

## Volunteers: Key things to know

Kia tūpato | Be careful

Your health and safety is important. This guidance explains some key things to know about health and safety when volunteering in Aotearoa New Zealand.

### Some things to understand first:

#### What do we mean by 'a volunteer'?

A volunteer is not paid for the voluntary work they do.

Volunteers can be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses (for example, petrol expenses if the volunteer work requires them to drive).



#### Only certain volunteer organisations fall under New Zealand's key health and safety law – the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA).

If this includes the organisation you volunteer for, there are certain requirements both you and the organisation must meet.

If your organisation is not covered by HSWA, it still has a common law duty to take reasonable care of the people involved in their activities.

[How can you find out if the organisation is covered by HSWA?](#)

#### Under HSWA, there are two types of volunteers:

- volunteer workers or
- casual volunteers.

The type of volunteering work you do determines what type of volunteer you are.

#### Why does this matter?

- Volunteer workers are classed as 'workers'.
- Casual volunteers are classed as 'other persons at a workplace' – this group also includes visitors and customers.

Organisations can have different duties towards workers (volunteer workers) and other persons at a workplace (casual volunteers).

The organisation needs to work out what type of volunteer you are to make sure you both understand the duties that apply to you.

[How can you find out what type of volunteer you are?](#)

## If your organisation falls under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA):

There are some key things the organisation you volunteer for must provide to keep all volunteers healthy and safe:



### You must work in a healthy and safe environment.

While volunteering, there are things that might hurt you or make you sick.

The organisation is responsible for the health and safety of workers and to make sure others are not put at risk from their activities.

The organisation must eliminate or minimise health and safety risks.

There are also other requirements for making sure:

- workplaces are clean, healthy, safe, accessible, and well-maintained
- there is adequate first aid equipment
- tools, equipment (including personal protective equipment), vehicles and machinery are in good working condition and safe to use.

There may be other duties depending on the organisation's activities and the type(s) of volunteers it has.



### You must know how to work in a healthy and safe way.

The organisation must provide you the information, training, instruction or supervision you need to be healthy and safe while at work.



### You must know what to do in an emergency.

The organisation must have an emergency plan in place.

You must know what you should do in an emergency. For example, how to escape if there is a fire or an earthquake occurs.

For more information on organisations' duties: [Keeping volunteers health and safe](#)

## What must you do?



### What are your main duties?

All volunteers must:

- take reasonable care of their own health and safety
- take reasonable care that they do not adversely affect the health and safety of others
- comply, as far as they are able, with reasonable instructions relating to work health and safety.

If you are a volunteer worker, you must also cooperate with any reasonable healthy and safety policies or procedures.

### You could have other duties depending on your volunteering work and what type of volunteer you are.

For example, if you use personal protective equipment, there are duties around its use. These duties are different for volunteer workers and casual volunteers.

The organisation should talk to you about any duties you have.

## What should you do?



### Tell someone if you have health and safety concerns.

Talk to the person in charge if you are worried about your or someone else's health and safety.

Remember you can cease work if you are concerned about health or safety.

To raise a health and safety concern with WorkSafe: [Raise a health or safety concern](#)



### Ask the organisation to be involved in health and safety discussions that affect you.

It is not a legal requirement for organisations to regularly talk with their volunteers and involve them in health and safety discussions. However, we strongly encourage that this occurs.

For more information, including learning modules [worksafe.govt.nz](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz)