

Loss prevention standards

# Volunteers and Willing Helpers

This Loss Prevention Standard provides guidance on protecting Volunteers and Willing Helpers.



# Volunteers and Willing Helpers



## Introduction

Voluntary workers are a common feature of UK industry and commerce. From helpers in charity shops to people who work on heritage railways, drivers taking people to hospitals and charity fundraisers.

The use of volunteers by a business and the presence of volunteers in the workplace is something that must be factored into health and safety planning and the management of risk. However, it should not pose any serious consequences for employers. If volunteers are treated in the same way as full-time employees, there should be little difficulty in meeting all moral and legal duties.



## Legal Requirements

Organisations that use volunteers have a duty of care for the health and safety of these helpers under Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and subsidiary regulations. Employers are required to take account of workplace hazards, to assess risks, supply information, instruction, and training and to manage risks in order to reduce the likelihood of accident or injury. In some cases, volunteers will be carrying out the same activities as paid employees so the same precautions and preventative measures will apply.

However, volunteers may present additional challenges for employers as a result of their inexperience or their lack of awareness of potential risks. If this is the case, then different or additional measures may be necessary and should be communicated.

## Risk Assessments

Carrying out risk assessments is a fundamental part of managing workplace risks. Wherever and whenever volunteers are present in the workplace, risk assessments should be carried out to assess the issues surrounding **volunteers' activities**.

It may be necessary to introduce more or different controls where volunteers are working. For example, greater supervision may be required, or it may be necessary to provide more detailed instructions on exactly how a task is to be carried out and include more around not deviating from the method described.

Where employees and volunteers work alongside each other, the measures that employers have introduced to protect their employees will be equally applicable to volunteers.

Risk assessments should be undertaken to consider whether the hazards will present a different or even greater risk for volunteers. **The volunteers' specific attributes, for example, lack of awareness of workplace hazards, a reduced perception of danger or other factors such as age may increase the overall risk to which they are exposed.** This situation can occur even when the volunteer is carrying out the same tasks as a full-time employee. It may also be necessary to provide other employees with guidance and training about the importance of taking greater care of volunteers.

## LOSS PREVENTION STANDARDS

In some cases, the risks faced by volunteers will be similar to those faced by employees, for example:

- Handling of heavy items
- Using machinery
- Risks posed by electricity or hazardous chemicals
- Working near or alongside vehicles
- Verbal abuse or even physical attack in retail premises
- Lone working

However, some volunteers, e.g. charity workers, may face more unusual risks, such as:

- **Violent attack whilst engaged in 'outreach work' with vulnerable people**
- Needlestick injuries whilst working with drug addicts
- Stress from working with disadvantaged persons, victims of attack or abuse, etc.

More information on risk assessments for volunteers can be found [here](#).

## Driving

Organisations will have normal operating procedures for the effective management of driving at work through policies, procedures, driver handbook, driver licence checks and training programmes. Volunteers should be included if they are used by the business for driving purposes.

In some instances, volunteers may be using employer owned vehicles during their volunteering work or they may use personally owned vehicles to assist in a variety of tasks such as collecting and delivering shopping/medication, patient transfers and delivering meals to vulnerable people.

Volunteers who have a company owned vehicle should check with their employer that they are insured for volunteering work. If volunteers are using their personally owned vehicle, they should check with their own insurer that suitable cover is in place.

Further guidance on checking driver licences can be found in the Aviva Loss Prevention Standard [Driver Licence Checking](#).

## Specialist Partner Solutions

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## Checklist

A generic Volunteers and Willing Helpers Checklist is presented in Appendix 1 which can be tailored to your own organisation.

## Sources and Useful Links

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations ([NCVO](#)) have a range of resources to support volunteers and voluntary organisations.

## Additional Information

To find out more, please visit [Aviva Risk Management Solutions](#) or speak to one of our advisors.

Email us at [riskadvice@aviva.com](mailto:riskadvice@aviva.com) or call 0345 366 6666\*

\*Calls may be recorded and/or monitored for our joint protection.

# Appendix 1 - Volunteers and Willing Helpers Checklist



|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Location                          |  |
| Date                              |  |
| Completed by (name and signature) |  |

|     | Health and Safety  | Y/N | Comments |
|-----|--|-----|----------|
| 1.  | Have you prepared risk assessments which consider the activities being undertaken by volunteers including vulnerable groups?   |     |          |
| 2.  | Have you updated all your health and safety policies and procedures to cover the role of the volunteer?  |     |          |
| 3.  | Have you implemented any procedures that are specific to volunteers – <b>if not, do ‘every day’ procedures cover them?</b>   |     |          |
| 4.  | Have volunteers been provided with adequate instruction, information, and training?<br><br>This might include; dealing with the public, using equipment, handling cash, driving for work, etc. |     |          |
| 5.  | Have volunteers been provided with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), workwear for the job/task as determined by risk assessments?   |     |          |
| 6.  | Are volunteers made aware of welfare/first aid and accident reporting arrangements?  |     |          |
| 7.  | Are there suitable arrangements in place for volunteers when working away or working alone?  |     |          |
| 8.  | Are there adequate supervision arrangements in place and do volunteers know who to speak to regarding questions/concerns?  |     |          |
| 9.  | Have Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks been carried out where relevant?  |     |          |
| 10. | Is staff I.D./authorisation required for volunteers to confirm their identity and legitimacy?  |     |          |

## LOSS PREVENTION STANDARDS

|     | Driving  | Y/N | Comments |
|-----|--|-----|----------|
| 11. | Have all the relevant driving checks been completed, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legally entitled to drive vehicle type (e.g. minibus)?</li> <li>• Training certificates?</li> <li>• Insurance documentation checked and verified for volunteer driving?</li> <li>• Vehicle roadworthiness?</li> </ul> |     |          |
| 12. | Are Driving at Work policies/procedures in place, up to date and communicated to volunteers?   |     |          |
| 13. | If a volunteer is required to drive, will they be driving their own vehicle, or a company owned vehicle?<br><br>Are appropriate controls in place?   |     |          |
| 14. | Do volunteers know who to report a road traffic collision to?  |     |          |

|     |                      |  |  |
|-----|----------------------|--|--|
| 15. | Additional comments: |  |  |
|-----|----------------------|--|--|

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