

## Volunteers and Insurance

Volunteering takes many different forms. A volunteer may be manning a food tent, selling brats and hot dogs to raise money for an organization, transporting meals to those in need, providing rides to veterans, stocking shelves at a local food pantry, or serving on a board of directors.

For both the organization and the volunteer, there are important [insurance](#) issues. For example, what happens if a volunteer driver is in a car accident? Or what happens if a volunteer is injured while setting up the brat stand or stocking the shelves?

**For organizations** utilizing volunteers, it is important to understand your insurance benefits and how your [policies](#) may impact your volunteer's insurance [coverage](#). In some cases, insurance coverage will be impacted if the organization reimburses the volunteer for their expenses. If you have a board of directors, your liability coverage may or may not extend to the board's actions and you may need to secure additional coverage.

**For volunteers**, the issues are equally important. Before engaging in volunteer activities, it is important to ask your insurance agent or your insurance company about coverage for the activities you are engaging in and remember the details matter. In some cases, the coverage provided by your personal insurance may be limited if you accept any reimbursement for your volunteer activities even if the reimbursement only covers some of your expenses.

### Auto Insurance

The most important point to remember is personal auto insurance policies vary in their treatment of volunteer driving activities. In almost all cases, the insurer will provide coverage for volunteers in which there is no reimbursement for expenses. However, if the organization provides any reimbursement, even if it is just for some of the expenses incurred by the driver, some insurers will treat this as a commercial activity.

Volunteer drivers should clarify if the organization that you are volunteering for is already covered under a commercial auto insurance policy. If not, a discussion with your insurance agent or insurance company may clarify the issues for you. You may be able to purchase a separate [rider](#) on your policy. If your insurer limits coverage and volunteering is important to you, you may be able to find an insurance company that will provide coverage under your personal auto policy.

For volunteer organizations engaging drivers, it is important to discuss with your drivers. Reimbursement policies may vary from insurer to insurer. Commercial policies covering your drivers may also be another option.

### Liability Insurance

Liability insurance provides coverage for damages and legal defense in cases where the actions of the organization have resulted in some harm to a person or property.

There are several types of liability coverage including:

**For more information or to file a complaint, visit our website or contact:**

Office of the Commissioner of Insurance, 125 South Webster Street, P.O. Box 7873, Madison, WI 53707-7873  
p: 608-266-3585 | p: 1-800-236-8517 | f: 608-266-9935 | [ociinformation@wisconsin.gov](mailto:ociinformation@wisconsin.gov) | [oci.wi.gov](http://oci.wi.gov)

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## Directors and Officers

This coverage provides protection to directors and officers from [claims](#) which arise from negligent conduct committed in their capacity as directors and officers.

## Comprehensive General Liability

This type of policy provides many liability coverages under one contract.

## Multi-Peril

Though it is possible to purchase many separate insurance policies to cover a single business operation, this may be impractical. Therefore, you may want to buy a multi-peril policy. This is a comprehensive policy tailored to suit your business needs providing both property and liability protection. For many businesses, it is the most efficient and economical way to buy insurance.

## [Umbrella and Excess \(Personal\)](#)

Umbrella liability insurance provides two kinds of coverage: payments of liabilities in excess of loss offered in your basic commercial policy, auto liability, or employers' liability coverages and liability for areas not covered in other liability policies.

Excess liability coverage provides protection for catastrophic accidents or occurrences, such as when several people are injured at once. The main difference between excess and umbrella policies is umbrella policies cover all underlying liability policies whereas excess liability policies increase the limits of liability in one particular policy.

## Worker's Compensation

Generally, volunteer workers are exempt from the worker's compensation requirements in the statutes. Specifically, as detailed in the Consumer's Guide to Worker's Compensation Insurance for Employers ([oci.wi.gov/Pages/Consumers/PI-065.aspx](http://oci.wi.gov/Pages/Consumers/PI-065.aspx)):

- A volunteer for a nonprofit organization that is exempt or eligible for exemption from federal income taxation under the Internal Revenue Code who receives nominal payments of money or other things of value totaling not more than \$10 per week is not considered to be an employee under the Act, unless the nonprofit organization elects to cover the volunteer under its policy.

Volunteers who are injured while working as a volunteer will not have coverage for lost wages (at a job providing income) unless covered under another insurance policy such as a weekly income policy.

Organizations providing volunteers with compensation in excess of the statutory \$10 per week limit may want to explore their liability for any injuries their volunteers may incur while providing services.

## Tips for Understanding Volunteer Insurance

### For volunteers:

1. Read your insurance policies to understand your coverage.
2. Talk to your insurance agent or your insurer about any concerns you may have.
3. Shop around for coverage. While one insurance company may not cover your volunteer activities, other insurers may.

4. Talk to the organization you will be volunteering for about insurance coverage.

**For organizations:**

1. Read your insurance policies to understand what is and is not covered.
2. Review your insurance coverage at least annually with your insurance agent.
3. Make sure your policies and procedures line up with your insurance coverage.
4. Before conducting any large public event, make sure you discuss coverage with your insurance agent or your insurer.
5. Discuss any insurance issues with your employees and volunteers to make sure there is coverage in case of an unfortunate event.