

**DISASTER EMERGENCY MEDICAL PERSONNEL SYSTEM (DEMPS) PROGRAM  
AND DATABASE**

**1. REASON FOR ISSUE.** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook provides procedures for the implementation of the Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System (DEMPS) program at VHA facilities.

**2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES.** This revised VHA Handbook contains updated processes for recruiting and deploying active employees and retirees. It:

a. Identifies expanded responsibilities of staff at the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) and medical centers.

b. Initiates the process for recruiting and using retired VHA employees.

**3. RELATED ISSUES.** VHA Directive 0320.

**4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE.** The Emergency Management Strategic Health Care Group (EMSHG) (13C) is responsible for the contents of this VHA Handbook. Questions may be referred to EMSHG at 304-264-4800.

**5. RESCISSION.** VHA Handbook 0320.3, dated July 21, 2000, is rescinded.

**6. RECERTIFICATION.** This VHA Handbook is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of March 2013.

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DISTRIBUTION: CO: E-mailed 3/27/2008  
FLD: VISN, MA, DO, OC, OCRO, and 200 – E-mail 3/27/2008

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## **DISASTER EMERGENCY MEDICAL PERSONNEL SYSTEM (DEMPS) PROGRAM AND DATABASE**

### **1. PURPOSE**

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook describes the processes and procedures for implementation, management, and oversight of the VHA Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System (DEMPS).

### **2. BACKGROUND**

In domestic disasters and emergencies, especially those involving significant numbers of casualties or individuals requiring medical services, there exists a need for both rapid identification and deployment of personnel who possess the required skills and qualifications for response. Experience has demonstrated that having a pre-identified core group of skilled and trained Federal volunteers to meet these requirements is critical for both effective response and maintaining VHA's ability to continue to meet its mission requirements. Past experience has also indicated that personnel may be deployed to function in a variety of health care delivery venues, i.e., hospitals, out-patient clinics, mobile medical outreach operations, special needs shelters, emergency operations centers, etc. Tasks for which volunteers could be used in disaster response and recovery activities include, but are not limited to:

- a. Augmentation of health care delivery and related services with physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, mental health counselors, and allied health personnel. Non-clinical staff can include transportation, construction, safety, industrial hygiene and engineering, and other identified health care support professionals and ancillary personnel.
- b. Provision of mental health personnel, chaplains, and other personnel for stress management and counseling services.
- c. Provision of personnel to aid in victim identification and forensic investigations.
- d. Provision of non-clinical personnel such as firefighters, engineers, contract specialists, and maintenance workers.
- e. Augmentation of emergency management staff.
- f. Administrative and clinical succession planning and knowledge transfer or training.

### **3. DESCRIPTION**

a. DEMPS is designed to provide a system whereby active or retired VHA personnel can register, in advance, for deployment in support of internal emergencies affecting the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), or external support as might be requested under various Federal plans and authorities such as the National Response Framework (NRF). The DEMPS Program and its database will be used by VHA Central Office, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN)

Directors, and medical facility Directors as a resource to match personnel qualifications to emergency response requirements and needs.

b. The Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG) is assigned program responsibility for DEMPS. Program oversight and coordination are accomplished through the VHA Emergency Management Coordination Group (EMCG). Program implementation and personnel management are accomplished through the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management. At the VHA Central Office level, the DEMPS Program Manager is located within the EMSHG Headquarters (Mailing Address: EMSHG (13C), Bldg. 203B, VA Medical Center, 510 Butler Avenue, Martinsburg, WV 25405). A DEMPS Point of Contact (POC) is located at each VISN; and a primary, and at least one secondary, DEMPS Coordinator is located at each VA medical facility.

c. DEMPS is the primary mechanism by which requests for deployment of VHA personnel (current and retired) are handled at the VHA Central Office level for both internal and external requests. DEMPS consists of two components:

(1) **Full-time VA Employees.** Full-time employees are first a resource of the medical facility to which they are assigned, then the respective VISN, and finally VHA Central Office. Accordingly, DEMPS personnel must be “released” by their respective VA facility Directors and VISN Directors before being utilized to fill requirements to support other VISNs or external requests made to VA.

(2) **Retired Employees.** Retired employees who, as DEMPS volunteers, comprise the VA Emergency Reserve Corps (ERC).

(a) While ERC DEMPS members do not have to be “released” by the applicable VA medical center, they must be “cleared” for deployment to ensure that they meet the physical and professional qualifications to meet the deployment tasking.

