Volunteer Ireland
Obair Dheonach Éireann

Managing risk in volunteer programmes

Minisming risk in your volunteer programme in a changing world

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Stuart Garland
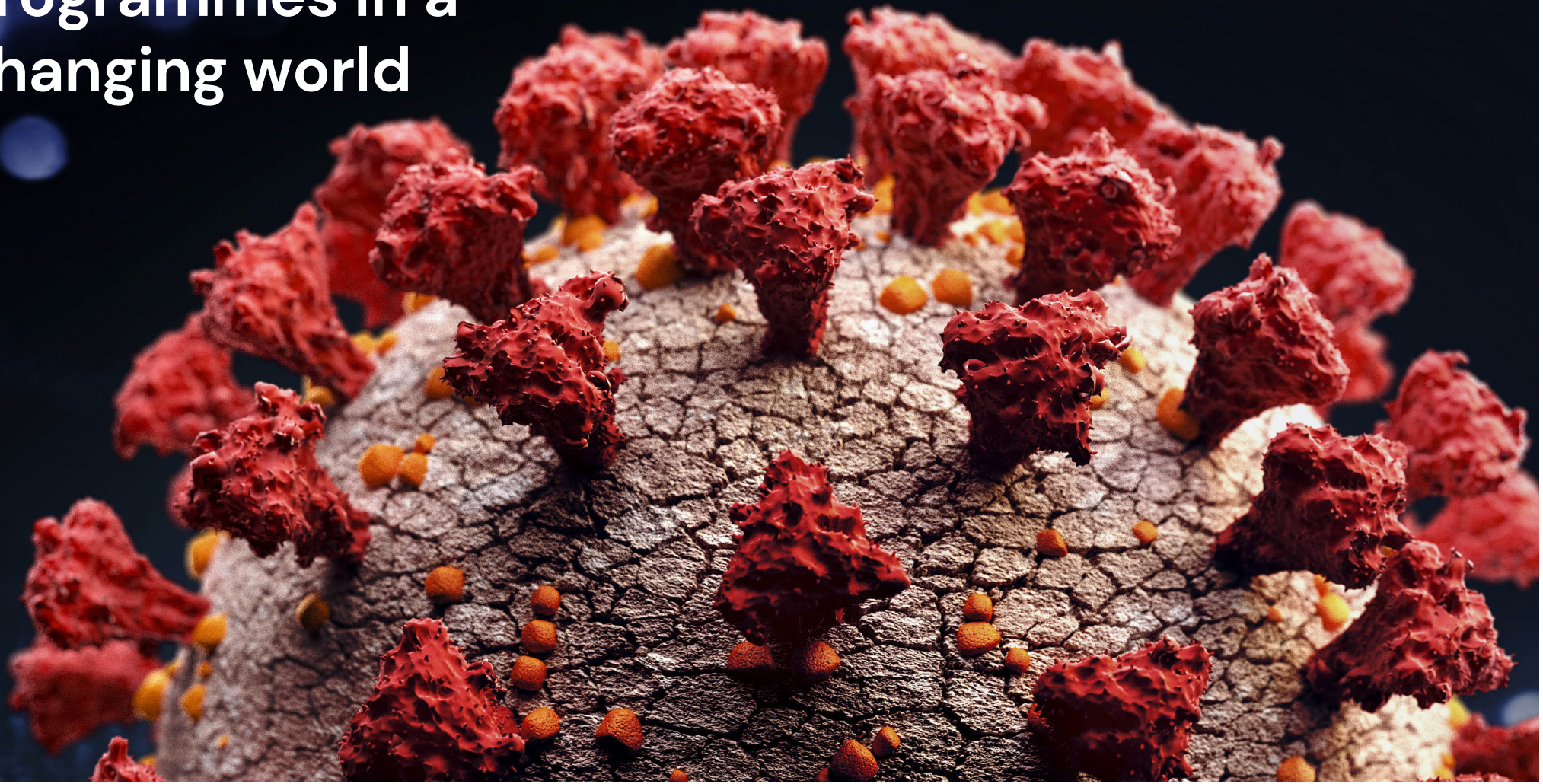## (He / Him)

Learning & Capacity Building Manager

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About me

Adapting our volunteer programmes in a changing world

Is this really risky?
How can we minimise the risk?

