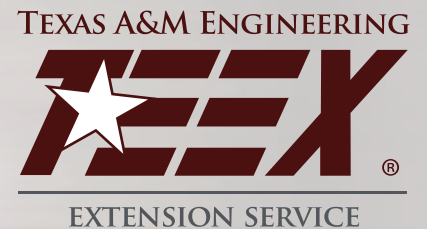


# DISASTER CITY® VOLUNTEER PROGRAM



## “WHO VOLUNTEERS?”

Our volunteers come from all walks of life, all ages, and many different communities. They include citizens who wish to help Texas A&M Task Force 1, including:

- Animal lovers and people interested in canine search teams
- Student groups from A&M, Blinn, and Sam Houston
- Volunteers interested in emergency preparedness
- Community groups such as Boy Scouts, and CERT teams
- Local churches
- Anyone who would like to see what happens in Disaster City®

The Disaster City® Volunteer Program adds the critical element of reality that prepares responders for any future natural disaster or terrorist attack. Without the program, TX-TF1 and students training in Disaster City® would not be able to experience that critical reality of interfacing with live victims with realistic injuries. Without the volunteer program, the responders in Disaster City® would have to train in quiet and empty buildings, working hard to reach a simulated mannequin that does not react or respond to calls for help. The level of realism that live victims provide during training and exercises is one reason why Disaster City® is considered the best urban search and rescue training facility in the world. Our volunteers have helped to prepare responders from Texas, the nation, and the world.

## “WHAT CAN I DO?”

Some of the disaster scenes that volunteers will help to simulate and participate in:

- A massive train wreck involving our 7-car passenger train derailment
- Collapse of a government office building and parking garage
- Victim of a suicide bomber
- Trapped beneath a city block of wooden buildings destroyed by a tornado
- Collapse of an office complex
- Victim of a chemical accident or chemical attack
- Collapse of a strip mall building
- Contaminated by a biological or dirty bomb
- Trapped in a collapsed house
- Stranded at the bottom of a river bank

Some of the “injuries” you may be assigned to simulate during the exercise:

- Broken legs and arms
- Puncture wounds
- Trapped legs and arms
- Blast injuries
- Problems breathing
- Broken neck or back
- Diabetic problems
- Coma or shock
- Heat-related injuries
- Facial and cranial injuries
- Scrapes and bruises
- Crush injuries

The volunteer in the red helmet is “impaled” on the metal bar, and the volunteer in the yellow helmet has two broken legs.

## “WHAT ABOUT CANINE TEAMS?”

One area that has seen tremendous training improvements is our Disaster Canine Search Program. Before the Disaster City® Volunteer Program, the canine handlers would have to take turns acting as victims in order for the canine teams to practice searching. The addition of volunteers has now freed the canine team to continue training instead of “hiding in the rubble.” The volunteers have become an integral part of the training and advancement of our canine search teams. The benefits these volunteers provide are:

- More training repetitions each training day
- Complex search scenarios with multiple victims
- New, unknown victims
- Repeat volunteers become well-trained assistants

As volunteers continue to come out and assist with the canine search training, they are assigned greater responsibilities each visit and can assist with providing more advanced training problems for the canine teams. Disaster City® volunteers are an important and necessary part of the Disaster Canine Search Program for the state of Texas.

## “DO I NEED TO HAVE ACTING EXPERIENCE?”

No, but we love to have aspiring stars, and all volunteers are encouraged to act the part – yell for help, scream, cry in agony, plead to be rescued first, ask for water and food, beg for pain medication. If you are more interested in letting someone else act like the hysterical family member, we have other emotional conditions for you to portray as well. All of these scenarios are designed to simulate the situations that responders will face during an actual incident, and we rely on the volunteer to help induce urgency and stress to the training and exercises. We will give you the scenario and information as well as some “coaching” so you’ll know what to say and how to act when the rescuers find you and start to deal with your injuries or problem.



## “WHEN CAN I VOLUNTEER?”

Training and exercises happen in Disaster City® year-round. Sign up for email announcements by clicking [here](#), or click the button at the top of this page. Announcements are sent about once a month as the opportunities arise. Last year, there were more than 25 different opportunities to come out and volunteer in Disaster City®.

