



## County of Santa Clara

Policy Name: Employee Roles in a Disaster

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**Policy Type:** Administrative

**Category:** Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management

**Sub-Category:** Emergencies

**Policy Name:** Employee Roles in a Disaster

**Policy Owner:** County Executive

### **Policy Purpose**

In the event of a catastrophic incident, County employees may be expected to fulfill emergency action assignments. As Disaster Service Workers, County employees may be assigned to assist in any disaster service activity that promotes the protection of public health and safety and the preservation of lives and property.

### **Policy Summary**

Under California law, all public employees are designated as Disaster Service Workers. In the event of a disaster, the County is authorized by law to carry out activities that protect its citizens and resources. County employees may be called upon by their managers, supervisors, or other superiors to perform either their normal job duties or alternate Disaster Service Worker duties.

When a disaster strikes, the County Executive may declare a countywide emergency. County employees should first ensure the safety of their families, and then follow their department's reporting instructions. Employees may be instructed to stay home, report to perform their normal job duties, or report for a Disaster Service Activity.



For more information on employees' roles in a disaster, visit the Office of Emergency Management Disaster Service Workers website at [\[url\]/sites/oes/Employees%20Role%20In%20Disaster/Pages/employee-role.pdf](#).

### **Procedures**

#### *Reporting for Disaster Service*

- 1) All **employees** must ensure that the Employee Services Agency has each employee's current contact information on file, including, but not limited to, the employee's land line phone number, cellular phone number, and e-mail address.
- 2) In the event of a disaster, the **County Executive** declares a countywide emergency.
- 3) All **employees** report for assignment following their department's internal procedures, which may include calling in to a specific phone number or waiting to be contacted by the County's or department's emergency system or coordinators. In the event of a disaster during non-business hours, employees may be contacted at home via their land line, cellular phone, text messaging, or e-mail.
- 4) **Employees** may be directed to report to a specific location other than their normal work location.
- 5) **Supervisors, managers, and department heads** instruct each employee to stay home, report to perform their normal job duties, or report to perform a Disaster Service Activity.



### Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- 1) **"Disaster"** means any catastrophic event, including, but not limited to an earthquake, flood, pandemic, fire, or other disaster causing disruption of daily life or damage to the County infrastructure. A disaster may be natural, manmade, or a war-related event.
- 2) **"Disaster Service Activity"** means any activity necessary for the County to carry out its responsibilities to its people, property, and resources during an emergency. Examples of such duties include clerical support, damage assessment, delivery driving, food preparation, interpreting, providing security, and loading and moving equipment or supplies.
- 3) **"Disaster Service Worker"** means any County employee reporting for work following a Disaster, whether assigned normal job duties or disaster service duties.

### Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) **Do County employees get paid for serving as Disaster Service Workers?**

Disaster Service Workers get paid only if they have been activated by the County as Disaster Service Workers and assigned a duty to perform during the period of the countywide emergency. They are compensated based upon the salaries of their normal County positions and may be eligible to receive overtime depending on their classification and hours worked.

- 2) **Can a Disaster Service Worker be sued for actions that occur while performing Disaster Service Activities?**



County employees serving as Disaster Service Workers cannot be held liable for their actions during a disaster while acting within the scope of their responsibilities.

**3) What if a Disaster Service Worker is injured while performing the functions of his or her assigned duties?**

Claims sustained by Disaster Service Workers while performing Disaster Service Activities shall be filed as workers' compensation claims under the same authorities and guidelines as all employees within the County.

**Related Policies**

- Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan - <https://saecommon.sccgov.org/countypolicy/Operational-Area-Emergency-Operations-Plan.pdf>

**Related Forms and Information**

- Office of Emergency Management Disaster Service Workers website, available online at  
[url]  
[/sites/oes/Employees%20Role%20In%20Disaster/Disaster%20Service%20Worker%20Information/Pages/dsw-info.pdf](https://sites/oes/Employees%20Role%20In%20Disaster/Disaster%20Service%20Worker%20Information/Pages/dsw-info.pdf)

**History**

Date	Changes Made
03/16/2016	Links updated. (David Bruno)
01/21/2014	Policy Uploaded. (Kyle Larson)



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