



National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

COOPERATION | COMMUNICATION | COORDINATION | COLLABORATION

1501 Lee Highway
Suite 206
Arlington, Virginia 36536-0244
Tel: (703) 778-5088
Fax: (703) 778-5091

Board of Directors

Officers

Mickey Caison
Southern Baptist Disaster Relief
North American Mission Board
President

Kevin Massey
Lutheran Disaster Response
Vice - President

John Robinson
Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
Secretary

Mike Manning
Louisiana Voluntary
Organizations Active in Disaster
Treasurer

Directors

Bill Adams
Christian Reformed World
Relief Committee

Kim Burgo
Catholic Charities USA

Steve Cain
Indiana Voluntary
Organizations Active in Disaster

Kevin King
Mennonite Disaster Service

Nate Leishman
Latter-Day Saints Charities

Major Sharon Polarek
The Salvation Army

Jane Prinz
Virginia Voluntary
Organizations Active in Disaster

Mark Askey
Federal Emergency
Management Agency
(ex-officio)

Bob Leipold
Executive Director
(ex-officio)

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

The Board of Directors of National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster has held many discussions over the past several years about our role in the National Donations Management Network (NDMN). The voting members of the Board (agency and state VOAD representatives only) have now unanimously agreed that we will seek out, or create if necessary, a system that better supports the needs of our members, our donors, and those we serve.

This decision was not taken lightly, nor without due deliberation. We recognize the value of the existing NDMN to the state governments and to several of our own constituencies. Our agencies and the state VOADs may continue to use the existing NDMN as long as it suits their needs, of course. But it has become evident the existing system does not and cannot meet the needs of the large majority of our members and we have a responsibility to provide an alternative solution. We seek to improve our own sector's capacity to manage donations by using a system where the non-profit agencies are the managers of donations and the donations process, rather than merely the beneficiaries of a system run by others.

The Board has asked me to share with you some of the thinking that went in to this decision.

The primary consideration was that we, the non-profit agencies, have a right and a responsibility to do this work for ourselves. In the United States, it should be the responsibility of charities, not governments, to manage charitable donations. We feel strongly that a disaster donor's primary relationship should be with one of our non-profit agencies, with you, in other words, and the decisions about what to do with those donations should be made first by you, and then collectively by our sector if needed. So the Board has voted for a system that will meet your needs first, but that can still connect and share with other systems. The goal is to assume our rightful place with our donors, take charge of policies that affect our agencies, and still collaborate with others regardless of which systems they are using.

The Board's second consideration was to recognize and agree that we have the capacity within the membership of National VOAD to achieve this goal for ourselves. When the problem of unsolicited donations and volunteers was exposed during Hurricane Katrina, it was unknown if our sector had the capacity to craft a solution, and FEMA stepped in to help. The Board wishes to express its appreciation to FEMA which has worked diligently to answer the problem. Now, our Board feels we are ready to explore our own capacity to produce solutions for our sector. With this vote, our Board is declaring, "Yes, we can do this work."

We know you will have many questions. Moving forward, we will be hosting meetings, conference calls, and discussions, and will be devoting a substantial portion of the next Member's Meeting to this subject.

We recognize not everyone is going to be pleased with this decision; we respect your opinions for you are part of our community, too. For us to arrive at a non-profit-based system that fulfills our responsibility to society, that links with other systems to maximize capacity, and that supports our operational activities, we will need the voices and talents of everyone in our community. The disaster sector has transitioned and matured since Katrina. We have proven that we can, in fact, work together on multi-agency solutions to vexing problems – we are ready to do so again.

Today, the Board of National VOAD is making clear its direction with the hope you will work with us to improve the VOAD movement's service to our country. National VOAD's guiding principles of cooperation, communication, coordination and collaboration will prove to be a strong foundation for a project of this importance.

Respectfully,

Bob Leipold
Executive Director