

# Habitat for Humanity of Iowa Disaster Response Guide Updated July 9, 2024

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## **Flexibility**

Flexibility is the key to a successful disaster assignment. Often in the earliest days of a disaster event a sense of chaos and uncertainty can be pervasive. You are likely to witness – and experience – a considerable amount of confusion.

It is important to understand that things at the disaster site will often not go according to plan. You will need to be flexible in dealing with uncertainty related to many everyday things that you might otherwise take for granted. These can include:

- transportation,
- communications,
- work schedules,
- work assignments,
- the housing situation, and
- other details that may change often.

By preparing yourself ahead of time to maintain calm, adjust to changes as they happen, and continue to expect the unexpected, you can greatly reduce the level of stress brought on by the uncertainty of the situation.

## **What to Expect**

Because no two disasters are the same, it is impossible to fully and accurately describe what you may encounter when you arrive at the disaster site. However, there are some general considerations that can help you conceptualize the range of conditions you may experience while on assignment. These include:

### **Hazardous work conditions**

You may be handling broken glass and twisted metal, climbing on roofs, wading through water, and cutting through twisted trees under severe and unpredictable tensions. Most of these tasks involve dangers that are unpredictable but potentially preventable through implementing regular safety discussions or tailgate sessions and diligent use of PPE. Many responders attempt to take on situations that they are not trained or equipped to handle and end up injuring themselves and others. Do the best you can within the resources and skills you have without overstepping abilities. Your knowledge of these hazards can also prevent injuries to volunteers working alongside you who are not as familiar as you. Always speak up when hazards are present.

### **Chaotic work environment**

Individuals deployed to disasters must understand that most deployments do not work out exactly as anticipated. A “hurry up and wait” scenario is possible – participants rush to deploy, only to spend several days on site with very little to do as the operation is organized. Also, responders may end up doing something totally different than what they had deployed to do. Additionally, there may prove to be no need for the responders once they arrive, and they may be sent home immediately. Flexibility and self-direction are the most important requirements for responder teams.

### **Disasters Are Stressful**

Stress is a major part of disaster response and recovery activities. You are likely to encounter people suffering in ways you never imagined, and to feel unable to adequately help them. If you are not able to manage the effects of stress it can lead to aggression, depression, and other adverse behaviors. You may also witness the effects of severe stress in your colleagues, or possibly notice yourself being affected in ways that are unfamiliar to you, causing behavior that is “not like you” in normal circumstances.

### **Your Health is Important**

Food safety is more difficult to monitor under adverse disaster conditions, and food poisoning is not uncommon. Other afflictions such as ‘traveler’s diarrhea’ are also very common among responders due to the difficulty of maintaining proper hygiene. Remember to drink only bottled water at the start. It is vital for all responders to take extra care to ensure their personal hygiene and health.

### **Limited food choices**

Often, responders are fed by the mobile operations of other responding voluntary organizations such as the Salvation Army and the American Red Cross, or by churches in the community. The selection of food at these sites is extremely limited, so there is no guarantee that special dietary requirements can be reasonably accommodated. While vegetarian meals are becoming more accessible, many times, responders have had nothing else to eat except Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) that were provided by FEMA.

## **Work Assignments Are Not Always Ideal**

Oftentimes, disaster assignments are made rather randomly. You may be asked to perform tasks that you find boring, difficult, dirty, or generally undesirable. Try to remember that everything you do is helpful to the community recovering from the event and that, in the end, all of what you do is part of a rewarding experience. Unless what you are being asked to do is unethical, illegal, or places you in undue danger, try to accept your assignment and give it your best effort.

## **Long work hours**

In the days and weeks immediately following a disaster, much work must get done as quickly as possible. Responders may be required to work from sunrise to sunset to meet immediate needs. Workers in shelters may have to work 24 hours a day. While FEMA usually tries to ensure one day off a week, there are no guarantees. **Traditionally A-DRT Teams will work 8-10 hour days with Sundays or Mondays off.**

## **Respect command and control systems**

Remember that emergency management is based on command structures that apply to official responders and to most volunteers assisting in response and recovery operations as well. It is essential that you understand and accept that you may be taking orders from those who might seem younger, less experienced, or even less knowledgeable than you.

## **Accept 'down time'**

Another common occurrence in disaster response is the “**hurry up and wait**” scenario. You’ve rushed to get your personal affairs in order, pack, and arrive on the scene, only to have to wait to be put to work. Remember that even the most organized disaster response can be unpredictable and chaotic, so there may be some down time as operations are established and responsibilities are delegated. Bring a book, or other form of entertainment, to keep yourself occupied during down time. Appreciate these relatively quiet moments while you can, for it won’t be long before you are working those long, hard hours you were anticipating.