Make sure you have signed up before you show up in Disaster City® to volunteer. All volunteers will receive a confirmation email indicating that they are signed up to volunteer. If you are part of a student organization and would like to schedule a group to come out and volunteer together, email [rescue@teex.tamu.edu](mailto:rescue@teex.tamu.edu) for more information, or call 979.458.5636.

## “WHERE IS DISASTER CITY®?”

Disaster City® is located next to the College Station Easterwood Airport, and is within 2 miles of the George Bush Presidential Library. [Click here for a map to Disaster City®.](#)

## “IS THERE A VIDEO ABOUT DISASTER CITY® THAT I COULD WATCH?”

Yes! Visit our [YouTube Channel](#)

## “WHY SHOULD I VOLUNTEER?”

Disaster City® Volunteers have provided hundreds of hours of support for Texas A&M Task Force 1 and FEMA training courses. In 2007, the Disaster City® Volunteer Program members donated 4,614 hours to TX-TF1, FEMA, and the US&R Training Program. Every hour spent volunteering in Disaster City® directly helps to prepare TX-TF1, other Texas teams, and national teams for the next natural disaster or terrorist attack.

## “IS IT SAFE?”

Absolutely. Keep in mind that you will be working in and around broken concrete, collapsed structures, train wrecks and damaged buildings, but everything is engineered to look dangerous. During your time in Disaster City®, you will be crawling on top of rubble, climbing into collapsed buildings, and getting a little dusty. Make sure you leave your cell phone in the car, and leave your car keys in the training classroom. Do not take your cell phone or car keys into Disaster City® – you may lose them in a rubble pile and never see them again. All volunteers are tracked on a volunteer log so that we know the location of all volunteers at all times. Make sure you always check in with the volunteer coordinator and let them know when you are departing for the day.



All volunteers are issued safety equipment when they arrive to volunteer in Disaster City®. For your own safety and protection, volunteers are always required to wear the following:

- Long-sleeve shirt or heavy T-shirt. No short sleeves or exposed lower arms.
- Jeans or long pants (camouflage BDU pants or hunting pants work well). No shorts.
- Closed-toe and sturdy shoes. Combat boots or hiking boots are best; tennis shoes are acceptable, but preferred only as a last resort. No sandals or exposed toes.

Each time you come out to volunteer, you will be issued:

- Protective hard hat
- Eye protection, must be ANSI Z-87 rated (sorry, sunglasses don't count)
- Leather work gloves
- Kneepads – (only climbing around the rubble)
- N-95 dust mask – as required
- Hearing protection – as required

The most important thing: HAVE FUN and ASK QUESTIONS!!



## “HOW CAN I SIGN UP?”

Contact [rescue@teex.tamu.edu](mailto:rescue@teex.tamu.edu) to sign up on the listserv, or call 979.458.5636 for more information.

## “WILL THERE BE ANY FOOD DURING MY SHIFT?”

No, unfortunately there is no funding to support feeding our volunteers. The program operates entirely on the efforts of our incredible unpaid volunteers. During the colder months, we'll have coffee and hot chocolate for the volunteers and we always have cold bottled water available during the summer months. If you know of a restaurant or business that would be interested in donating food/beverages to the Disaster City® Volunteer Program, please contact [rescue@teex.tamu.edu](mailto:rescue@teex.tamu.edu) or 979.458.5636 to discuss how we can recognize your business.

## STORIES ABOUT EVENTS IN DISASTER CITY®:

Quoted from a March 4, 2007, article in the Bryan-College Station Eagle:

Scenarios at Disaster City® on Saturday were guided by a detailed script that ensured certain objectives were accomplished, and the scenes were supported by team leaders' interjections and volunteers acting as victims. Officials said 125 volunteers rotated through Disaster City® on Saturday. Most were Texas A&M students.

Abby Niles, a sophomore bilingual education major at Texas A&M, said she was fascinated by the rescue process. Niles, a member of the Texas Aggies Making Changes service organization, volunteered her Saturday to play an accident victim.

Volunteers wear tags that list their symptoms and injuries. Niles' tag said she had a foreign object penetrating her chest and she was panicky.

“This whole thing is really cool. It's very strange to see how they actually do all this. There's a lot more going on than I ever imagined there would be,” Niles said as she waited for her rescuers in the second story of the “collapsed” building.

