



Employer perspective

In January 2009, Volunteering New Zealand conducted a short survey on health and safety issues related to volunteers involved in the employee volunteering programmes. Results published below are solely giving the indications of trends in New Zealand, and are not to provide any scientific statistical significance.

We received 14 responses out of which 84.6% were national businesses. 46.2% responses were coming from the employers operating at the national level, 30.8% in Wellington, 15.4% in Canterbury and 7.7% in Auckland and Marlborough respectively.

Thirteen responses are coming from businesses which do have an employee volunteering programme. 69.2% of respondents stated they provide paid time/leave for employees to undertake volunteering. 46.2% arrange the projects for their employees to participate in, 23.1% let employees to choose their own projects and 53.8% offer both options to their employees.

76.9% of the respondents use brokering services in order to arrange projects with community/voluntary organisations. All of them use the services of regional volunteer centres.

Only 23.1% of those having employee volunteering programme have formalised written health and safety guidelines for staff involved in the programmes. Those who have formalised guidelines, they all contain health and safety briefings for employees before participating in a volunteering project, as well as the procedures for action and follow up reporting in the event of an employee being injured while on a volunteering project. Only half of them have a health and safety good practice checklist and/or are obtaining information from the host community/voluntary organisation on potential health and safety hazards at the host's site. 33.3% are ready to share the guidelines with the other employers.

If an employee was injured while participating in paid employee volunteering away from his/her normal workplace, 100% of respondents answering the question consider the employee to be 'at work'. If the injured employee was absent from work as a result of the injury, ten respondents would pay wage/salary for the first week of absence. Three were not sure, and one would only if the employee has sick leave available.

Hosting Community Organisation perspective

Another survey was conducted in May 2009 as part of the Employee Volunteering Health and Safety project run by Volunteering NZ with support from Mobil Oil NZ.

The purpose of the survey was to obtain information from community organisations on their health and safety practices for occasions when they are assisted by individual employee volunteers, groups of employee volunteers or other groups from the community (e.g. Church and youth groups offering to undertake projects).

The results of the survey will further assist in the development of new health and safety guidelines for use by employers and other organisations offering groups of volunteers, the volunteers participating in group volunteering and the host community organisations.

The results published below are solely giving the indications of trends in New Zealand, and are not to be used for any further research.

About the respondents

- Invitation was sent to 1082 recipients (there is a possibility of cross-posting)
- 89 responses; 49 completed the survey
- 42.9% are local/regional community organisations
- 22.5% local regional branch of the national organisation
- 22.5% are national organisations
- 6.1% national branch of the international organisation
- 2% are national umbrella organizations
- Most of the respondents operate in Wellington (40.8%), 30.6% in Auckland, 32.7% at the national level but the responses came from the organisations operating in many different parts of NZ (Northland-14.3%; Canterbury 28.6%; Waikato/Coromandel 16.3%; Bay of Plenty, Wanganui/Manawatu/Horowhenua, Wairarapa – 12.2% each; Taranaki, Otago, Southland, Nelson – 10.2% each; Hawkes Bay, West Coast- 8.2% each; Poverty Bay – 6.2%; Marlborough – 6.1%).

About the employee volunteers

- 88.8% of the organizations engage Employee Volunteers in their activities.
- 25% of the organizations who do not engage Employee Volunteers do not intend to do so in the future and 75% are not sure.
- 56.4% of the Employee Volunteers are individuals supported by their employer but who organise their volunteering themselves. 31% individuals organised by their employer, 45.5% are groups organised by themselves, while 34.5% of employers organises the groups of their employees. Others (38.2%) are youth groups, community based organisations, church groups, club groups.
- Most of the volunteers come to the organisations through brokering agencies (47.3%) or they approach the organisations directly individually (47.3%). 40% of businesses do the first step and directly approach the organisations. 25.5% of the organisations approach businesses. 10.9% of the organizations approaches individual volunteers.

