



## The Safety Minute “Emergency Roles” v1.08

### Public Employees as Disaster Service Workers

California City, county or state agency or public district employees are, by law, Disaster Service Workers. The roles and responsibilities for Disaster Service are authorized by the California Code. {California Government Code 31 00- 31 02; Labor code 3211.92 (b)}. Due to popular demand, the Safety committee has arranged to have a local expert (and IVC adjunct instructor) present more on this topic at orientation (August 22, 2008). Additionally, a certified SEMS /NIMS trainer will be offering sessions throughout 08-09 to help everyone understand their roles and responsibilities (schedule is being compiled).



#### What does that mean?

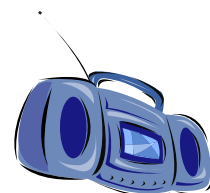
If a “Local Emergency” is declared during normal work hours, employees will be expected to remain at work to respond to the emergency needs of our community. If a “Local Emergency” is declared outside of normal work hours. Employees may be called back to work.

#### It also means.....

In order for us, as public employees to be effective Disaster Service Workers, it is important to be assured that our family members are safe and secure. The best way to have this assurance is to be prepared for a possible emergency by having personal/family emergency plans. It is vital that every employee take the necessary steps to prepare themselves and their families.

#### How will I know when a disaster has been declared?

The declaration will be announced on the Emergency Alert System (EAS) on radio and television. If the emergency is declared while you are at work, your supervisor will inform you. If you are at home and **do not** have a pre-assigned emergency duty, listen to the television or radio for EAS announcements for further instructions. If you have pre-assigned emergency duty at your Department Operations Center (DOC) or the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) report for work automatically. Do not wait for contact from your agency. *First take actions to protect you and your family and then report for your assigned duty.*



#### What are some assignments I might be given during an emergency?

In all probability, you may be assigned a task that you do not generally perform in a normal day’s work. For example, you may have more contact with the public as you provide childcare at a clinic or help register people at a service location. If you are fluent in another language, you may be asked to translate for non-English speaking individuals. Other typical tasks may involve logistical support. You may be asked to be a messenger at a designated site, or serve food to emergency staff, or answer phones. Of course, medical staffs, including physicians and nurses will likely be performing medical functions such as administering vaccinations and triage.



# CALIFORNIA CODES GOVERNMENT CODE

## SECTION 3100-3109

*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 in 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 subject to such disaster service activities as may be assigned to them by their superiors or by law.*

*All disaster service workers shall, before they enter upon the duties of their employment, take and subscribe to the oath or affirmation required by this chapter.*



### **I took an Oath?**

Before entering upon the duties of employment, public employees usually take and subscribe to the oath or affirmation set forth in the California Constitution (Section 3 Article XX) that declares them to be disaster service workers in time of need. Many IVC employees signed the oath or affirmation during the hiring process and the document is kept in their employee file. There will be copies of this Oath included in packets at orientation this Summer so that everyone has an opportunity to review and sign.



### **I have Questions!**

**Do I get paid? Can I be sued? What happens if I get hurt?**

Public employees acting as disaster service workers get paid only if they have taken and subscribed to the oath or affirmation.

Public employee disaster service working for non-profit organizations and government cannot be held liable for their actions during a disaster while acting within the scope of their responsibilities.

Claims sustained by public employees while performing disaster services shall be filled as worker compensation claims under the same authorities and guidelines as with all employees within the agency.

### **More Questions?**

View the short video “Your Role as a Disaster Service Worker: Public Employees Roll Up Their Sleeves” on our website at: <http://www.imperial.edu/index.php?pid=1590>

For more information about public employees as disaster services workers or for staff training contact any member of the Environmental Health and Safety Committee or contact:

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