## **Accurate Information May Be Scarce**

In disaster situations, access to information can be limited and communications may be difficult. In these conditions, rumors can start and spread quickly. It is up to the individual responder to acknowledge the damaging effects of rumors, and to prevent their spread by not passing inaccurate information along to others. Always feel comfortable talking to your supervisor, or to a mental health specialist, about any concerns you may have about information you have heard from other volunteers, responders, or impacted individuals.

## **Disaster Living Conditions Are Difficult**

As you might expect, the living conditions you will experience during your deployment will likely be more difficult than normal. Most people describe these living conditions as difficult, but are also able to handle them for the period of their assignment without too much trouble. The key is to understand what might happen ahead of time, and prepare for the potential hardships. Maintain a constant awareness of your personal needs.

## **What are different levels of response?**

- **Immediate:** This is the response of EMTs, firefighters, police, and Emergency management personnel.
- **Intermediate:** After the first few days, the first responders will give way to emergency management personnel who Volunteer Reception Centers and other bases started to bring in community volunteers. A-DRTS can come at this time but not usually.
- **Long term recovery:** After the community volunteers start to return to their normal lives, the long-term recovery begins with teams like A-DRTs. They come in to help with remaining activities.
- **Really long term:** Disasters take years of recovery. After the clean-up phase, recovery is placed back into the hands of the community to start the healing process.

## **When do disasters occur? When are teams deployed? How long is deployment?**

- **A traditional deployment is 30 days. The deployment can be as short as 2 weeks with permission from the FEMA coordinator.**
- Disasters generally occur during certain seasons and the national A-DRTs prep for this flow. Example tornados generally occur May – August, severe storms in the summer, and flooding in spring and fall.
- If a disaster is declared and a state has asked for help, FEMA will ask A-DRT to send teams, like us, to serve on the disaster. ADRTs usually receive multiple weeks' notice before going on deployment. However, it could be as little
- as a few days if the disaster occurs in our home state.
- A-DRTs traditionally are deployed for long term recovery. That means we wait until the immediate response has left. By the time we get there the community has gone back to normal.

## **Who goes on disaster for the MRT?**

- MRT first sends AmeriCorps members trained in A-DRT. We will also send staff if no other ADRT staff will be present as supervision.
- Other AmeriCorps members are eligible, but they must get permission from host sites and be trained in ADRT.

## **What training**

Members must be trained in the Volunteer Iowa A-DRT training. This is provided live multiple times a year and is recorded for those that cannot attend the live sessions.

1. **Mini A-DRT Training** -  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQAfHGUDyQs>
2. **Mucking Gutting Set Up** -  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ACBdXAH7HQ>
3. **Mucking and Gutting Full Training**-  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mX2SBa1Lf\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mX2SBa1Lf_4)

## **What to Pack**

You will be living in confined quarters, so you will want to minimize taking any items that you will definitely not need while on assignment. Try not to bring items of large value such as expensive cameras or other electronics. You may not be able to guard your belongings at all times and they may be vulnerable. Purchasing luggage locks is encouraged in order to lock bags to deter theft. Each deployment is different. You will be told where you are staying before deployment and that will change your packing slightly. Example hotel vs campground will affect whether you pack sleeping bag or not.

### **Check-list of Items to pack:**

- Duffle bag or suitcase with zipper locks
- Daypack – Backpack, CamelBak, etc...
- Personal Toiletries (soap/shampoo/toothbrush/Q-tips/nail clippers/razor and shave cream/menstrual supplies/deodorant/medication/etc)
- Towel
- Sunglasses
- Cell phone and charger (car and outlet adapters)
- Camera
- Water bottle
- Pillow
- Sleeping bag
- Camp pad (You will be sleeping on cots most likely but pads add comfort)
- Leisure time materials (Book/games/music/etc.)
- Ample clothing for 7 days to accommodate potential weather conditions including sets of work clothes, camp clothes, and sleeping clothes. (before deployment you will be told your potential station, but it is helpful to be prepared to move around)
  - Pants – Work and Office (3-5)

Shirts (7-10)

Underwear and socks (up to 10 pair)

Handkerchief, bandana, or baseball cap

Sleepwear (1 set)

Bathing Suit (for both recreation and communal showers)

