

## OIL SPILL VOLUNTEER FAQs

### **How can volunteers help now in advance of any oil impacts on Florida's coastline?**

Volunteer Florida encourages everyone to get connected with a local organization. Volunteers can support the oil cleanup effort through appropriate activities such as Coast Watch, pre-oil landfall beach cleanups, fundraising, and meeting other needs of responding organizations. [www.volunteerflorida.org](http://www.volunteerflorida.org) features information on volunteer activities happening in your own backyard, as well as links to other websites with volunteer opportunities.

### **I read BP was offering training in advance of any oil impacts, but now I read training will be on a will-call basis. Why the change?**

Due to the changing nature of the oil spill, information can quickly become outdated. While BP initially offered training on a first-come-first-serve basis, community response surpassed capacity. To receive the most up to date and accurate information possible, please visit [www.volunteerflorida.org](http://www.volunteerflorida.org).

### **Can volunteers help clean up oil contaminated areas?**

The complex nature of oil cleanup, coupled with health and safety concerns, limits the role of volunteers. Volunteers will not engage in any activity directly contacting oil-contaminated materials. All oil-contaminated materials will only be handled by trained, paid workers and not by volunteers. These trained, paid workers include **Qualified Community Responders** who are typically hired from the local community and **Paraprofessionals** who are BP pre-approved contractors with previous permits, training and skills.

Although volunteers will not be utilized in activities that involve direct contact with oil, there is still a need for volunteerism in your community. Visit [www.volunteerflorida.org](http://www.volunteerflorida.org) for a list of opportunities.

### **What can volunteers do to help?**

The impact of the oil on Florida's coastline continues to change. As local communities identify specific volunteer needs, those volunteers who have registered and meet the requirements of the opportunities will be notified. The oil spill affects more than Florida's coastline. The event also impacts local organizations and communities. Citizens are always welcome and encouraged to volunteer locally in Florida. Volunteer opportunities are offered on a local basis, community by community, or through local, state, and national organizations. Get connected at [www.volunteerflorida.org](http://www.volunteerflorida.org).

### **What training can I take now to be prepared to volunteer?**

Any training required specific to the volunteer assignment will be conducted onsite. BP provides training for paid **Qualified Community Responders** and **Paraprofessionals** through PEC/Premier Safety Management. PEC trains those interested in employment and not volunteers.

### **What kind of volunteer activities might I be involved with?**

Due to the changing nature of the oil spill, local communities anticipate a variety of activities to support relief and rescue organizations will be available for volunteers. Here are some examples of how volunteers may help local community agencies for the oil spill:

- Monitor the shoreline by becoming a Coast Watcher
- Provide administrative and office support such as staffing call centers (211) or answering phones to help field the many inquiries concerning the oil spill
- Manage volunteer databases or website support.
- Get Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training
- Get affiliated with a local agency and be trained in disaster relief work specific to that agency
- Become a fundraiser for a local wildlife or conservation organization as the interest in protecting Florida's natural environment grows
- Where needed, support the work of the paid oil spill workers (as directed locally)
- Become trained as a volunteer leader
- Attend Volunteer Management Training Series to be a volunteer manager
- Utilize special skills and services (web maintenance, technical services, communication skills)
- Maintain contact with local volunteers through phone calls, emails, mailers, and meetings

### **Who is leading the volunteer efforts in each county?**

The county emergency management team is leading volunteer efforts in each county.

### **Where can I learn about volunteer opportunities?**

Volunteer opportunities are located at [www.volunteerflorida.org](http://www.volunteerflorida.org) and county websites.

### **I have heard only paid workers will be allowed to clean up oil-impacted areas, but I want to help clean up my beach. Why can't I do that?**

Contact with crude oil or crude oil contaminated materials without proper training could be hazardous to your health. Crude oil, as a hazardous substance, requires proper training in order to handle, clean or transport contaminated materials. DO NOT attempt to conduct any cleanup or recovery activities without the proper training and supervision from the authorities.

### **What is Volunteer Florida's role in the oil spill disaster?**

Volunteer Florida is proud to be the agency responsible for coordinating volunteers and donations during times of disaster as a member of the State Emergency Response Team (SERT).

Volunteer Florida continually updates [www.volunteerflorida.org](http://www.volunteerflorida.org) to keep you informed with the most reliable information. As part of this effort, staff is:

- Actively preparing an effective strategies with our partners for volunteer engagement;
- Working with BP representatives to collect information on potential volunteers who registered with their volunteer hotline; and
- Coordinating with county and state officials, and non-profit relief and wildlife rescue organizations to coordinate volunteer efforts.