

Disaster Service Workers

General FAQs

The City of Los Angeles Disaster Service Worker program was recently activated by Mayor Garcetti in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Please see the below FAQs regarding this program. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your HR Section.

1. What does it mean to be a Disaster Service Worker?

In the event of an emergency (fire, flood, earthquake, or public health emergency), City of Los Angeles employees may be called upon to serve as Disaster Service Workers. Non-essential public employees (those who are not required for continuity of operations as indicated in a department's Continuity of Operations Plan) may be released from their usual duties so they can be reassigned to assist any agency or organization carrying out its emergency response duties.

2. What types of duties can I be expected to perform as a Disaster Service Worker?

Duties will vary depending on the emergency. **Examples of duties for DSWs may include but are not limited to:**

- Registering people at a shelter, hotel/motel, testing location or other mission site.
- Interpreting for non-English speaking individuals.
- Acting as a messenger at a designated site.
- Serving/organizing food for emergency staff or to vulnerable populations.
- Answering phones, providing directions, explaining procedures, or distributing information.
- Performing general administrative tasks including data entry
- Greeting and orienting guests (vulnerable populations) to a hotel/motel or other facility
- Meal sorting and delivery to various locations
- Setting up cots or bedding, gathering linen, maintaining floors, clearing walkways and spills, and maintaining restroom supplies
- Directing vehicles to parking areas
- Feeding and providing water to animals

Note: Some DSW assignments may be performed from an employee's home.

Examples of positions for DSWs include: Animal Care Assistant; Call Center Operator; Data Entry Assistant; Dormitory Worker; Entertainment and Recreation Aide; Facility Maintenance Worker; Finance Clerk; Food Service Assistant; Greeter; Information Gatherer; Laborer; Language Interpreter; Logistics Clerk; Parking and Traffic Attendant; Personal Assistance Service Support Personnel; Registration Worker; Runner; Safety Support Worker; Supply Clerk; and Transportation Assistant.

3. How are Disaster Service Worker activities assigned?

In most cases, your department supervisor or HR Section (DSW manager) will provide you with a general assignment based on the needs of the City to carry out its responsibilities during times of disaster. Duties may be outside your regular scope of work or schedule. Established work restrictions continue to apply, such as lift limitations.

4. What will my shift be while working as a DSW?

The shifts vary. They can be 8 hours, 12 hours, or partial days. Please keep in mind, shifts and schedules may change as response and recovery efforts are fluid during a crisis. (In the case of 12-hour shift schedules, your department will be mindful to stagger 12-hour shifts to provide relief to DSWs (e.g., two days of work followed by two days off). Please contact your HR section with any questions about your assigned shift.

5. Will my schedule change as a Disaster Service Worker?

Yes. The Mayor/Management can change your normal schedule or require overtime during an emergency. Your supervisor or DSW manager will determine your work hours and manage an equitable schedule during long-term disasters. Although there is no limit to the number of days a DSW can be assigned to an emergency, Los Angeles City Council and the Mayor monitor declarations of emergency closely and will close the incident as soon as possible.

6. Can I refuse to be a Disaster Service Worker?

No. All City of Los Angeles employees take a Loyalty Oath when hired. All employees are therefore expected to abide by the Loyalty Oath and participate in the Disaster Service Worker program. However, for the current COVID-19 pandemic, employees may be excused from certain Disaster Service Worker duties if he/she falls into any of the vulnerable categories and are being asked to work in high risk areas. If an employee falls into a vulnerable category, he/she may be expected to assist with other aspects of the Disaster Service Worker program that do not put them in harm's way of COVID-19 exposure.

7. Can I request to be sent to only certain areas/assignments?

No. As a DSW you will be assigned to areas/assignments that are in greatest need. To the degree possible, the City endeavors to assign locations with an employee's commute length in mind but this is not always possible.

8. Do I need to get permission from my supervisor to be a DSW?

No. You may be removed from your regular duties at any time when being activated as a Disaster Service Worker. You do not need to ask permission from your supervisor, but should inform your supervisor immediately if you are activated as a DSW so he/she can make any necessary adjustments to work schedules and assignments.

9. What do I need to bring?

DSWs need to bring their City IDs, their own meals, snacks, and water (beverage). DSWs should also wear comfortable shoes and clothing and plan to wear sunscreen if assigned

outside during the day. Additionally, bring a fully charged cell phone in case there is a need for communication while on the site or a photo of a sign-in sheet.

10. Will I be provided with personal protective equipment (PPE)?

Yes. Following the Center for Disease Control (CDC), Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) exposure guidelines and ***based on your assignment***, you will be provided with appropriate PPE for the respective assignment; appropriate PPE may include a combination of gloves, respiratory protection, gowns, booties, safety glasses or goggles, and/or face-shields. It is possible a DSW assignment may not require PPE, such as an assignment at home.

DSWs may see medical providers with different PPE than those issued to DSWs. This difference in PPE is due to the providers tasks/assignments in dealing more directly with guests/residents for a prolonged period (more than 10 minutes) than DSWs who have less direct contact and for a significantly less period of time (less than 10 minutes).

11. What are the advised safe practices for DSWs while on assignment?

While working at an assignment at minimum: 1) wash hands thoroughly and often with warm water and soap or, if soap and water are not available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer; 2) maintain physical distancing guidelines; 3) avoid touching your face; 4) wear PPE as provided/recommended - *PPE must be worn at all times while working at an assignment*; 5) know how to properly don and doff PPE (see video link below).

