

Volunteer FAQ

1. How does Oregon State University (OSU) minimize potential liability associated with using volunteers?

It is recommended that each department or unit establish procedures for volunteer selection, training, and supervision. The department or unit should identify each volunteer's scope of services and assigned duties in the Conditions of Volunteer Service Form, or on an additional sheet attached to the form.

2. Does OSU have any workplace injury insurance that covers volunteers?

No. Volunteers are not covered by Workers' Compensation and are not entitled to employee benefits as a result of University volunteer affiliation. OSU does not provide volunteers with accident or medical insurance. It is recommended that all volunteers have private medical and accident insurance. Volunteer injuries should be reported by the supervisor through the [HR Advocate Public Incident Reporting Form](#).

3. Is a volunteer protected against personal liability for his or her negligence or intentional acts when acting within the scope of volunteer services requested by OSU?

Yes, registered OSU volunteers are provided liability protection while acting within the scope of their volunteer services. OSU will indemnify and defend volunteers against civil actions for injuries or damage to the person or property of others, subject to the following conditions: (1) the volunteer is working on an OSU task assigned by an authorized OSU supervisor; (2) the volunteer limits the volunteer's actions to the duties assigned; and (3) the volunteer performs the assigned tasks in good faith, and does not act in a manner that is reckless or with the intent to unlawfully inflict harm to others.

4. What is a Conditions of Volunteer Services Form and when is it necessary?

The Conditions of Volunteer Services Form describes the terms and conditions of volunteer service, the assumption of risk, the extent to which the volunteer will be covered by OSU insurance, and documents the duties assigned to the volunteer. A signed Conditions of Volunteer Services Form is required documentation for all volunteer services.

5. How often does the Conditions of Volunteer Services Form need to be completed?

A new form should be completed every 12 months for ongoing activities, or when volunteering for a different activity, or when volunteer duties change.

6. Who retains the signed Conditions of Volunteer Services Form?

The form needs to remain in the department or unit where the volunteer duties are being performed and be kept in accordance OSU retention requirements.

7. What is the responsibility of the OSU supervisor to whom the volunteers report?

The supervisor should ensure that all volunteers are provided with direct University supervision, as necessary. The supervisor should inform the volunteer of the tasks for the day and any problem areas. Supervisor oversight of a volunteer should be based on the activity, age and experience of the volunteer.

8. Are volunteers to affiliate organizations considered OSU volunteers?

An individual is not an OSU volunteer while performing volunteer services for an entity that is not a University department or program (i.e. non-profit or government agency; contracted third parties; etc.). However, certain events may be both affiliate and OSU events. Contact Insurance and Risk Management Services if clarity is needed as it relates to the volunteer status.

9. What can an OSU department or unit do to ensure that their volunteers will receive appropriate legal protection from claims that might arise out of the volunteers' actions or omissions?

Protecting the safety and welfare of our volunteers is important. Documentation of registered volunteer names, assigned duties, and training related to the volunteers services will assist OSU in the event a tort claim is filed for which OSU may need to provide legal defense to the volunteer. If a volunteer has not been registered by a department or unit prior to commencing volunteer services or if the volunteer's services have not been specified, it may be impossible for OSU to provide legal protection to the volunteer.

10. When or how might a volunteer be reclassified as an employee under federal or state law?

If the volunteer is performing services similar to those performed by a person in a paid position, departments or units should consult with OSU Office of Human Resource Services to prevent a situation in which OSU may be liable for payment of wages and hours under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

11. Can a department or unit terminate the services of a volunteer?

The department or unit may end a volunteer's service at any time and without prior notice.

12. What are export control laws and how do they apply to volunteers?

The United States has regulations that restrict the transfer of certain information and materials outside of the country. The [Office of Export Controls & International Compliance](#) can advise and help departments and units navigate the complex environment of export regulations and international laws. University departments and units should visit the [Export Controls & International Compliance website](#) to see if any of the activities of the volunteer might pose an export control issue. The regulations apply even when one is serving as a volunteer of OSU.

13. Can minors (under the age of 18) become OSU volunteers?

Yes, but the assigned duties should be thoughtfully considered. Both the minor and the parent or guardian of the minor must sign the Conditions of Volunteer Services Form.

14. Can a volunteer rent and drive a motor pool vehicle?

Yes. The volunteer must possess a valid driver's license. The volunteer must submit a Driver's Authorization Form with OSU Motor Pool and meet all the guidelines outlined under [Authorized Drivers and Passengers](#). If the volunteer is involved in a collision in a motor pool vehicle, the department or unit will be responsible for the \$5,000 deductible to repair or replace the vehicle. Please refer to [Motor Vehicle Claims](#) for more information.

15. What happens if a volunteer is involved in a collision in a personally owned vehicle?

If the volunteer uses a personally owned vehicle in the course of the volunteer's assigned duties, then the volunteer is required to have personal automobile liability insurance in accordance with University Policy 07-026 Vehicle Use for University Business. The personal automobile insurance will provide primary coverage for any accidents. Any OSU-provided automobile liability coverage may apply on a limited basis only after primary coverage limits have been used and only where the indemnification conditions as outlined in the Conditions of Volunteer Service Form apply. An [Auto Accident Report Form](#) should be provided to Insurance and Risk Management Services.

16. What types of safety training are available for volunteers?

Supervisors should determine the appropriate training for the volunteer based on their scope of services and assigned duties. Supervisors should also document any training provided. In general, recommended safety training may include: General and Office Safety, Fire/Life Safety, and Emergency Preparedness. Supervisors may wish to consult with Environmental Health & Safety and Human Resources on appropriate training.