



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAFETY FIRST!

POTENTIAL DANGERS ARE MANY FOR UNAFFILIATED VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers should avoid entering affected areas at this time, unless trained and deployed by an experienced disaster relief organization.

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER, TALLAHASSEE – The Governor's commission on Volunteerism and Community Service, Volunteer Florida, encourages potential hurricane relief volunteers to exercise patience in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Wilma, and to avoid entering the affected areas at this time. Potential dangers to volunteers who are not specially trained by experienced disaster relief organizations, such as The Salvation Army or the America Red Cross, are many.

Serious injury can result for anyone dealing with the aftermath of a major storm, or any other disaster, so it's wise to be overly cautious:

- Debris-filled streets are dangerous. Snakes and rodents can be hazards.
- Washouts may weaken road and bridge structures, which can collapse underfoot or under the weight of vehicles.
- Buildings may have sustained structural damage and can collapse unexpectedly.
- Gas leaks can cause explosions.
- Downed power lines pose a threat of electrocution.
- Even minor wounds are subject to serious infections because of contaminated flood waters.

(more)



VOLUNTEER SAFETY FIRST!

(Add One)

“While the urge to provide immediate assistance in disaster areas is understandable, safety has to come first,” said Volunteer Florida CEO Wendy Spencer. “Until conditions on the ground are deemed safe, a financial gift to the relief organization of your choice is the **very best** way to assist in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Wilma.”

Financial contributions allow relief organizations to respond with maximum speed and flexibility to meet the needs of survivors. In addition, money spent in or near affected areas helps to restore local economies after disaster strikes. Please visit Volunteer Florida’s Web site, located at www.volunteerflorida.org, for a list of relief organizations that need your financial support **now**.

There will be opportunities to volunteer in the affected areas in the coming days. Potential volunteers can contact a local Volunteer Center to offer assistance. They also can stay tuned to Volunteer Florida’s Web site for the information on voluntary organizations, or call the Volunteer Florida’s Volunteer and Donations Hotline at 1-800-FL-HELP1 (1-800-354-3571) for further information.

The Governor’s Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service was established in 1994 by the Florida Legislature to administer grants under the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. The Commission grants funds to Florida AmeriCorps and National Service programs; encourages volunteerism for everyone from youths to seniors to people with disabilities; promotes volunteerism in emergency management and preparedness; and helps to strengthen and expand Volunteer Centers in Florida.

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