



**DID YOU KNOW** . in today's economic and political climate there is increased pressure for organizations to do more with less, which in many cases also involves volunteers doing more and more.

Too often, stress and burnout replace the stimulation and rewards of volunteering. It is inevitable that quality volunteers are lost each year due to burnout. The objective these days should be to manage this symptom – a symptom of a larger problem, structural or otherwise.

Following are suggestions that may alleviate volunteer burnout:

- Communications – knowledge, information and effective communication are powerful allies in the war against burnout. Volunteers who are most likely to develop burnout have unrealistic expectations, are not properly armed with clear information, and don't possess a sure understanding of their role within the organization. Set clear boundaries and limits for volunteers. Through a system of screening, training, support and monitoring this can be avoided. Include volunteers in your communications. It is important that volunteers are included and kept informed but not bombarded with information.
- Volunteer Feedback – ensure there are regular opportunities for volunteers to provide feedback such as group volunteer feedback sessions, polling, regular interviews, etc. This not only gives volunteers a chance to identify the advantages and disadvantages of a particular position, but also ensures that the distribution of tasks to volunteers isn't unbalanced.
- Training Program – proper training will equip the volunteer with the necessary information to do their job which subsequently will reduce stress. Use the training resources available within the organization, such as workshops. The opportunity to receive further training is a powerful recognition tool in itself.
- Monitor the well-being of volunteers on a regular basis by following up with volunteers before and after events. Whenever volunteers contact the office, ask how they are doing and listen well. If there are signs of stress, try to resolve any issues which might come out of the conversation. A suggested change of duty might alleviate some stress.
- Volunteer recognition and support – one of the most widely used volunteer morale boosting (and burnout reducing) techniques is volunteer recognition. Most volunteers do not want to be rewarded materially but just want to know they are doing a good job and making a difference. It is important that volunteers are made to feel they are part of a team and striving towards a common goal.

Volunteers are key to healthy communities. Let's do our part to ensure the health and happiness of our volunteers

For more information see Volunteer Canada website: [www.volunteer.ca](http://www.volunteer.ca)

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AN INFORMATION SHEET FOR ST. JOHN AMBULANCE MEMBERS