



# NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **SAFETY FIRST!**

### **POTENTIAL DANGERS ARE MANY FOR DISASTER VOLUNTEERS**

*Flooding from Tropical Storm Fay presents unique potential dangers for volunteers ...*

**STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER, TALLAHASSEE** – The Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service (Volunteer Florida) encourages potential disaster relief volunteers to exercise extreme caution. Tropical Storm Fay was largely a rain event, rather than a wind event, which poses unique potential dangers to volunteers who are not specially trained by experienced disaster relief organizations such as The Salvation Army, the American Red Cross, and the numerous faith-based organizations that engage in disaster recovery.

Serious injury can result for anyone working in or around flood waters, so it's wise to be overly cautious:

- Flood waters may contain dangerous debris that is not readily visible. Snakes and rodents can be hazards.
- Those working on flood cleanup either inside or outside of buildings should wear a face mask sufficient to prevent breathing in dangerous contaminants.

(more)



- Washouts may weaken road and bridge structures, which can collapse underfoot or under the weight of vehicles. Never attempt to drive through flooded areas.
- Buildings may have sustained structural damage and can collapse unexpectedly.
- Volunteers should exercise extreme caution when using electrical equipment that may have been exposed to flood waters.
- Downed power lines pose a threat of electrocution, especially when they come into contact with standing water.
- Even minor wounds are subject to serious infections as the result of contaminated flood waters.

“While the urge to reach out to our friends and neighbors who need assistance is understandable, safety has to come first,” said Volunteer Florida CEO Wendy Spencer. “Unless you are a trained disaster relief volunteer, making a financial gift to the relief organization of your choice is the **very best** way to assist people who are affected by Tropical Storm Fay.”

Financial contributions allow relief organizations to respond with maximum speed and flexibility to meet the needs of those impacted. In addition, money spent in or near affected areas helps to restore local economies. Please visit [volunteerflorida.org](http://volunteerflorida.org) for a list of relief organizations that need your financial support.

Potential volunteers should contact a local Volunteer Center to offer assistance or call Volunteer Florida’s Volunteer and Donations Hotline at 1-800-FL-HELP1 (1-800-354-3571) for further information. Volunteer Center contact information is available at [volunteerflorida.org](http://volunteerflorida.org).

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 supports the Governor’s priorities through the creation and management of innovative volunteer programs.

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