Warm Jacket/Rain Gear/hat/gloves

Shower shoes

- AmeriCorps t-shirts (*Acquire extra t-shirts if necessary*)
- Identification, cash, debit and credit cards – for personal spending
- Extra Things to Consider:**
  - Watch/alarm clock
  - Headlamp/flashlight w/extra batteries
  - Swiss army knife/Leatherman
  - Camera
  - Ear Plugs (never know who snores)

All rules for use of PPE apply during deployment:

*(PPE will be supplied to you, but it is helpful to bring items you might already have and like using if applicable. Be certain that you acquire necessary personal items from your cache for your use)*

- Work boots
- pair leather gloves
- Ear protection
- Rubber boots

Group items such as laundry detergent, insect repellent, sunscreen, etc will be purchased and made available by the ADRT team. A couple computers will accompany the Team Leaders and may be available occasionally for personal use.

## **What do to do before leaving on disaster?**

- Fill prescriptions
- Pay any bills
- Tell landlord of extended leave so you are not “abandoning” the property
- Tell anyone else you need to.
- Consider a stop in mail at the post office
- Ensure pets have a care plan
- Clean out fridge of any food that would go bad (MILK!!!! )

## **What are the rules on deployment?**

- Listen to your supervisor.** This could be Habitat Staff, other ADRT staff, or someone assigned to your group.
- Disaster can be hard. **Respect each other's spaces.** Sometimes, people need time to cool down and decompress.
- You must **never go out alone.** Always have a buddy with you. Walks and exploring the area are allowed with a buddy.
- Regardless of the local laws **no drugs or alcohol** are allowed on deployment (this was implemented due to other members getting out of control).
- Members serve 6 days on, 1 day off. This day off is usually Monday. **Members generally do not get to pick the day off.**
- Lights and noise out by 10pm;** Deployments have long days and this respects your colleagues who would like to sleep. This time can be adjusted if agreed upon by the whole team.
- Members must stay in the housing provided.**
- Members must **take their turn with housing chores.** Example: rotating who cooks and cleans for the group going.
- Members have a set amount of money allocated for food each day. **Members must stay within that window** or will have to pay for any food outside of that. Traditionally members will buy groceries to keep costs lower. There are lots of rules to using company cards. Read those below.
- On days off members are allowed to explore and have fun. However, members are still representing Habitat, AmeriCorps, and FEMA 24/7. This means be respectful, don't get into trouble, and **don't get arrested.**

## How do we get food, meals, and other needs on deployment- NW Iowa?

Food will be provided to disaster crews through donated goods or other means. This means you will not need to purchase any food for 3 meals a day. However, if you want snacks or do not wish to eat provided food you will need to cover the cost.

## If for some reason food is not being provided and you are asked to purchase things like groceries on the grant, we must follow the state of Iowa reimbursement rules.

Things allowed to be purchased on disaster on a company card or personal for reimbursement:

- **Food** during meal time – groceries or restaurant (All parts of the meal must be purchased at the same place. Can't get a burger at McDs and then a shake at Dairy Queen)
  - o Groceries must be broken down on the receipt. Have staff help with this.
- **Lodging** – hotel, air bnb, etc.
- **Gas** for habitat or other disaster vehicles
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### **Extra rules or things to consider for reimbursement:**

- Absolutely no alcohol, drugs, or tobacco on the receipts

- No snacks (it's sad. I know.)- Get creative with a grocery run
- No food outside of mealtimes unless it is groceries
- All food during a meal must be purchased at the same location. No salad from Fresh Market and fries from Burger King.
- No fun things like admission to a museum
- Must be an itemized receipt - No itemized receipt, no reimbursement
- Lost receipt, no reimbursement
- Alcohol on receipt, no reimbursement
- MORE DETAILED RULES: <https://das.iowa.gov/state-accounting/travel-relocation/out-state-travel>

### **Member Spending while on Deployment- Company Card**

Member should avoid using their own money for deployment related expenses, gas, food equipment. The expense should go on a company card or paid by staff.

#### **When using the Habitat card:**

1. Have permission from staff to spend money
2. Purchase item making sure to follow proper spending rules. (example: no alcohol, no snacks, no admission to an amusement park)
  - a. If alcohol is going to be purchased, please ask for a separate check
3. Obtain an itemized receipt (details of the expense and items, date, location, total)
4. On top of receipt mark the person(s) who expense is for and what meal.
  - a. Example: Katie and Michael - Lunch 8/16/22, Next one Katie – Dinner 8/16/22.
5. Take a photo of receipt
6. Turn in receipt to Habitat Iowa staff
7. Members on Deployment must follow the spending limits set by the state travel allowance. <https://das.iowa.gov/state-accounting/travel-relocation/out-state-travel>

