

Disaster Service Workers

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

2025 Windstorm and Fire Emergency

The City of Los Angeles Disaster Service Worker (DSW) Program was recently activated by Mayor Bass in response to the 2025 Windstorm and Fire Emergency. The following Frequently Asked Questions and answers are designed to provide more information regarding this program. Disaster Service Work is designed to provide support services to assist in mitigating the effects of an emergency. When on assignment, employees should be patient and understand processes will not be perfect but are constantly being improved. 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. Employees identified by their employing departments are placed on a DSW Bench List pursuant to Executive Directive No. 26 (those who are not required for continuity of operations as indicated in a department's Department Emergency and Continuity of Operations Plan) and 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 local assistance center, family assistance center, shelter, 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 affected groups
- Answering phones, providing directions, explaining procedures, or distributing information
- Performing general administrative tasks including data entry
- Greeting and orienting guests (affected groups) to a recovery site, hotel/motel or other facility
- Meal and supply 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
- Other duties may be required depending on the specific emergency

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. (This is not an exhaustive list.)

3. How are Disaster Service Worker activities assigned?

Your Department Personnel Officer (DPO)/HR Section 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 DPO/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 (departments have the authority to determine whether overtime is paid in cash or compensated time off). Your supervisor or DPO 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, you are encouraged to contact your Department Personnel Officer (DPO) to discuss.

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. 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 they can make any necessary adjustments to work schedules and assignments.

9. What do I need to bring?

DSWs need to bring their City IDs and have them at all times. It is strongly recommended that DSWs bring their own meals, snacks, and extra water (or other 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 or photos while on the site.

When assigned to work in areas that have been affected by the wildfire and are impacted by smoke, soot, ash, chemicals, among others, at a minimum, DSWs should wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, or coveralls. Wear sturdy close-toed, high-ankle leather shoes if debris (i.e., broken glass, metal, wood, etc.) is in the area. Note that you will have the option to voluntarily wear face masks even when not required by any Cal/OSHA standards or the DSW mission/task.

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

Yes. Based on your individual task assignment and the environmental site condition, you will be provided with appropriate PPE and safety gear as deemed necessary. This equipment is provided by the entity requesting DSWs for support. PPE may include hard hats, eye protection, respiratory protection, hand protection, hearing protection, clothing, safety vests, foot protection, etc. It is also possible a DSW assignment may not require any PPE.

11. What if I start to feel sick or become injured?

DSWs who are experiencing any flu or respiratory infection symptoms, including COVID-19, or any other ill symptoms should notify their DPO/HR Section before reporting to work. If a DSW begins to feel sick or is injured while at their DSW assignment/worksites, they should notify the Site Manager immediately and seek medical attention. Once the illness/injury has been addressed, please notify the DPO/HR Section. DSWs who are unable to work due to any other health conditions are entitled to use sick time as usual.

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

12. 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. Please be aware there are times where there may not be work readily available as staff may be setting up a mission. Please be patient as emergencies are fluid situations. You may also have a veteran DSW there at the assignment to whom you can ask questions. If you are informed the assignment has been canceled at the last minute and you are at the location, you should contact your DPO/HR Section as you may be given a new mission.

13. Will I be provided with training about/for my DSW assignment?

Yes. Our goal is to provide as much information about the DSW missions as we can so you have an understanding before reporting to your assignment. While we attempt to gather information about potential assignments for the DPOs to share with you in advance, specific training for assignments will be provided once you arrive at your designated DSW work location. This training is called, “Just-In-Time” training.

14. 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, please:

- 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 them.
- 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.
- Focus on peoples’ abilities, not their disabilities, when you interact with them.

15. 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, DSWs will be asked to keep a task log (214 Form) throughout the day to note what tasks were completed and if there were any notable incidents that should be recorded. When assigned multiple days, DSWs are required to complete this log each day.

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

DSWs will continue to receive their regular pay (including regularly assigned bonuses) while working as a DSW. 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.

17. What do I do once I complete the end of my assignment?

DSW assignments could last a single day, several weeks, or even longer. Once you complete your assignment, you should contact your DPO/HR Section to inform them that you have completed your assignment, as you may be given another assignment where support is needed.

If you were assigned to work in areas that have been affected by the wildfire and are impacted by smoke, soot, ash, chemicals, it is recommended that you remove ash and debris from skin, hair, clothing, and shoes, using a cloth to gently blot and remove the contaminants. If ash does get on your skin, wash off with warm water and soap as soon as possible. Additionally upon arrival at home, wash all clothes in hot water and detergent. These clothes should be washed separately from uncontaminated clothes.

As a general safety precaution, it is recommended you wash your hands frequently. This includes after removing any gloves and/or facemasks, before eating/drinking, upon being released from your shift, and upon arrival at home.

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

Immediately seek assistance at the site to address your injury. Notify your DPO/HR Section of the injury.

The City of Los Angeles ensures access for City employees acting as a DSW to the City workers' compensation benefits. This program is made available to protect those workers from financial loss as a result of injuries/illnesses sustained while performing authorized disaster-related activities, including pre-approved training. Claims sustained by City employees while performing disaster services will be filed as workers' compensation claims under the same authorities and guidelines as with all employees within the City of Los Angeles.

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 DPO/HR Section.

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>

You are asked for your patience, flexibility, and understanding during this emergency.

Thank you for your service!

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