(b) ERC members, who have volunteered as part of DEMPS, are contacted through the local medical facility where they have registered, when the need exists to temporarily fill critical vacancies or to deploy ERC members as necessary. ERC members may also be utilized to function as mentors, preceptors and coaches, or for the purpose of administrative or clinical succession planning and knowledge transfer or training.

*NOTE: Procedures and processes for request and deployment of VHA personnel, to include management and oversight at the deployed location, are provided in greater detail in VHA Directive 0320.*

#### **4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH FOR OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT**

The Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management (10N) is responsible for:

- a. Authorizing the utilization, and requesting deployment, of VHA personnel to support both internal and external disasters and emergencies.
- b. Establishing emergency management policy in coordination with the Emergency Management Coordination Group (EMCG), as it applies to personnel utilization and deployment in response to both internal and external emergencies.
- c. Establishing emergency management priorities regarding utilization of VHA personnel in an emergency.
- d. Identifying staff to serve as subject matter experts for participation in support of the DEMPS emergency management activities to include sub-committees of the EMCG.
- e. Ensuring that the health and safety needs of DEMPS personnel are provided or arranged for when deployed.

## **5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COORDINATION GROUP (EMCG)**

EMCG and its membership are responsible for:

- a. Providing professional and technical expertise and advice in support of the DEMPS program and program manager. This includes ensuring representative participation in the applicable sub-committees of the EMCG and DEMPS committees and task groups as may be established.
- b. As part of the overall VHA Comprehensive Emergency Management Program (CEMP), providing program oversight and policy coordination.

## **6. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHIEF CONSULTANT, EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIC HEALTHCARE GROUP**

The Chief Consultant, Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group is responsible for:

- a. Ensuring that resource requirements for the DEMPS program are identified as part of the emergency management budget and that allocated resources are effectively managed to ensure maximum program effectiveness.
- b. Appointing the VHA DEMPS Program Manager and alternate.
- c. Providing quarterly DEMPS reports to VHA Central Office, as well as ad hoc reports as requested.
- d. Ensuring that the DEMPS database website is maintained and responsive to the needs and requirements of the program to include facilitating rapid identification of personnel by VISNs and VA medical facilities to meet deployment requirements.

- e. Providing logistical, travel, and other appropriate situation information to ensure that deployed DEMPS volunteers are prepared and properly briefed prior to deployment.
- f. Assisting with the logistics, health and safety needs of DEMPS personnel prior to and during deployment.

## **7. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE VHA DEMPS PROGRAM MANAGER (DPM)**

The VHA DPM is responsible for:

- a. Managing the overall program, including the development and implementation of processes and procedures to ensure program effectiveness. This includes the development of educational materials, conferences and training sessions to facilitate and otherwise promote the program. The DEMPS Program Manager is responsible for the VHA-wide DEMPS Training Program.
- b. Ensuring the currency and accuracy of the national DEMPS database.
- c. Assisting VISN and facility staff responsible for DEMPS policies, guidance and program support.
- d. Working with DEMPS Coordinators to develop a robust promotion, recruitment and recognition program.
- e. Developing DEMPS training and exercise program guidance.
- f. Ensuring that plans to utilize DEMPS to mobilize and deploy personnel are included in the overall VHA Emergency Operations Plan and exercised on at least an annual basis.
- g. Providing DEMPS consultation and assistance to the VHA Incident Management Team staffing the VHA Joint Operations Center (JOC).
- h. Providing quarterly program reports on the status of the program to the Chief Consultant, EMSG.
- i. Providing feedback to VISNs, facility DEMPS Coordinators and supervisors concerning volunteer experiences during deployment.

## **8. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE VETERANS INTEGRATED SERVICE NETWORK (VISN) DIRECTOR**

Each VISN Director is responsible for:

- a. Assigning a VISN staff member and alternate to support and provide assistance to the facility DEMPS Coordinators and manage the overall VISN DEMPS Program.

- b. Ensuring a 24 hours a day, 365 days a year emergency point of contact (POC) is maintained for response to VHA Central Office requests for volunteers for deployment.
- c. Supporting DEMPS by ensuring that volunteer recruitment and deployment processes are in place.
- d. Coordinating facility efforts to identify staff that will support DEMPS requirements.
- e. Ensuring that VISN medical facilities are in compliance with DEMPS requirements to include training, simulation exercise and program maintenance.
- f. Receiving and reviewing quarterly reports submitted by DEMPS Coordinator.
- g. Submitting quarterly VISN reports to the VHA DEMPS Program Manager.