#### **Member Spending while on Deployment- Personal Money:**

1. Have permission from staff to spend money
2. Purchase item making sure to follow proper spending rules. (example no alcohol, no snacks, no admission to an amusement park)
  - a. If alcohol is going to be purchased please ask for a separate check
3. Obtain an itemized receipt (details of the expense and items, date, location, total)
4. On top of receipt mark the person(s) who expense is for and what meal.
  - a. Example: Katie and Michael - Lunch 8/16/22, Next one Katie – Dinner 8/16/22.
5. Take a photo of receipt



6. Complete an expense reimbursement form (excel)
7. Turn in receipt to Habitat Iowa staff and expense form

Members on Deployment must follow the spending limits set by the state travel allowance. <https://das.iowa.gov/state-accounting/travel-relocation/out-state-travel>

## **Driving Rules:**

### **VEHICLE USE AND SAFETY**

Members may drive Habitat Iowa vehicles only if authorized. Such authorization is given to members who:

- are 18 years of age;
- have a valid driver's license;
- Are on the Habitat Iowa insurance

### **SERVICE HOURS FOR TRAVEL TIME**

Habitat Iowa members can only accrue service hours for travel time if they are conducting Habitat Iowa business and one of the following:

1. They are traveling in a Habitat Iowa vehicle to or from a Habitat Iowa event.
2. They have obtained explicit permission and training from their sponsor to travel in a sponsor vehicle in order to fulfill the needs of the placement, and the sponsor explicitly assumes the member's travel liability.
3. They have obtained explicit permission from their sponsor to travel in a personal vehicle and the sponsor provides mileage reimbursement; and
4. They have obtained explicit permission from their appropriate Habitat Iowa staff to drive in a personal vehicle to attend a Habitat Iowa event.

Use of the vehicles by members must be approved in advance by the appropriate Habitat Iowa staff, unless it is a medical emergency. Members must understand that all liability falls on the member's automobile insurance when driving their personal vehicle.

### **RULES FOR DRIVING HABITAT IOWA VEHICLES**

- Drivers are to perform a thorough vehicle check before driving the vehicle.
- Seatbelts must be worn at all times.
- Non-authorized personnel are not to be transported in Habitat Iowa vehicles.
- There is to be no smoking in Habitat Iowa vehicles.
- Alcohol cannot be consumed, stored or transported in Habitat Iowa vehicles.
- Vehicles are to be driven by authorized personnel only.

- Personal belongings or equipment are not to be stored in vehicles.
- Suspended members may not use vehicles while suspended.
- Any accidents, damage to the vehicle or maintenance requests need to be reported to staff either before departing the office or, for items occurring during the day, upon return to the office. Drivers are prohibited from using cell phones while driving.
- Disasters may have additional requirements for driving company vehicles. Refer to host site rules and regulations.

### **SUSPENSION OR REVOCATION OF DRIVING PRIVILEGES**

The following violations will result in a member being placed on driving suspension or the total loss of his or her Habitat Iowa vehicle driving privileges:

- Repeated disregard of safe driving practices;
- Personal deficiencies that make driving unsafe;
- Abuse of vehicle and/or equipment;
- Unauthorized use of vehicles;
- Serious traffic violations; or
- Documented complaints by members, passengers or general public.

The Program Director may reinstate a member's driving privileges if the member meets requirements as outlined by the Director. The Program Director may, at his/her discretion, omit the disciplinary steps and suspend or revoke a member's driving privileges at any time.

### **UNSAFE DRIVING RESOLUTION PROCEDURE**

1. Communicate to the driver when safety is being compromised.
2. Communicate to your Leader or staff of instances when safety has been compromised. Your site supervisor or Iowa Habitat staff will issue a written warning and initiate Disciplinary Action as outlined on page 16 of this handbook.

### **TRANSPORTATION OF NON-HABITAT IOWA PASSENGERS**

At no time may AmeriCorps members transport non-Habitat Iowa passengers in Habitat Iowa vehicles, unless the passenger is a registered Habitat Iowa volunteer and travel in a Habitat Iowa vehicle is necessary for his/her participation in a Habitat Iowa service project. At no time may persons under the age of 18 ride in Habitat Iowa vans unless he or she is enrolled as a Habitat Iowa member.

