



EMA Volunteers Informational Guide

Porter County Emergency Management Agency



A large portion of the Porter County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) is comprised of volunteers who assist the agency in various roles. The volunteers assist with such things as responding to emergency callouts, equipment maintenance, public outreach, damage assessment and activation of the County's Emergency Operations Center.

When emergency services organizations (police, fire, EMS, etc.) are called to emergency situations and need additional resources, EMA is often contacted to provide those resources. This may encompass the numerous assets EMA has in its arsenal. When those assets are dispatched, our volunteers respond with command staff personnel in order to meet that need. Once at the scene, the assets are set up and operated by our personnel. This means the volunteers must be capable of operating all the assets EMA has. This includes, but is not limited to a mobile command truck, generators, light towers, rescue boats, ATV vehicles, a climate controlled rehabilitation trailer and various other logistical equipment. The operation of all these combined assets requires a great deal of training and time to stay proficient.



The vast amount of equipment EMA has must be kept in good working order. While some equipment is used on a regular basis, other equipment may be needed less frequently. However, it is critical that all the equipment operates correctly when called upon. This means the equipment must be inspected, cycled regularly and repaired to ensure it is ready to go. At EMA, we like to say "No one calls us when they are having a good day". Meaning, when the equipment is called upon, the situation is critical and must work, every time. The volunteers are a critical part of making this happen. They participate in detailed monthly inspections and the cycling of all the assets to ensure we are providing a consistent, reliable product.



EMA Volunteers Informational Guide

Porter County Emergency Management Agency



Volunteers participate in several outreach activities. These range from touch-a-truck events to teaching citizens about how to be prepared for emergencies. It's important for the public to know what we do on a daily basis. Attending events gives us the opportunity to speak with the public and answer questions. Additionally, preparing citizens for emergencies is critical. In the event of a large-scale disaster, emergency crews may be taxed and unable to respond to everyone's needs immediately. EMA teaches citizens how they can help themselves and their neighbors, at least initially, until emergency crews can arrive. We address topics such as where to shelter in your home, what to have in your shelter area, what to do in the event of a tornado, what to do (and not to do) during a flood, etc. Our volunteers are integral in communicating these types of messages.



If a disaster, such as a tornado or a flood, does occur. Damage to county property as well as citizens' homes must be evaluated. This helps to establish whether certain thresholds have been reached in order to apply for potential FEMA assistance. During large-scale events, our volunteers assist with these types of assessments. These range from examining the physical evidence at hand, gathering photo documentation and filling out applicable reports. EMA reports are also used by the National Weather Service in order to determine the severity of certain storms. This would not be possible without the assistance of our volunteers. During critical situations, such as storms or other large-scale incidents, EMA may activate its Emergency Operations Center. This center does not act as a dispatch resource. That's the 911 Center's responsibility. The goal of the Operations Center is to gather information and coordinate resources. When activated, our Operations Center is often staffed by our volunteers. During storms, for example, they are gathering information so we get an understanding of the status of the County. Information such as power outages occurring and the number of people affected, roads that may be closed, the status of snow plows and road crews, the status of the local hospitals, the need for shelters to be opened, school closings, etc. This helps to paint a picture of resources that can be deployed in order to assist with the situation. Once again, our volunteers are instrumental in making this possible.





EMA Volunteers Informational Guide

Porter County Emergency Management Agency



Porter County EMA has a goal of maintaining a roster of 20 volunteers on staff. As stated, our volunteers require a great deal of training and donate a great deal of time to stay proficient at what they do. They receive no pay for their efforts. They are the “behind the scenes” contributors to emergency operations. While most people have no idea about their massive contributions, the significance of their roles is not diminished. The Porter County Emergency Management Agency is extremely proud of these unsung heroes and what they do to assist the citizen of Porter County.

If you are interested in becoming a Porter County Emergency Management Agency Volunteer, contact the Director of Emergency Management at the following email address:
Lance.Bella@PorterCo.org

