Cadboro Bay Emergency Incident Command Post

Managing Convergent Volunteers in an Emergency

1. Background

The management of convergent volunteers is an enormously important component of our response to a disaster. Volunteers can assist:

- By providing input into the initial damage assessment of the Cadboro Bay area. The Incident Command Post (ICP) needs this assessment to develop its strategy, set priorities and make prudent tactical decisions.
- Search and Rescue (SAR) teams which will be understaffed, initially.
- First Aid groups.
- With the setup and operations of the Emergency Response Centre.
- With other tasks that may arise.

This document provides guidelines for managing the convergent volunteers so that the Incident Command Post’s Manager of Convergent Volunteers can quickly assess and document the convergent volunteer’s skills and channel them to an appropriate group within the emergency response team. A partial list of roles and skills that will be needed in an emergency is in appendix 3.

2. Getting Started

Getting Started tasks for the Manager of Convergent Volunteers are:

1. Announce your presence to the Incident Command Post (ICP) Leader. You will be assigned to the Logistics Chief of the ICP.
2. Set up your “work station” consisting of, at least, one (1) table (possibly makeshift) and two (2) or more chairs. One for you and one for the volunteer being interviewed.
3. Obtain several sheets of paper, pens and pencils. Also useful are: clipboards, tape, felt pens, and post-it notes
4. Go to the appendices of this document to find the templates of the forms that you will use to:
   a. Register and interview the Convergent Volunteers,
   b. Maintain the Emergency Task Registration Form.
5. Read these instruction and talk with the Logistic Chief if you have any concerns.
6. Get to work. 😊
3. **Interviewing Convergent Volunteers – Screening and Placement**

For every Convergent volunteer you must fill out a short “Registration-Interview Form”. Several volunteers can be on the same sheet of paper (which itself might be in short supply). Appendix 1 has a template. When you run out of templates, make them up by hand.

You will get the full names and contact information for each volunteer. The street address of the contact information is very important because telephone, cell phone and email services will not be available. If the volunteer is required at a later time, someone will have to fetch them.

The next task is to interview / evaluate the volunteer to determine how they can best help with the emergency response. Fill in this part of the template in summary form. Be flexible with regard to the information that you gather to suit the nature of the emergency. You may want to discuss this with the Logistics Chief.

A list of questions to ask the volunteers includes:

- What professional (trade) skills do you have that might be useful (medical, engineering, electrical, carpentry, etc.)?
- What non-professional skills do you have that might be useful (good with hand- or power-tools, amateur radio, can you build and/or fix things, hobbies and recreational skills, able to jump buildings in a single bound, etc.)?
- Do you own tools that might be useful (chain saws, jacks, cutting/welding torches, electric generators, portable lights, 12V inverters, etc.)?
- When are you available?
- Do you have a preference for how you want to help?

Summarize the interview and place this summary on to the Volunteer Registration List (Appendix 1).

You may already know of urgent needs for volunteers by one or more group and can proceed to assign the volunteers (via the next step). However, you may also choose to place the volunteers on a list to be used at a later time, or for another shift. An option is to ask volunteers to return at a later time, or to be on “stand by” at their homes. Do whatever makes sense. Flexibility is crucial to a good emergency response.
4. **Put the Volunteers to Work**

Before you direct the volunteer to their assigned task/station/supervisor, it is important, for legal and other reasons, that you do the following.

1. The volunteer must “sign-in” and “sign-out” on the Emergency Response Task Registration Form. A template is in Appendix 2. Because we are a small community group we can assign every volunteer to a single task, such as “Provide Assistance as Required” on this form. The reason for the form is a legal one. Once an emergency has been declared by the Government of British Columbia, the Task Registration Form instills Work Compensation (WCP), Insurance, and Liability protection to the volunteer.

2. Brief the volunteer (singly or in a group) on the status of the emergency and our current response and activities. They need a “picture” of our situation.

3. Instruct the volunteers that even though they have insurance and liability protection, they must always;
   a. Act responsibly and within their capability (based on prior experience).
   b. Not put themselves unnecessarily at risk.
   c. Make sure that someone at the ICP knows where they are, when in the field.
   d. Call in to the IPC, if in doubt about what to do, or how to do something.

5. **Other Important Tasks**

When you are not directly engaged in dealing with the Convergent volunteers;

1. Walk around the Emergency Response Centre and find out what kind of help is needed by the various groups. Form a simple list containing the name of the group, the desired skill-set of the needed volunteers, and the number that are needed.

2. Brief the Logistics Chief on the pool of volunteers that you have available.

Additional points of importance.

1. Train one or more of the volunteers to be a manager of convergent volunteers. That is, find people that can do your job because you cannot work 24/7. Also, the number of volunteers may be large and overwhelming. Use such an opportunity to your advantage by assigning some of the volunteers to help you.

2. Maintain good notes, records, suggestions, diagrams, etc. so that you can brief the next shift. If there is no next shift, but you need a break, then brief the Logistics Chief.

3. Remember to sign-out on the Emergency Task Registration Form.
Appendix 1: Convergent Volunteer Registration List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Information, Skills, Tools, Availability, etc.</th>
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Appendix 2: Emergency Response Task Registration Form.

<table>
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<th>Cadboro Bay Emergency Task Registration Form</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Task:</strong> Provide Assistance as Required.</td>
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I certify that the people listed above attend this task:

Task Leader  Signature  Date
Appendix 3: Convergent Volunteer Assignment — Roles and Skills

Here is a partial list of the groups and teams that will need volunteers, the roles that need to be filled and the skills required for these roles. People with administrative skills (record keeping) and Runners (people that can transport information, supplies and equipment) are likely to be the biggest pool of volunteers and will be needed for a wide variety of tasks. People with highly specialized professional and vocational skills will be desperately needed, but likely few in number.

Incident Command Post -
  
  • Replacement of Chiefs
    o Leadership
    o Team Management
    o Organizational
    o Imaginational and creativeness
  
  • Media Communication
    o Public Relations
    o Communication
  
  • Record Keeping
    o Proficient with reading and writing
    o Administrative experience

Planning Chief
  
  • Community-wide damage assessment and reporting
    o good mobility by foot, bicycle or other means

Operations Chief
  
  • Runners
    o Fleet of foot
  
  • Trades
    o All manner including electrical, plumbing carpentry, etc.
  
  • Engineering
    o All manner including structural, civil, mechanical, electrical, etc.
  
  • Translation
    o Foreign Language

Communications Chief
  
  • Certified Radio Operators
  
  • Record Keepers
  
  • Message runners
Search & Rescue Group

- Field Teams
  - Physically Fit
  - Medical and or First Aid
  - Preliminary Property Damage Assessment

Medical Chief

- Medical Persons
  - All manner including doctors, surgeons, nurses, care-givers, aids, etc.
- Administrative
  - Recording
  - Runners

Temporary Shelter Chief

- Administration
- Care-givers
  - Personal Relations
- Food-preparation and Catering
  - Food Safe Certification
- Runners

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