

THE CITY OF NATIONAL CITY
City Manager's Office
Memorandum

DATE: March 25, 2020
TO: All City Employees
FROM: Brad Raulston, City Manager

SUBJECT: DISASTER SERVICE WORKERS

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, there have been questions regarding what it means to be a designated disaster service worker. As City employees, we are a vital and important part of the National City Emergency Plan and the San Diego County Operational Area Emergency Plan.

Under State law, all government employees are disaster service workers who can be called upon in any emergency as specified in the California Government Code. This means that in addition to our everyday duties, we have an added responsibility to help in a disaster. This is important. All the advanced preparation and planning which has been accomplished can succeed only if we are fully aware of, and prepared to carry out, our responsibilities.

Many of us are already trained to respond. During a disaster, some departments will respond in their traditional roles (such as Police and Fire). Other departments may be required to perform their day-to-day tasks as well as other duties to support the activities of the City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Employees who do not have a specific disaster assignment, and who have not received specific training, may be asked to perform duties as may be needed/assigned. Training would be provided to those employees at that time. These duties will normally be non-technical, but important duties such as:

Answering telephones	Running messages
Delivering supplies	Tracking information in the EOC
Rendering first aid	Helping in a Red Cross shelter
Guiding visitors	Being an interpreter
Managing volunteers	Crisis counseling
Monitoring news reports	Re-shelving library books
Picking up tree limbs	Stacking bricks
Staffing barricades	Filling sandbags
Cooking food	Serving food

I also want to assure you that I share your concern for the security of your family, and we will make every effort to allow employees time to check on their families. It is possible, however, that many employees may be required to remain at work, or immediately report in, following a designated disaster.

With this in mind, I encourage you to take some basic steps that can help reduce the hazard to yourself and your family:

- Have an emergency kit in your home, which contains food, water, and basic supplies for at least three days.
- Each member of the family should know how to turn off the gas, electricity, and water to the dwelling.
- Have a portable radio and flashlight with spare batteries. These will provide a source of information and lighting in an emergency.
- Develop a family emergency plan so that each member of the family knows what to expect in an emergency. Include an out-of-state telephone contact and keep the number with you.
- Keep an emergency supply of water and food snacks in your car and at the office.
- If possible, pre-arrange for someone to care for your children and/or pets.

Although we may not be able to stop a disaster, the precautions we take now can reduce the effects on our families and ourselves. For more information on preparing your Family Disaster Plan, please contact Walter Amedee at (619) 336-4556 or visit www.readysandiego.com. I am also attaching a Frequently Asked Questions with additional information on what it means to be a disaster service worker.

I believe that the residents of this city, and the other cities within the San Diego region must have confidence that we, the employees of National City, are ready, willing and able to step up and serve in the event of an emergency. I am incredibly proud of the work staff has already put forth helping respond to the COVID-19 crisis and I look forward to working with you to continue to support our community as we face these uncertain times together.

Frequently Asked Questions for Public Employees

As a City of National City public employee you may be called upon to work as a Disaster Service Worker (DSW) in the event of an emergency. The information contained in this document will help you understand your role and obligations as a disaster service worker, and what to do in an emergency.

California Government Code Section 3100-3109 states in part:

It is hereby declared that the protection of the health and safety and preservation of the lives and property of the people of the state from the effects of natural, manmade, or war-caused emergencies which result in conditions of disaster or extreme peril to life, property, and resources is of paramount state importance...in protection of its citizens and resources, all public employees are hereby declared to be disaster service workers...

What does disaster service mean?

Disaster service means all activities authorized by and carried out pursuant to the California Emergency Services Act* to aid in the response and recovery phases of a disaster or emergency, including approved and documented training necessary or proper to engage in such activities.

What does being a Disaster Service Worker mean to me?

As a Disaster Service Worker you may be asked to carry on with your work as usual, or you may be asked to do something completely different than your everyday job. There are many different ways to assist during a disaster because each situation is unique. You may be assigned and trained to do a specific disaster response job such as working in a Department Operations Center or the City Emergency Operations Center; you may be called upon to assist your Department or other City Departments with their response efforts; or you may be assisting nonprofit disaster response agencies such as the American Red Cross and Salvation Army.

What is the oath or affirmation that is referred to in the government code? Why does the City ask that employees sign an Affirmation of Loyalty?

Before entering upon the duties of employment, all public employees take and subscribe to an oath or affirmation set forth in the California Constitution, declaring them to be Disaster Service Workers in time of need.

The oath or affirmation reaffirms an employee's willingness to support and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of California.

National City employees sign an Affirmation of Loyalty during the hiring process, and documentation of the Affirmation is kept in the employee's Department personnel record.

