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IEMA Highlights Role of Volunteers in Disasters

Volunteers assist with preparedness, response and recovery

SPRINGFIELD – As Hurricane Florence bears down on the east coast, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) is highlighting ways Illinois residents can volunteer and provide critical assistance when disaster strikes.

IEMA would like to take this opportunity to educate people about how they can get connected with reputable organizations and lend a helping hand with disaster response and recovery efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Florence.

“When disaster strikes, voluntary organizations help people in their community, region or across the country,” said Acting IEMA Director William P. Robertson. “Volunteer organizations play a vital role in ensuring the long-term recovery of a community affected by a disaster.”

Following a disaster, many people express interest in helping those impacted by the event. Robertson suggests it’s best to volunteer time or money through a reputable disaster relief organization. The National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (www.nvoad.org) maintains a national database of voluntary and charitable organizations involved in a variety of activities, including emergency preparedness and response throughout the nation.

More than 50 Illinois communities have established Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs). These volunteer groups work to make their communities safer, stronger and better prepared to respond to and recover from emergencies. Illinois CERT members have assisted with damage assessments, donations management, spontaneous volunteer management and in Multi-Agency Resource Centers. More about CERT is available at https://www.ready.gov/community-emergency-response-team.

During disasters, representatives from the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and Serve Illinois Commission have liaisons in IEMA’s State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) to coordinate with state agencies, mutual aid organizations and others on response and recovery efforts. In addition, other voluntary organizations are represented in the SEOC by Illinois’ Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster.

Disaster volunteer opportunities vary by community. People interested in learning more volunteer opportunities can contact local voluntary organizations or their local emergency management agency.