



City and County  
of San Francisco



# Disaster Service Worker Guide

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## Introduction

- This *Disaster Service Worker Guide* describes the role of City and County of San Francisco (City) employees as Disaster Service Workers during a proclaimed state of emergency in the City.
- As part of our efforts as City employees, we help make San Francisco a great place to live, work, and visit.
- One of our most important roles as public employees is to assist in protecting the lives and property of City residents during an emergency.

## All City Employees are DSWs

- Under State law and the City's Administrative Code, all City employees are Disaster Service Workers or "DSWs."
- This means that when the Mayor proclaims a citywide emergency, City employees may be required to serve as DSWs to support response and recovery efforts.

## What is a DSW

- "Disaster service worker" generally includes all public employees employed by a city, county, or public district, other than police and firefighters.
- When City employees are hired, they take and sign an oath to serve as a DSW in a time of need.
- DSWs carry out lawful activities as directed by their DSW Supervisor, to support the City's response to and recovery from a proclaimed emergency.
- ***When you receive a notice to report to an assignment as a DSW, you are required by law to report and serve.***

## When DSWs May Be Needed

- Types of emergencies that you may be asked to respond to include earthquakes, tsunamis, pandemics, extreme weather events, and other natural or human-caused emergencies that result in disaster conditions or in extreme peril to life, property, and resources in San Francisco.
- When such emergencies impact the City, the Department of Emergency Management may activate the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), a central location where City and County departments and partners coordinate the City's emergency response activities.
- If City leaders determine that DSWs are needed to support the City's response to an emergency, the San Francisco Department of Human Resources (DHR) will notify employees that they are being deployed.
- Most recently, San Francisco activated City employees to serve as DSWs during the 2020-



2021 COVID-19 pandemic. Over 4,000 City employees served as DSWs during the pandemic, helping to save lives and to speed the City's recovery.

## Notice of DSW Assignment

- When DSWs are needed to support the City's response to an emergency, DHR will notify employees who are being assigned as DSWs, typically through email.
- The DHR DSW Notice includes information about the DSW's assigned position, when and where to report, how long your assignment is expected to last, the name of your DSW Supervisor, and what to bring with you when reporting. Information about your DSW assignment is also shared with human resources representatives for the department you work for (your home department).
- To ensure the City can reach you after an emergency occurs, keep your emergency contact information up to date by visiting the [City Employee Portal](#) and selecting the "My Information" tab.
- If you have a serious health concern, childcare or eldercare responsibilities, or another issue that would prevent you from serving as a DSW, you may file a [DSW Restrictions Self Certification Form](#) with your home department's human resources representative. Your department will review the form and advise you on next steps.

## More About DSW Work Assignments

- As a DSW, you may be assigned to:
  - Report to a DSW Supervisor who is not your normal work supervisor.
  - Perform work that is different from your normal work duties.
  - Report to a location that is not your normal worksite.
  - Work a schedule that is different from your normal schedule.
- DHR will make every effort to assign you to DSW positions that call for the same types of skills you use every day or that require special skills you may possess.
- ***You will not be asked to perform work as a DSW that you do not know how to do or for which you have not received training.***
- Examples of the type of work you may be asked to do as a DSW include:
  - General duties such as clerical support, damage assessment, driving, food preparation, sorting, packing, or loading.
  - Specialized duties depending on special skills you possess such as language translation, public outreach and communication, data analysis, or driving a forklift or a commercial vehicle.
- Let your home department human resources representative know if you have special skills that you do not use in your regular position, such as language skills, a commercial



driver's license, or CPR training.

- During your DSW assignment, your home department should not ask you to perform your normal work duties.
- If you have questions about the responsibilities of being a DSW, contact your home department's human resources representative.

## What To Do After An Emergency Occurs

- Immediately after an emergency occurs, your first duty is to make sure you and your family are safe.
- Once you are sure you and your family are safe, follow the steps below:
  - **If you are at work:** Report immediately to your assigned emergency reporting location (e.g., department staging area or department operations center). If you have no such assignment, report to your department supervisor for instructions.
  - **If you are at home or away from work:**
    - Follow the procedures for reporting to your normal work location or designated emergency reporting location.
    - If you have not received any reporting instructions, contact your immediate supervisor for instructions.
    - If you are unable to contact your supervisor, listen to KCBS 740 AM or 106.9 FM on the radio to receive possible reporting instructions.
  - **If you receive a DSW Assignment Notice:** Follow the reporting instructions in the notice.
- When you report to work after an emergency or to a DSW assignment, bring your City DSW Identification (ID) Card with you.
  - You will need your DSW ID Card to check in at your DSW work site. You may also need your ID to access emergency transportation.
  - For more information on your DSW ID Card, see the [DSW ID Card FAQ](#).