COVID-19 Test Centre Volunteers in Dublin

Irish Mountain Rescue
Association ...
10 Volunteer MR Teams

40,000 RNLI Volunteers and 43 Lifeboat Stations in Ireland.

Irish Coastguard ... 54 Coast Guard Units
Crewed by 950 volunteers

What are the risks for this fisherman? …
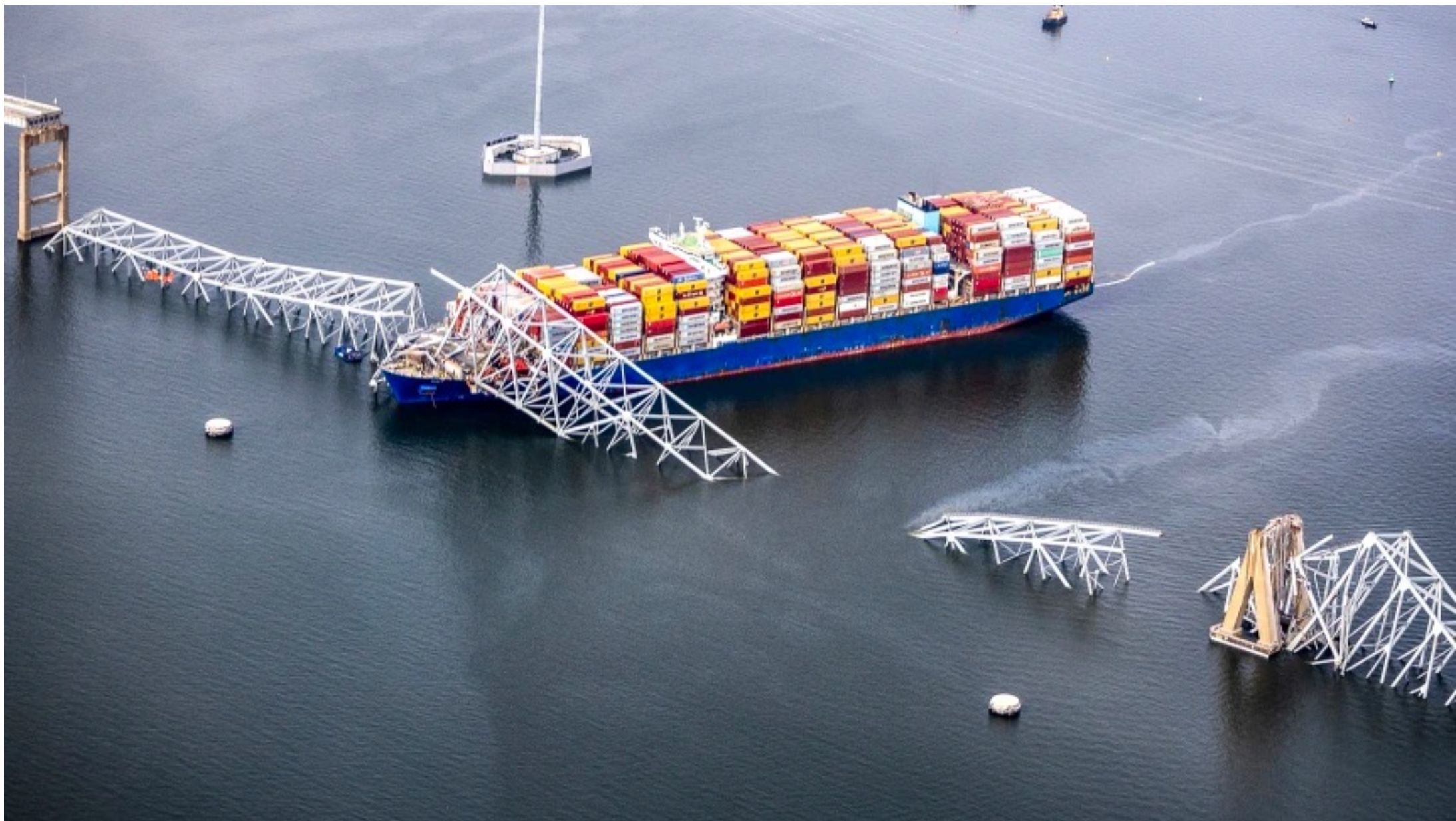
… **are they the same risks for these fisherman?**