Formalised agreement

- 51% of the organisations do not have any formalised partnership agreement with any stakeholder.
- Only 11.8% have the agreement with both individual/group employee volunteer(s) and their employers.
- 15.7% has the agreement with the brokering agency and the same percentage with the individual/groups independent from their employer.
- No organisation has the agreement only for the employer who organises the volunteering
- 23.5% of the organisations have other types of the agreements, such as verbal agreements; have developed comprehensive training, policies and procedures for catering groups and their leaders.

Health & safety elements of the agreement

- 52.4% of those who do have the agreement include non health and safety elements.
- 52.4% of those who have the agreement include the H&S obligations of the hosting organisation, 23.8% of the employer, and 47.6% of the employee volunteer.
- 14.8% includes the responsibilities in provision of the protection equipment, 9.5% on liability in case of an injury of the employee volunteer and 19% on liability in case of third-party injury or damage caused from an employee volunteer.

- 33.3% of the agreements contain other elements such as next of kin and emergency contact numbers. One respondent stated that the procedures are the same as the ones for the employed staff members.

Role of brokering agencies in Health & Safety issues

- 33.3% of those using brokering agencies in recruitment of employee volunteers think that H&S is a responsibility of hosting organisation, employers and employee volunteers.
- 3.2% thinks that brokering agency is the one to provide H&S guidelines and make sure everyone is briefed.
- 25.8% thinks the role of brokering agency is to encourage other stakeholders to develop and follow health and safety procedures.
- 25.8% expects the brokering agency to assist the other stakeholders in developing guidelines.
- 16.1% of the respondents had some other suggestions such as:
 1. "Brokering agencies can provide a useful function by facilitating free H&S seminars for employing organisations (e.g. Hazard Identification etc)"
 2. "Mostly up to agencies/organisations at which they work to take leadership. Having suggestions or a general simple and basic procedure (easy to adapt to individual locations) would be a good idea. Volunteer agency has its hands full without taking big part in this. However, part of follow up of volunteers might be to ask about H & S issues and risks..."
 3. "Provide a checklist of things to consider."
 4. "They should not arrange any volunteers for organisations that do not have a health and safety plan/procedures"

Current practices

- 44.2% of those who engage Employee Volunteers do have formalized written H&S guidelines, while 20.9% do not. 57% of the respondents do not know if their organisation has such document. 18.6% of the organizations are in the process of developing the guidelines, while 9.3% are addressing health and safety of their employee volunteers by other means such as: volunteer policy and procedure handbook including H&S which is constantly being reviewed and added to.
- Those who do have H&S written guidelines:
 1. 79% contains the procedures for action and follow up reporting in the event of an injury of an employee volunteer.
 2. 68.4% provides the potential H&S hazards information for everyone involved in the project.
 3. 57.9% organise H&S briefings for employee volunteers on the spot.
 4. 52.6% obtains the information from the businesses on volunteer's skills and capacities to participate in the project.
 5. 47.4% have H&S good practice checklist for the organisation's staff participating in the project.
 6. 10.5% brief the businesses on H&S before arranging the participation in the project.
 7. 8.3% of the respondents were unsure about the content.
- 33.3% is prepared to share the guidelines with the VNZ for the purpose if the project.
- 28.7% of employee volunteers participating in the projects have to use tools and machinery or undertake activities which require special skills. 57.1% don't, while 14.3% of the organisations have volunteers engaging in some other potentially hazardous activities such as driving a vehicle, physical activities such as bending or light lifting.
- Out of those who do use special tools and machinery or require specific skills for their activities:

1. 16.7% think that if the employee volunteers use the special tool they probably know what they are doing.
2. 19.1% of the organisations check with the employee volunteer if they are able to use the tool.
3. 26.2% brief the volunteer/employer on how to use the tool.
4. 14.3% allow the tools to be used only under the direct supervision of a skilled staff member.
5. 59.3% follow some other practices such as: "We focus on managing safety, not determining or prohibiting activities as volunteers range from professionals in the field to novices. For some special skills or areas of risk managing safety means requiring proof of skill and this sometimes involves requiring formal qualifications or certificates."