## 9. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FACILITY DIRECTOR

Each facility Director is responsible for:

- a. Designating a primary and secondary DEMPS Coordinator.
- b. Ensuring that duties and responsibilities of the DEMPS Coordinator positions are included in the individual's performance plan.
- c. Ensuring that primary and secondary DEMPS coordinators have access to the DEMPS database.
- d. Ensuring the individual assigned responsibility for DEMPS at the VISN is provided with the names, e-mail addresses and phone numbers of the assigned coordinators.
- e. Ensuring that the medical facility Human Resources office provides all retiring personnel with DEMPS program information, including the DEMPS Coordinator's contact information.
- f. Ensuring that appropriate facility support personnel are available to assist identified volunteers at the time of deployment, i.e. travel clerk, payroll clerk, employee health, etc.
- g. Providing local guidance for the facility DEMPS Program, to include training, exercise, program maintenance and deployment.
- h. Ensuring that DEMPS personnel meet all the requirements, including physical standards, for deployment.
- i. Ensuring a robust recruitment program is developed that includes distribution of DEMPS promotional materials, training, and simulation exercises. *NOTE: All VHA personnel are eligible and encouraged to volunteer for DEMPS; not just those involved in direct medical care or ancillary services.*

- j. Approving volunteers for deployment and ensuring names and other applicable information are input to the DEMPS database.
- k. Ensuring that the facility Employee Health or Occupational Health Office reviews the DEMPS registration or recent physical examination, including an immunization update, as required based on the anticipated conditions of the deployment environment.
- l. Providing a quarterly DEMPS status report to the VISN Directors.
- m. Ensuring local procedures are followed for deployment support and return of volunteers including brief psychological and physical assessment and support.
- n. Ensuring a mechanism for contacting volunteers post deployment regarding their experiences which can be consolidated into an "After Action Report."
- o. Incorporating the local DEMPS program into facility level exercises, at least annually.
- p. Providing all essential information obtained from the VHA JOC, such as pertinent contact information, reporting instructions, directions to volunteers, and necessary equipment, supplies, and proper clothing.
- q. Facilitating travel and payroll coordination to ensure the volunteer is deployed expeditiously within 24 hours of notification.

## **10. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FACILITY DEMPS COORDINATOR**

The facility DEMPS Coordinator is responsible for:

- a. Providing quarterly program reports to the Facility Director and VISN DEMPS POC.
- b. Participation in DEMPS training, updates, meetings and conference calls conducted by VHA Central Office, EMSHG, and the VISNs, as applicable.
- c. Organizing local program support for volunteers (educational materials, deployment, and travel readiness).
- d. Providing information about DEMPS at various medical facility programs, such as new employee orientation, staff meetings, health fairs, and the Director's Town Meetings.
- e. Coordinating education opportunities to promote DEMPS within the facility.
- f. Quarterly review (April 1, July 1, October 1, and January 1) to ensure that volunteer data is current.
- g. Conducting an annual review to ensure that the local DEMPS program plan is current.

## **11. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EMSHG AREA EMERGENCY MANAGER (AEM)**

The EMSHG AEM, or designee (who may be the Management Assistant (MA)), is responsible for:

- a. Supporting the VISN DEMPS Program by assisting the DEMPS Coordinators with educational briefings or other information to implement, exercise, and maintain VISN and local programs.
- b. Assisting VISN POCs and VA medical facility DEMPS Coordinators with deployment of volunteers.
- c. Supporting VA facilities and VISNs following volunteer deployment and return.

## **12. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FACILITY HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

The facility Human Resource Management is responsible for:

- a. Providing information to all retiring personnel about the VHA ERC during the retirement counseling phase and at time of separation and, in coordination with the facility DEMPS, initiating a 3-month and 1-year follow-up program to ascertain interest in the ERC.
- b. Referring retiring VHA personnel to the facility DEMPS Coordinator for additional information about the DEMPS Program.
- c. Processing retired personnel who are approved for deployment or backfill as re-employed annuitants in accordance with applicable policies and regulations.
- d. Notifying the DEMPS Coordinator when DEMPS volunteers separate from the facility.

## **13. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FACILITY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS VOLUNTARY SERVICE (VAVS)**

The facility VAVS is responsible for:

- a. Ensuring that volunteers for the ERC DEMPS program are officially enrolled in Voluntary Service.
- b. Ensuring that ERC volunteers are aware of VHA mandatory training.
- c. Maintaining all ERC training records.
- d. Ensuring communication with DEMPS Coordinators on all ERC-related issues.

## 14. DATABASE MANAGEMENT

Access to the DEMPS database is based on the individual's current role in DEMPS and requirements for access (volunteer, volunteer's supervisor, DEMPS Coordinator(s), VISN DEMPS POC, etc.). At each facility, a primary and secondary DEMPS Coordinator inputs registration information for each approved DEMPS applicant and maintains this secure database to ensure currency of volunteer data throughout the year. DEMPS registration can be accessed by going to <http://vaww1.va.gov/emshg> and clicking on the DEMPS link. **NOTE: DEMPS Coordinators are given access to volunteer data after contacting the DEMPS Program Manager at 304-264-4800.**

a. **DEMPS Volunteer.** The DEMPS volunteer is responsible for application submission and updating information.

(1) Employees may request registration as a DEMPS volunteer in one of two ways, either "on line" or by use of a paper form.

(2) The DEMPS Volunteer can access the database through the DEMPS database Registration web page. On this page the volunteer can complete the web-based DEMPS application. The volunteer is only able to complete the application, review the application, print the application, and submit the application electronically to the volunteer's supervisor for approval or disapproval.

(3) If the DEMPS volunteer does not have access to the DEMPS database, the volunteer needs to contact the DEMPS Coordinator and obtain a paper DEMPS Registration Form (DRF), complete the form, and submit to the supervisor for recommended approval or disapproval.

b. **DEMPS Volunteers' Supervisor.** The DEMPS volunteer's supervisor is responsible for processing the application and reviewing the information.

(1) If the employee has entered the application directly into the DEMPS database the volunteers' supervisor, whose DEMPS database access is password restricted, receives an email informing the supervisor that a member of the supervisor's unit has applied to DEMPS.

(2) The supervisor, who must register in the DEMPS database as a supervisor by providing a username and password, must recommend approval or disapproval of the volunteer's application. A copy of the request, with the supervisor's recommendation, is printed and forwarded to the medical facility Director for final action. **NOTE: For processing a paper DRF see subparagraph 14b(3).** If the medical facility Director approves the volunteer's application, the Director sends an e-mail to the facility DEMPS Coordinator, with a "cc" to the member's supervisor stating that the individual has been approved as an active DEMPS member.

(3) If the supervisor receives a paper version of the DEMPS Registration Form from a volunteer, the supervisor must indicate on the form the supervisor's recommendation for approval or disapproval and then forward it to the medical facility Director. If approved, the DRF is sent to the DEMPS Coordinator as a source document for entry of the individual's

information into the DEMPS database with a copy to the supervisor. The Director also sends an e-mail to the facility DEMPS Coordinator, with a "cc" to the member's supervisor stating that the individual has been approved as an active DEMPS member.

(4) If the medical facility Director does not approve a request for DEMPS participation, the employee must be informed, in writing, by the Director of the decision and the reason(s) stated for disapproval. A copy of the notification must be provided to the employee's supervisor.

c. **DEMPS Coordinator.** The DEMPS Coordinator is responsible for handling and updating the applicant's or registered DEMPS member's information.

(1) The DEMPS Coordinator's access to the DEMPS database is password restricted. The DEMPS Coordinator(s) receives access permission from the VHA DEMPS Program Manager. The DEMPS Coordinator(s) has the ability to move a DEMPS volunteer's approved application from "pending" to "active" and secure the medical facility Director's approval for the volunteer to be part of DEMPS.

(2) The DEMPS Coordinator also has the ability to conduct database searches using appropriate report tools. If a volunteer is unable to access the DEMPS database to complete the application, the DEMPS Coordinator provides the DEMPS volunteer with a DRF; upon receipt of this form as approved by the volunteer's supervisor and medical facility Director, the volunteer is entered into the DEMPS database.

(3) The DEMPS Coordinator also assists the ERC volunteer with DEMPS registration using the on-line registration or by providing the ERC volunteer with a DRF. Since the ERC personnel do not have a supervisor, such as the current employee, the ERC volunteer's application needs review by the Human Resources Retiree POC and subsequently by the medical facility Director for approval or disapproval.

d. **VISN DEMPS POC.** VISN DEMPS POC has the access and ability to search the VISN DEMPS Database.

(1) The VISN DEMPS POC's access to the DEMPS database is password restricted. The VISN DEMPS POC receives the access permission from the VHA DEMPS Program Manager.

