup Chair & Vice-Chair (2)
- c) Designated County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) (5) – one per county, in most cases the County Volunteer Management Coordinator
- d) PA VOAD President
- e) PEMA Voluntary Agency Liaison

B. Pre-Disaster/Preparedness Period

SEPA VOAD's preparedness practices of its members may include:

- a) Maintaining an up-to-date directory of SEPA VOAD Member Organizations. (MO)

- b) Cultivating working relationships with the 5 County Emergency Management Agency Contacts, one per county.
- c) Encouraging MOs to develop, revise, and test their own activation protocols.
- d) Encouraging all AMORs to acquire FEMA certificates in IS-100, IS-200, IS-288, and IS-700.
- e) Updating contact information from Member Organizations (MO).
- f) Building relationships with local Emergency Management.
- g) Building relationships between MOs.
- h) Informing local communities about the SEPA VOAD mission, events, and activities.
- i) Testing the Communication Plan annually with at-large membership as participants in county and Task Force drills.
- j) If a potential response can be anticipated, the Executive Committee will issue an e-mail **alert** to the AMORs:

Note: It is not necessary for an alert to precede a request for help.

C. SEPA VOAD Response Protocols

“Responding” for SEPA VOAD means that SEPA VOAD member agencies will collaborate and collectively strategize for response to disaster. ***It is SEPA VOAD’s understanding that local resources within each county will be sought before SEPA VOAD collectively brings its resources to the table.

The primary requestor of SEPA VOAD help during a disaster will be County Emergency Management, likely through their County Voluntary Management coordinators. Member Organizations are free to respond independently through whatever partnerships, cooperative agreements, and protocols they have established.

SEPA VOAD Response includes:

1. SEPA VOAD Executive Committee will convene a conference call with the assistance of the relevant County Volunteer Management Coordinator(s), county representative or Regional Task Force Planner.
 - a) Conference call procedure
 - i) The SEPA VOAD President or the President’s designated representative from SEPA VOAD will initiate the call. If the President is unavailable, unreachable, or not present, the SEPA VOAD Vice President will initiate the call. It is anticipated that The President or call convener will have been in communication with other SEPA VOAD council members and county EMA representatives, likely the Volunteer Management Coordinators.
 - ii) A determination will be made by the SEPA VOAD President about when to schedule the conference call. All Partner

members shall be invited to participate in the call either by email or phone call.

- iii) SEPA VOAD will continue to convene by conference call until council determines it is no longer necessary.
 - iv) It is likely that those SEPA VOAD members with early response functions will not be available to convene conference calls. A list of possible, more likely conveners is included as an appendix to this document. In addition to the convener those listed are also likely candidates for taking notes on the calls.
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- b) When a specific resource is requested, the Executive Committee will consult the SEPA VOAD Directory and determine which Member Organization might be the first potential responder. It is our intention to house these directories in a database like the Coordinated Assistance Network (CAN) or Knowledge Center. County Volunteer Management Coordinators also have resource directories specific to their counties.
 - c) The AMOR will be contacted directly with the relevant information. If the MO can commit its resources, then it will be asked to initiate its activation protocols. If it cannot commit resources, the EC will contact the second potential responder, then the third, and so on. MO's may collectively respond as well.
 - d) Collective Response may include:
 - i) Strategizing on how to offer volunteer and monetary resources
 - ii) Reaching out to organizations both a part of and beyond the SEPA VOAD network for assistance.
 - iii) Communicating needs throughout and beyond the network
 - iv) Organizing resources such as volunteers, financial contributions, and material donations
 - v) Working in concert with local and regional authorities for integrated response.
 - e) SEPA VOAD will strive to make affected areas aware of its resources by establishing communication with community responders and Long-Term Recovery Committees and/or assisting in their creation

SEPA VOAD Responds on a case by case basis. Factors determining response degree include:

- a) Scope of disaster
- b) Assessments of disaster caused unmet needs and capacity of local community to respond.
- c) Resources available among SEPA VOAD Member Organizations
- d) Requests for SEPA VOAD assistance from the SEPA RTF, county governments, or local governments
- e) Internal requests from SEPA VOAD members

III. RESPONSE CHECKLIST

Before the Event:

- Email a notice of an event or likely event to SEPA VOAD member agencies
 - Conduct preparatory conference call
 - Ensure emergency management connection to SEPA VOAD
 - Review planning documents
 - Encourage agencies to pre-position or at least confirm capacity and support structures
 - Staff or maintain contact with the appropriate Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
 - Identify appropriate SEPA VOAD representation if Agency staff will be re-tasked
 - Make contact with PAVOAD and establish communications plan
 - Establish a connection with the 2-1-1 System
 - Encourage agencies to identify possible needs
 - Determine cash donations procedures and a possible fiscal agent.
 - Encourage voluntary and faith-based responders to connect with SEPA VOAD
 - Encourage voluntary and faith-based responders to record hours and equipment usage
 - Identify the local / state lead organizations for each subject matter area (i.e. mucking / gutting)
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Event:

- Maintain open lines of communication
 - Compile information by category of tasks under the major “response and recovery” headings
 - Develop messaging about donations, volunteering, reporting damage, and seeking help for suggested distribution through EMAs, SEPA VOAD agencies, and 2-1-1
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After the Event (first few days):

- Share early damage assessment information
 - Hold regular conference calls to share damage information, record activities, and address agency needs
 - Promote sub-group conference calls as necessary (mass care, donations, recovery, etc.)
 - Continue to update messaging on volunteers, donations, damage reporting and requesting help
 - Hold first Long-Term Recovery specific planning and coordination call
 - Collect and report agency activity through SITREPs
 - Encourage agencies to identify needs
 - Encourage voluntary and faith-based responders to connect with SEPA VOAD
 - Encourage voluntary and faith-based responders to record hours and equipment usage
 - Ensure that external partners are working in support of local / state voluntary agency leads under each subject matter area (i.e. mucking / gutting)
 - Identify unaffiliated groups and approach with SEPA VOAD membership
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After the Event (early weeks):

- Continue having SEPA VOAD and sub-group conference calls / meetings as needed
 - Publish a success story press release
 - Help to establish LTRCs
 - Promote effective client intake and case management
 - Engage with business and industry points of contact
 - Identify gaps in recovery services and invite external VOAD and other partners to participate
 - Collect and report agency activity through SITREPs
 - Distribute individual assistance impact reports
 - Encourage agencies to identify needs
 - Identify unaffiliated groups and approach with SEPA VOAD membership
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After the Event (later weeks):

- Continue having SEPA VOAD and sub-group conference calls / meetings as needed
- Publish a success story press release
- Support LTRCs
- Collect and report agency activity through SITREPs
- Encourage agencies to populate NDMN needs section
- Conduct an after-action review to capture best practices and lessons learned for follow-up. Use this information to develop an improvement plan to correct any deficiencies that were identified
- Recognize member agencies and specific staff for service during the disaster
- Hold a SEPA VOAD meeting while attention and momentum remains
- Identify unaffiliated groups and approach with SEPA VOAD membership

IV. CONTACT LIST

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