

DISASTER SERVICE WORKER FAQ

The City of Sunnyvale and its Department of Public Safety are pleased to offer Disaster Service Worker (DSW) registration to qualified participants in its Sunnyvale Emergency Response Volunteer (SERV) programs.

Who needs to be registered as a DSW?

You need to be registered as a DSW if you are on a CERT deployment team; if you are a member of SARES; if you are an instructor for any SERV classes; or if you are a student in Sunnyvale's CERT Basic class or any CERT continuing education class held in Sunnyvale.

Why should I register as a DSW?

California state law provides workers' compensation benefits to registered DSWs who are injured while participating in authorized disaster-related activities (see below). Current DSW registration is required in order to receive any assignments during a disaster, and in order to participate in any training activities held on city property. (Sedentary classroom training does not require DSW registration.)

How do I register as a Sunnyvale Disaster Service Worker?

Fill out and sign [this form](#) and deliver it to an authorized city official (by hand, by email to OES@sunnyvale.ca.gov, or by mail to Office of Emergency Services, 700 All America Way, Sunnyvale CA 94086). Your registration is valid when it has been counter-signed by an authorized city official. (If you send the form in by email or postal mail, this should be done within a few days after receipt of the form.) It remains valid as long as you continue your volunteer service.

What "Classifications" should I check on the form?

Select "Communications / ARES" if you are (or will be) a SARES member. Select "CERT Member" for all other SERV volunteer activities (CERT, Listos, SNAP, etc.). You can select both if appropriate.

How can I tell if I am registered as a DSW?

Log in to your account on SunnyvaleSERV.org, click on "Profile", and look in the "Volunteer Status" section. You will see a DSW registration date there if you are registered.

Doesn't my Sunnyvale Volunteer photo ID card indicate that I am a DSW?

No. It indicates that you have passed a background check, and it will be useful to you in gaining admittance to emergency scenes when activated. But it does not convey DSW registration.

I registered as DSW years ago (prior to 2020). Is it still valid?

Maybe, but probably not. It depends on a number of factors. Check your registration status on SunnyvaleSERV.org as described above to be sure.

I am registered as a DSW with Santa Clara County, or with another city. Does that count?

No. You need to be registered with each jurisdiction that might deploy you. In our case, you need to be registered with the City of Sunnyvale. (SARES members may wish to be registered with Santa Clara County *as well*, in order to have coverage during county ARES events that are outside Sunnyvale.)

How do I keep my DSW registration current?

Your DSW registration is renewed each year as long as you continue your volunteer service to at least a minimum level, as determined by the volunteer hours that you submit to the SunnyvaleSERV.org website each month.

What activities are covered by workers' compensation for a currently-registered DSW?

- Proclaimed emergencies, in which your SERV program has been activated by the Sunnyvale Office of Emergency Services.
- Training activities that have been approved in advance by the Sunnyvale Office of Emergency Services. (Note that this includes most county ARES training classes and activities.) Check the calendar listing for an event on the SunnyvaleSERV.org website to confirm whether it is approved for DSW coverage.

What activities are not covered?

- Activities during an emergency that were not assigned to you, directly or indirectly, by the Sunnyvale Office of Emergency Services. Self-activation is not covered.
- Activities during an emergency in which you are not supervised, directly or indirectly, by the Sunnyvale Office of Emergency Services.
- Activities that are not documented (e.g., on an ICS-214 form), or in which your participation is not documented on a sign-in/sign-out record.
- Training that is not approved in advance by the Sunnyvale Office of Emergency Services.
- Meetings and events that do not serve primarily a training purpose.
- Celebrations and community events (including outreach booths at such).
- Travel to and from training. (Travel to and from emergency activations is covered.)

Does DSW registration provide liability insurance?

No. If you are sued for something you did while activated in an emergency (not training), you *may* be able to assert the same immunities as officers and employees of the state or the city performing similar work. You would still be responsible for legal fees while asserting an immunity defense. The primary purpose of DSW registration is to provide workers' compensation insurance against injury to you, not to provide liability protection.

This document is a summary of state law and CalOES policies. For authoritative detail, see the CalOES [DSW Program Guidance](#) document and the relevant statutes.