(2) The DEMPS POC has the ability to execute searches of the DEMPS database using preformatted search tools or to conduct a search of the database using an ad hoc database search tool. The results of the search(s) may be exported to an Excel spreadsheet where the VISN DEMPS POC has the capability to sort the data according to the POC's specific needs.

e. **EMSHG and VHA Central Office.** The VHA DEMPS Program Manager is responsible for providing access to key personnel within EMSHG and VA Central Office. These key personnel have the ability to search the DEMPS database using the same search tools as the DEMPS Coordinators and VISN DEMPS POC. Assistance with database searches for these key personnel is provided by the DEMPS Program Manager, as needed.

## 15. APPLICATION, REGISTRATION, AND APPROVAL PROCESS.

a. **Current (employed) VA Personnel.** Current (employed) VA personnel desiring to volunteer in an emergency must apply for the DEMPS Program on-line or by completing a DRF. The DRF can be obtained by printing the form from the DEMPS Volunteer web course or by requesting the DRF from their DEMPS Coordinator. If the volunteer completes the application on-line and is recommended for approval by the volunteer's supervisor, the electronic form goes to the DEMPS Coordinator who obtains the medical facility Director approval; if approved, the electronic application moves from "pending" to "active." If the DEMPS volunteer completes the application using the DRF, the volunteer must take the form to the supervisor who recommends approval or disapproval. The completed form must be sent to the medical facility Director. If approved, the application information is fed into the data base, moving to "active" status for inclusion into the DEMPS database. Once "active" the volunteer is eligible for deployment and, if the need arises for volunteers, they may deploy with the approval of their facility Director. On a quarterly basis, the DEMPS volunteer is responsible to review and ensure that the information in the DEMPS database is current and complete.

b. **ERC Volunteers.** ERC volunteers may register for DEMPS on-line or by completing the DRF. The DRF can be obtained by printing the form from the DEMPS Volunteer Training Course prior to retirement or by requesting the DRF from the DEMPS Coordinator.

(1) Approval for ERC personnel is made by the medical facility Director based upon a review and recommendation from the Human Resources POC, regardless of the registration method. Once approved the ERC volunteer is moved from "pending" to "active" by the DEMPS Coordinator. Once "active" the volunteer is now eligible to support the facility by backfilling full-time employees who have deployed, or may deploy with the approval of the facility Director. On a quarterly basis, the ERC volunteer must ensure the information in the DEMPS database is current and correct.

(2) Clinical practitioners, upon retiring, must ensure the Credentialing Office has updated VETPRO information to remain on staff without privileges or scope of practice.

*NOTE: Current credentials does not equate to current competency, so that at the time of deployment, competency must be assessed and assignments made accordingly.*

## 16. EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND EXERCISE

A standard program that addresses volunteer training and education will be developed by the VHA DEMPS Program Manager in coordination with other applicable offices to include Patient Care Services and Nursing Services. Local DEMPS coordinators must ensure that these training and educational requirements are provided to all DEMPS volunteers, to include incorporation of DEMPS activation and deployment into a facility-level exercise on at least an annual basis.

a. **All** DEMPS volunteers must participate in available training including completion of DEMPS Training Course (online), Hazard Communication training (1-hour online course), Introduction to the Incident Command System (2-hour online Federal Emergency Management

Administration (FEMA) offering at <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is100.asp>), and review of the Deployment Handbook (hard copy). Annual training requirements vary year to year and are selected based upon need and as a result of lessons learned from DEMPS volunteers who completed a deployment. The DEMPS Program Manager is responsible for the VHA-wide DEMPS Training Program.

b. Instructions and guidance for volunteers are available in the DEMPS Volunteer Guidebook at <http:vaww1.va.gov/EMSHG> under “DEMPS,” or through local DEMPS Coordinators. It is applicable for all deployments within the continental United States, its territories, and possessions.