## Management Systems Used to Respond to Emergencies

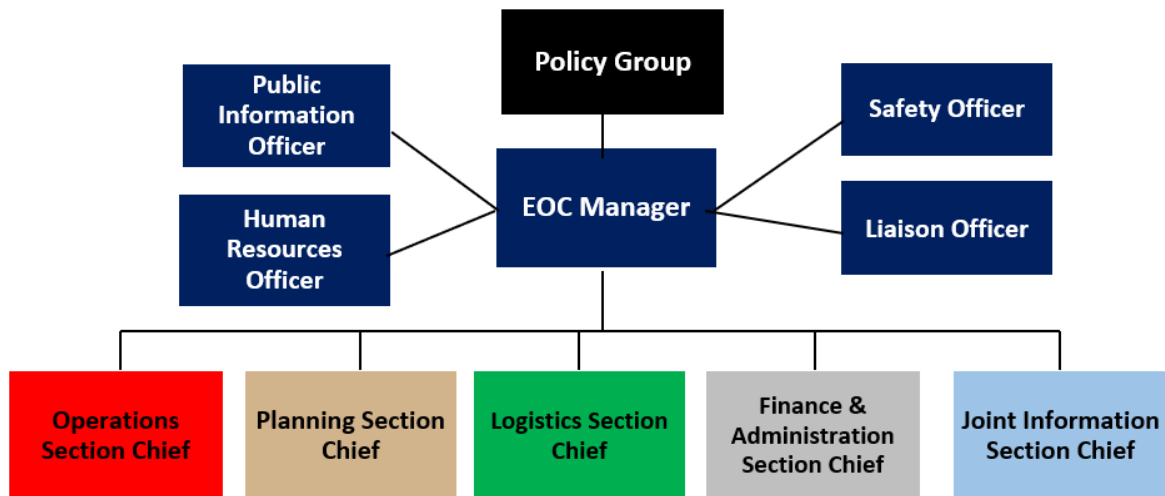
- You may be assigned to work at the City's EOC, at a Department Operations Center (DOC), or at a field location such as a staging area, food or medicine distribution site, shelter, or first aid station.
- No matter where you are assigned, the City will use the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the State's Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) to successfully manage and coordinate our response efforts.
- NIMS and SEMS include the Incident Command System (ICS), a standardized emergency management model that provides responders with an organizational structure and



common terminology. Using ICS allows different City departments and City partners to work together during response efforts.

- The City is required to use NIMS and SEMS to receive federal and state funding to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies.
- Under ICS, responders work within a “chain of command” structure. Chain of command is an orderly line of authority within the City’s incident management organization.
  - As part of chain of command, you will be assigned to report to a single DSW Supervisor.
  - You are expected to follow directions given to you by your DSW Supervisor.
  - You are also expected to keep your DSW Supervisor informed regarding the work you are doing and any issues that you encounter during your DSW assignment.
  - If you have questions about your DSW assignment, see your DSW Supervisor.
- DSWs assigned to work at the City’s EOC may work within an organizational structure like the one shown below.

#### Simple EOC Organization Chart



- The EOC organizational structure may change depending on the size and needs of the emergency.
- Your DSW Supervisor should share information with you about the organizational structure at the location where you are assigned.
- For more information about NIMS and ICS, see the Preparing to Serve as a DSW section below.

#### Required DSW Record Keeping

- While serving as a DSW, you will be expected to fill out ICS forms and records to help the



City keep track of the work done to respond to and recover from the emergency.

- These records may also be used to help the City obtain state and federal funding for emergency activities when appropriate.
- At a minimum, you will be expected to:
  - Check in when you arrive at your DSW work site for each shift and check out before you leave. You may be required to use ICS Form 211 to check in and out.
  - Keep an Activity Log in which you record the major tasks you perform during each shift. Normally, you will turn this form in to your DSW Supervisor before you leave each day. You may be required to use ICS Form 214 to report this information.
- These forms may be filled out and submitted electronically or in paper form, depending on the resources available during the emergency.
- DSWs must also note on their normal Employee Portal work timesheet the number of hours they spend working as a DSW. Your DSW Supervisor should explain what codes to use to accurately report DSW work hours.
- Ask your DSW Supervisor if you have questions about required record keeping.

## DSW Safety and Well-being

- Maintaining your safety and well-being while serving as a DSW is extremely important.
- If at any time during your DSW service, you feel unsafe, report this immediately to your DSW Supervisor. You may also report safety concerns to your home department human resources representatives.
- If you are injured while serving as a DSW, report your injury to your DSW Supervisor and to your home department human resources representative. They will ensure that you receive assistance.
- Stress prevention and management is a critical part of staying well while serving as a DSW. For information on how to manage stress, review the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [Tips for Disaster Responders: Preventing and Managing Stress](#).
- City employees also have access to free telephone counseling 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the City's [Employee Assistance Program](#).

## Preparing to Serve As a DSW

### Required Training

- City employees are required to take the following training to prepare to serve as a DSW:
  - Individual DSW Training
    - Review the [Disaster Service Worker Training Curriculum](#); and
    - Watch the [Disaster Service Worker Training Video](#)



- Online required classes:
  - Independent Study (IS) 100 - Introduction to the Incident Command System (ICS)  
Introduces ICS and describes the history, features, principles, and organizational structure of ICS. Explains the relationship between ICS and the National Incident Management System.
  - IS 700 - Introduction to National Incident Management System (NIMS)  
Provides an overview of NIMS. Identifies the purpose, principles, key components, and benefits of NIMS.
- For more information on how to access the DSW training listed above, visit the City's DSW Training page.
- City employees should take the above required training within six months of being hired and should retake the training every two years.

### Personal Preparedness

- You cannot be effective as a DSW if you are worried about your safety or the safety of your family or home.
- Talk with your loved ones about the fact that you may be assigned to serve as a DSW after an emergency occurs.
- Take the following steps to prepare yourself and your family for emergencies:
  - Learn about potential hazards where you live or work.
  - Sign up for emergency alerts from the city or county where you live.
  - Make a family emergency plan. Include your pets in your family planning.
  - Put together an emergency kit for home, work, and your vehicle.
  - Take free personal preparedness training from your local Community Emergency Response Team.
  - Make plans for childcare or elder care if applicable.
    - The City may provide childcare assistance to DSWs during their deployment.
    - For questions about what assistance is available, contact your home department human resources representative.
- Additional Preparedness Resources:
  - Ready.gov: Plan Ahead for Disasters.
  - SF 72, San Francisco's Hub for Emergency Preparedness.
  - San Francisco Fire Department Neighborhood Emergency Response Team (NERT) Training – NERT training is free to anyone who lives or works in San Francisco.