### **GETTING PULLED OVER WHILE DRIVING A HABITAT VEHICLE:**

Should a staff, member, or volunteer be pulled over for a driving violation or other reason while driving a habitat vehicle, they need to follow these rules

- Listen to the police officer and show respect. You are representing Habitat for Humanity of Iowa and AmeriCorps

- Provide driver license, proof of insurance, and registration (located in the glove box)
- Any violation resulting in a citation or fee is the responsibility of the person driving.
- Depending on the violation, Habitat for Humanity of Iowa has the right to revoke any driving privilege. Serious violations may also lead to suspension or termination of position in severe cases. These will be determined on a case-by-case basis by Habitat Iowa program staff and the executive director.

### **GETTING PARKING TICKET WHILE RESPONSIBLE FOR HABITAT VEHICLE:**

Should a staff, member, or volunteer get a parking ticket while responsible for the Habitat will be responsible for any citation or fee.

Depending on the violation, Habitat for Humanity of Iowa has the right to revoke any driving privilege. Serious violations may also lead to suspension or termination of position in severe cases. These will be determined on a case-by-case basis by Habitat Iowa program staff and the executive director.

### **GETTING IN AN ACCIDENT WHILE DRIVING A HABITAT VEHICLE:**

**Should a staff, member, or volunteer get in accident with a Habitat Iowa vehicle, they need to follow these steps:**

Depending on the violation, Habitat for Humanity of Iowa has the right to revoke any driving privilege. Serious charges may also lead to suspension or termination of position in severe cases. These will be determined on a case-by-case basis by Habitat Iowa program staff and the executive director.

### **WITH ANOTHER PERSON, VEHICLE, or KNOWN PROPERTY INVOLVED:**

1. Move the vehicle to a safe location
2. Check yourself and passengers for injuries
3. Do not admit guilt
4. If there are any immediate medical injuries, call 911
5. If there are no immediate medical injuries: If 1 of the parties wishes to call police involvement, call a non-emergency police line (if can't be found, dial 911)
6. Exchange insurance information with other driver or property owner.
7. Call Habitat supervisor
8. Take as many pictures as possible of both the Habitat property and the other party property.
9. Immediately take notes of the situation from all Habitat parties involved (driver and passenger) - Note book and pen in glove box or on an email.
  - a. Gather name, phone number, address, email, insurance information of parties involved
  - b. Gather location information (where at, cross roads, nearest address)
10. If police involved, wait for to tell you when to leave
11. Complete this accident report and turn into the Financial Operations Manager.
12. If the vehicle is damaged and unable to drive, call the number on the insurance card for roadside assistance.

13. Call Habitat Staff to arrange a ride of everyone.

### **ACCIDENT WITH NO OTHER PERSON INVOLVED:**

1. Move the vehicle to a safe location
2. Check yourself and passengers for injuries
3. Do not admit guilt
4. If there are any immediate medical injuries, call 911
5. If there are no immediate medical injuries, call a non-emergency police line (if can't be found, dial 911)
6. Call Habitat supervisor
7. Take as many pictures as possible of both the Habitat property and the other party property.
8. Immediately take notes of the situation from all Habitat parties involved (driver and passenger) - Note book and pen in glove box or on an email.
  - a. Gather name, phone number, address, email, insurance information of parties involved
  - b. Gather location information (where at, cross roads, nearest address)
9. Complete this accident report and turn into the Financial Operations Manager.
10. If police involved, wait for them to allow you to leave
11. If the vehicle is damaged and unable to drive, call the number on the insurance card for roadside assistance.
12. Call habitat staff to arrange a ride of everyone.

### **EMERGENCY CONTACTS AS OF JULY 2022:**

- **Medical emergencies** call 9-1-1
- **Cedar Rapids Police Department**- nonemergency line- 319-28-5491
- **Les Gunderson work cell** 515-505-0210
- **Katie Sylvis – work cell** 515-344-3790
- **Kristen Holtan - office** 515-266-6886 Cell -
- **Cedar Valley Office number** – 319-294-1500

### **PREPPING VEHICLES BEFORE TRAVEL:**

Before traveling with the Habitat vehicles, staff, members, and/or volunteers should ensure each item of the checklist is ready before leaving.

1. Vehicles are gassed up
2. Tires are correct air pressure. (look on the tire side wall for proper PMI for each vehicle)
3. License plate and tags are properly placed
4. All packed tools should be secured to ensure no injuries of passengers of the vehicle
5. All mirrors are properly placed
6. Insurance card and registration are in glove box
7. Copies of accident report forms are in glove box
8. Notebook and pen for accidents are in glove box

### **PROCESSING VEHICLES AFTER TRAVEL:**

1. All vehicles are gassed up

2. Check tags on windshield to see if vehicle needs to be scheduled for an oil change or maintenance
3. Clean out all trash and unnecessary items
4. Put away tools in correct locations