## 17. DEPLOYMENT OF DEMPS PERSONNEL

a. **Selection of Volunteers for Deployment and Activation.** Volunteers are selected according to the resource type necessary to meet the mission requirement. Full-time current, as well as ERC, members matching the requested skill set are considered. Qualifications, skills, and experience are evaluated in selection of volunteers. The facility Director retains the sole authority to approve deployment for any identified employed or ERC volunteer.

b. **Notification of Selection.** VISN and individual facility selection procedures and the sequence of events may vary, but must be detailed in individual VISN and facility DEMPS plans or Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs). Once a volunteer is identified and the facility Director approves the proposed selection, the DEMPS Coordinator or supervisor notifies the volunteer.

c. **Pre-deployment Information for Volunteers.** All essential information provided by the VHA Joint Operations Center (JOC), such as pertinent contact information, reporting instructions, directions, and necessary equipment, supplies, and proper clothing, is communicated to volunteers by the DEMPS Coordinators or supervisors according to local SOPs.

d. **Deployment Processes Including Travel.** The local facility is responsible for making travel arrangements in accordance with guidance furnished by the VHA JOC. *NOTE: It is recommended that facilities within a VISN participate in the same VHA electronic travel system.*

### e. **Compensation**

(1) Pay for volunteers currently employed (non-ERC employees) is based on factors such as employees' specific pay entitlement, work schedule, and applicable salary limitations. Local Fiscal and/or Human Resources Management Service must be consulted on matters of pay at the time of the proposed deployment.

(2) For ERC personnel, a waiver may be approved on a case-by-case basis for a re-employed annuitant when the appointment is necessary to accomplish one or more mission critical tasks on an emergency basis, and only if and for as long as no other reasonable staffing options exist to fill the vacancy. Requests must be forwarded through the VISN Director for concurrence to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management (006), VA Central Office. VHA

needs to request a delegation of authority from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to waive the dual compensation reduction (salary offset) required of re-employed annuitants by Title 5 United States Code (U.S.C.) 8344 and 8468.

f. **Command and Control.** During deployment, the volunteer remains a VA employee for supervision, pay, administrative, and disciplinary purposes; however, day to day direction may be provided from another Federal agency, State, local, or private organization depending upon the assignment of the volunteer.

g. **Administrative and Logistical Needs.** Administrative and logistical needs on site must be coordinated and managed by an EMSHG Emergency Manager. A senior clinical advisor or VA supervisor must either provide, or coordinate, task instructions and duties of volunteers at the deployment location.

h. **Deployment Expectations.** Assisting others in a disaster response can be challenging and rewarding; however, volunteers must be prepared to work and live in unusual conditions which may be severe. These can include: less than ideal lodging arrangements with few or no amenities, primitive conditions, difficulty traveling, no power, and limited or no communications. Normal deployments are for a 14-day period to include a travel day on either end. Volunteers need to be prepared to work 12-hour shifts.

i. **Communications.** Opportunities to communicate are difficult or nonexistent in the aftermath of a disaster. DEMPS volunteers' home facilities need to consider providing volunteers a means of communication to take with them, such as cellular telephones and calling cards. All cell phones should be kept turned-on and charged. *NOTE: Volunteers may prefer to use their personal cellular telephones.*

j. **Screening for Volunteers.** The physical requirements for volunteers deployed to disasters or emergencies under DEMPS are based on the functional requirements of the job to be performed. VHA Occupational Safety and Health Standard (OSHA) Operating Procedures, designed so that all volunteers are able to function, operate, and work in a safe manner, are contained in VHA Handbook 7701.1. The volunteers selected must be physically capable of performing all required duties in a potentially severe environment. Occupational Health at the volunteer's home station is responsible for reviewing the DEMPS registration or recent physical examination; this includes an immunization update, as required based on the anticipated conditions of the deployment environment.

k. **Demobilization Procedures.** Upon mission accomplishment or completion of assigned rotation, each volunteer must follow the out-processing procedures required at the deployment site.

l. **Recognition.** The DPM is responsible for developing a system to recognize and reward volunteer accomplishments following direct input from on-site deployment supervisors and EMSHG staff after mission completion.

m. **Personnel Issues.** Attempts to resolve personnel issues need to be made at the lowest possible level and must follow all guidelines in accordance with Human Resource policy.

(1) Volunteers are subject to the Federal Standards of Conduct, Title 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 2635.

(2) Volunteer behavior, conduct, and performance should always demonstrate the highest VA standards.

## **18. OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (OSHA) STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

All deployed VHA personnel must adhere to the VHA Occupational Safety and Health Standard Operating Procedures that have been designed to ensure that personnel are able to function, operate, and work at response sites in a safe manner and in compliance with all OSHA regulations.

## **19. RELEASE OF DATA**

Personal data contained in DEMPS is only released in accordance with the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. 552a, and VA policies.

## **20. RECORDS**

DEMPS records are created, filed, retrieved, and maintained in accordance with the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. 552a, and the systems of records notice number 98VA104A.