

FACILITY REPAIR / UPGRADING OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Volunteer/School Directed Project - Guidelines

1. Background

The Division recognizes that school administrator(s) have expressed an interest in having volunteers undertake projects that cannot be funded from traditional sources due to budget restrictions. To ensure that such projects are successful, it is essential that all parties involved have a clear understanding of the professional, financial and legal responsibilities associated with the project. Involvement by Facilities in all projects undertaken by volunteers in schools is essential not only for legal reasons but also because it is the Division's responsibility to assume the subsequent maintenance and associated costs for all work completed by volunteers. It is therefore the Division's responsibility to ensure that the quality of the work and materials used meet appropriate standards.

2. Limitations of Volunteer Projects

2.1 Statutory Requirements

Certain federal, provincial and municipal legislation restricts who can do what and how in buildings. Some examples include:

- Alberta Fire Code
- Alberta Building Code
- Alberta Occupational Health & Safety Act
- Canadian Electrical Code
- Canadian Gas Code
- Canadian Plumbing Code
- Municipal By-Laws

2.2 Liability for Injury to Volunteers, Students, Staff or the General Public

The issue of who is liable and what insurance exists to cover liability for injury to volunteers, students, staff or the general public has to be determined before any work starts. As a rule, the sponsoring group is to have liability insurance if they are registered under the Alberta Societies Act. If this is not the case, the project could be covered by the Division's insurer who must be in agreement before the project commences.

2.3 Liability for Damage to the Facility

In addition to personal liability, there is also the question of who is liable and what insurance exists to cover unintentional damage to the facility by volunteers.

The school is responsible for the costs to complete any work that is necessary to be completed by the Facilities Department or outside contractor(s) in order to bring the project to acceptable standards if they must repair damages caused to the facility by the volunteers. Depending on the type of project, separate insurance may be required to cover major damages to the facility.

2.4 Existence of Hazardous Materials

There may be asbestos and lead paint in some facilities. In their present state they generally do not pose a health concern. However, when disturbed, the presence of these materials does present a problem. There are very stringent provincial regulations regarding the handling of asbestos and lead paint, and acceptable measurements of airborne particles.

2.5 Standards

Volunteers may not be aware of Division standards of work. For example, the Division utilizes Institutional Standards which are different and higher than residential or commercial standards.

2.6 Responsibility/Accountability for Inferior Work or Damages to the Facility

In the absence of clear guidelines and procedures outlining the responsibilities of all parties involved in volunteer projects, there may be a lack of accountability involving the work that is done by volunteers.

2.7 Indoor Air Quality

Guidelines for building air exchange rates and heating system efficiency can be compromised simply by the removal or addition of an indoor partition.

2.8 Subsequent Maintenance

The issue of who is responsible for the subsequent maintenance of the work done by volunteers must be dealt with at the outset of the project. Over the lifespan of the volunteer installation, this could represent a significant factor in ongoing maintenance costs.

3. **Examples of Potential Volunteer Projects**

3.1 Projects that may be appropriate for volunteers if carried out within the proposed guidelines:

- Murals
- Landscaping and gardens
- Playground installation

3.2 Examples of projects that are NOT appropriate for volunteers:

- Painting
- Electrical or mechanical/plumbing alterations or installations
- Wall removal
- Signage
- Projects that involve disturbing asbestos or other hazardous containing materials
- Projects that affect the structural integrity of the facility
- Projects that involve disturbing lead-based paints

4. **Implementing a Volunteer Project**

If upon considering all the benefits and limitations, there is a wish to proceed with the project, prior approval from the Director of Facilities is required. Facilities may be able to provide assistance with the following areas:

- 4.1 **Scope of Project:** The school, parents and/or community organization must clearly define the scope of the project, including project schedule, specific location, type of work, which people are involved and any other relevant information.
- 4.2 **Appoint the Volunteer Project Coordinator:** This individual is the key individual with whom all stakeholders will communicate, including the Principal, Facilities and the volunteers. It could be a school staff member, a parent or one of the volunteer workers.
- 4.3 **Complete and submit the Facility Repair/Upgrading Of School Buildings “Volunteer/School Directed Project - Authorization” (Form 540-1).**

Reference: Sections 52, 53, 197 Education Act

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