When wearing cloth face covering ensure: 1) you have clean hands; 2) it fits snugly but comfortably against the sides of the face; 3) it is secured with ties or ear loops when removing cloth face covering; 4) be careful not to touch eyes, nose, and mouth. Wash hands immediately after removing cloth face covering and wash the cloth face covering daily and/or based on the frequency of use. Also prior to use inspect face covering to ensure that there are no holes or tears in the fabric.

After completing a shift: As a precaution, upon release from your shift, it is recommended you wash your hands before leaving the assignment site, upon arrival at home, remove your clothing and set them in a bin, wash your hands again, and shower before interacting with any members of your household. Wash clothes as you normally would, but launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting.

Some DSW assignments require serving or delivering meals in person or other means which requires a very brief contact (i.e., less than 10 minutes) with individuals and as such would make them fall into low to medium exposure risk category per Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). For these types of tasks, masks/face coverings and gloves would be considered sufficient PPE combined with proper hand hygiene and other safety measures. According to LA County Public Health, close contact means being within 6 feet of a **person with**

COVID-19 symptoms for more than 10 minutes, or having contact with their body fluids, and/or secretions.

If the recommended PPE such as masks/face coverings, gloves, etc., are not available at a site, DSWs are not to perform assigned tasks. In this situation, please be patient. In the interim, there may be other general work that may be performed such as directing vehicles to a parking area, and/or directing individuals to a general location, both of which can be performed from a distance until PPE is provided.

Know how to properly don and doff PPE by watching the following training video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKoYFAY1DaQ&feature=youtu.be>

12. What if I start to feel sick?

DSWs who exhibit any symptoms of COVID-19 should not report to work, but should notify their HR Section. DSWs who are unable to work due to any other health condition are entitled to use sick time as usual.

Note: If assigned to work at a shelter, please be aware, there may be pets accompanying the guests. Contact your HR section with any questions or concerns about possible allergies due to pets at your assigned location.

13. What if I arrive and there is no work for me to do?

Please check with the Site Manager to see if there are any tasks for you to complete. If not, you should contact your supervisor as you may be returning to your previous assignment or given a new one.

14. Will I be provided with training?

Yes. Training will be provided to DSWs by the Site Manager or Director at each location, along with a review of all duties, expectations, and work schedules.

15. Will I be interacting with the public during my DSW assignment?

Some DSW assignments will require interaction with the public and persons from various backgrounds, and/or persons with disabilities. When interacting with anyone as a DSW, the City has some basic etiquette tips.

- Be patient.
- Help only when needed or asked.
- Provide care that shows the need for and preserves dignity.
- Repeat questions and answers if necessary.
- Some disabilities, like hearing impairments or mental illness, may not be readily apparent. Ask the person how you can best help him or her.
- Focus on people first by using language that shows respect for people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs.
- Show respect for people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs through your behavior.

- When you interact with people, focus on their abilities, not their disabilities.

16. Am I expected to complete any forms during my DSW assignment?

DSWs are expected to sign in upon arrival to their assignment and check-out at the end of their shift. Additionally, most DSWs will be asked to keep a task log throughout the day to note what tasks were completed and if there were any notable incidents that should be recorded. Please confirm with the Site Manager if you are required to complete a task log or any other forms during your assignment. (Some assignments will require a cell phone to take a photo of a sign-in sheet such as hotels/motels assignments.)

17. How am I paid while working as a DSW? Will I receive overtime pay?

DSWs receive their regular rate of pay while performing response and recovery activities. Represented DSWs are paid in accordance with their respective Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Non-represented DSWs are paid in accordance with the Los Angeles Administrative Code (LAAC.) **Overtime and other additional compensation:** If a DSW works overtime and is eligible for overtime pay (or other additional compensation) under his or her respective MOU or as a non-represented employee under the LAAC, or under applicable law, that DSW will be paid overtime accordingly. DSWs should report their time as instructed by their department.

18. What do I do once I complete my shift assignment?

You should contact your supervisor as you may be returning to your previous assignment or given a new one. As a precaution, upon release from your shift, it is recommended you wash your hands before leaving the assignment site, upon arrival at home, remove your clothing and set them in a bin, wash your hands again, and shower before interacting with any members of your household. Wash clothes as you normally would, but launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting.

19. What happens if I'm injured while performing DSW duties?

Legislation provides workers' compensation benefits to registered DSWs who are injured while participating in authorized disaster-related activities, including pre-approved training.

Your safety, and the safety of those around you, is most important during this time. If at any time you have any questions or concerns regarding this program, please contact your HR Section.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR CURRENT COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Additional FAQs for Disaster Service Workers:

<https://emergency.lacity.org/frequently-asked-questions-public-employees>

DSW Information from Emergency Management Department:

<https://emergency.lacity.org/dsw>

City of Los Angeles COVID-19 Updates and Information:

<https://corona-virus.la/>

COVID-19 Information for City of LA Employees:

<https://per.lacity.org/covid19/>

CDC Coronavirus Website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

CDC How to Protect Yourself:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>

OSHA COVID-19 Website:

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>

Cal/OSHA Guidance on Requirements to Protect Workers from Coronavirus:

<https://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/Health-Care-General-Industry.html>

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Coronavirus Website:

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/coronavirus/>

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