Who is included in Disaster Service Worker status?

Pursuant to the California Emergency Services Act, any person employed by a county, city, state agency or public district in California is a public employee and considered a Disaster Service Worker.

Disaster Service Worker does not include any legal alien employed as a public employee, public employees who are engaged in law enforcement, fire services or emergency medical services on a day-to-day basis, or members registered as active fire fighters of any regularly organized and officially recognized volunteer fire department.

What is my responsibility as a Disaster Service Worker?

It is your responsibility to prepare yourself for disaster service duties by ensuring that you and your family are ready for an emergency.

Be prepared! Make sure your family is prepared - if you are at work when a disaster strikes, you may be staying at work until you are released by someone in authority. If you are at home, you may be called in to work. Management can suspend sick leave and scheduled vacation in the event of a major emergency, and you are responsible for reporting for duty if requested.

Know your plan! Each Department has an Emergency Operations Plan. When the City Manager declares a citywide emergency, follow your department's reporting instructions and be prepared to be assigned to any type of disaster service activity where you are needed.

If there is a disaster, what am I expected to do?

If a disaster happens while you are at work:

Report immediately to your department supervisor or to a department designated staging area.

If you are driving:

If you are driving during your work day - such as delivering supplies or conducting inspections - and a disaster occurs, call your supervisor and let them know where you are. Your supervisor may tell you to stay where you are and assist there, or direct you to another location. If you cannot contact your supervisor report to your designated alternate work site or drive to the closest National City facility.

If you are at home, or otherwise away from work:

Secure your family first; then follow procedures or instructions established by your Department for reporting to your normal work location or designated alternate staging area. Notify your supervisor of your location and status, if possible.

Be sure to keep your City of National City identification badge with you - It may be required to access emergency transportation routes or facilities.

What about my family?

Every effort will be made to permit you time to check on and secure the safety of your family. It is possible; however, that you may be required to remain at work for an extended period of time, or to immediately report-in following a disaster.

Prior to leaving the worksite to check on family you must coordinate with your supervisor to agree on a time for return and to ensure connectivity and safety.

It is critically important that you prepare an emergency plan for your family so they will know what to do in your absence. You are encouraged to utilize information at www.readysandiego.com to create a home and family disaster preparation plan before a disaster occurs.

What is the scope of duties I may be asked to perform as a Disaster Service Worker?

Disaster service is designed to aid in the response and recovery phases of a disaster or emergency. You are considered to be acting within the scope of disaster service duties when performing any act contributing to the protection of life or property or mitigating the effects of an emergency or potential emergency while under the supervision of any unit of the City of National City Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

You are also considered to be acting within the scope of disaster service duties while under the supervision and direction of other State, Federal, and volunteer agencies responding to the disaster such as San Diego County, Department of Public Health, and the American Red Cross.

Examples of general disaster service duties include clerical support, answering telephones, delivering supplies, running messages, managing volunteers, staffing barricades, working in a Red Cross shelter, food preparation and serving, interpreting, and filling sandbags.

How are Disaster Service Worker activities assigned?

In most cases, your department supervisor will provide you with a general assignment based on the needs of the City to carry out its responsibilities during times of disaster. Duties may be outside your regular scope of work or schedule. Established work restrictions continue to apply, such as lift limitations.

Who determines my work hours and what is the expected length of time I will be required to work as a DSW?

Management can change your normal schedule or require overtime during an emergency. Your

supervisor will determine your work hours and manage an equitable schedule during long-term disasters. Although there is no limit to the number of days a DSW can be assigned to an emergency, the City Manager monitor declarations of emergency closely and will close the incident as soon as it is feasible.

If I am a worker with a disability, would there need to be an accessibility review of my (potential) worksite and roles/responsibilities before I can be assigned to disaster duties?

All accommodation is made for personnel with disabilities or others with access and functional needs, keeping safety in mind when assigning duties deemed to be within their “normal scope of work”. It is the determination of the City as to what an employee can or cannot do.

Do public employees acting as Disaster Service Workers get paid?

Disaster Service Workers get paid only if they have taken and subscribed to the Affirmation of Loyalty. Overtime and other compensation is provided in accordance with established MOUs and the nature of the disaster declaration.

What if I am injured while performing my assigned duties as a Disaster Service Worker?

The Disaster Service Worker Program (DSWP) is the result of legislation to provide workers’ compensation benefits to registered Disaster Service Workers (DSW) who are injured while participating in authorized disaster-related activities, including pre-approved training. The Program also provides limited immunity from liability.

Claims sustained by public employees while performing disaster services will be filed as worker compensation claims under the same authorities and guidelines as with all employees within the City of National City.

[*California Emergency Services Act](#)