Four lanes of traffic

Clearance below: 56m (184ft)

Total length: 2.6km (1.6 miles)

Opened: March 1977

Learning Objectives

The aim of this session is to give you an introduction to the Fundamentals of Risk Management, in this session we will explore:

1 Risk management and appreciate its importance regarding your volunteers.

2 Organisations' policies and procedures related to risk management.

3 Identify and evaluate potential risks in volunteer involvement.

4 Address and diminish risk with preventive strategies and techniques.

5 Understand how to handle a volunteer-related liability incident or emergency situation.

General principles of managing risk in volunteer programmes

Every organisation and volunteer role has its own risks

Nothing can protect you from a legal action, insurance provides some financial coverage

Insurance cannot undo bad publicity, anguish, and other losses

Managing risks lowers the probability of 'human error' by or toward volunteers

Weigh risk against its extent, the importance of the activity, and how to manage it

Risk management techniques

Avoidance

Prohibit an activity or programme

Decline to provide a service

Modification

Change activity and make it safer

Develop Policy and Procedures

Retention

Live with it and minimise risk

Buy or increase insurance

Sharing

Transfer liability to partner (whole or part) through a contract or SLA

What are the risks in your volunteer programme?

01 | Preventive risk management is essential for all Volunteer Involving Organisations

What is risk management?

Risk management is a system to forecast risks in advance and take proactive steps to deal with identified risks.

Steps in risk management

1. **Identify risks:**
   - What might go wrong?

2. **Evaluate each risk:**
   - How likely is it to occur?
   - What is the amount of potential harm?

3. **Control the Risks:**
   - Stop or delay.
   - Eliminate or diminish.
   - Minimise harm.

Why do we need a risk management system?

- To protect your organisation, your service users, staff and volunteers.

- To run a better volunteer programme to meet your organisation's mission.

Five risks in volunteer participation

1

People
The possibility of inappropriate volunteer-client / caregiver boundary setting is particularly vulnerable to transgression

2

Property
Theft, loss, damage to equipment including personal protective equipment (PPE)

3

Reputation
The damage to your community credibility, both as a service provider but also as a workplace

4

Income
The loss of grant or contract funding, as well as individual giving (often driven by reputation)

5

Liability
for supporting the health and safety of volunteers, employees, partners, and those you serve

Risk Management should be safe keeping

Action	Risk Management	Safe keeping
Screening volunteers	Exclude undesirable people who may create a liability for the organisation	Be confident that volunteers are caring people who enhance what you do, but watch out for the odd bad apple
Risk assessment	Scrutinise activities, assessment events, sites and people for things that could go wrong	Think of everything that could make things go as smoothly and successfully as possible
Risk management	Take evasive action to prevent harm and expose the organisation to insurance claims and legal action	Run the organisation in the best way possible way for the maximum benefit of everyone involved

02 | All volunteers must be familiar with and follow organisational policies and procedures for risk management

What will a risk management policy do?

Establish a standard for behaviour

Provide orientation and training

Support unpleasant, but necessary requirements

Help ensure operational consistency

If sued, they will strengthen your case

Policies and procedures

What Policies do you have?

Review the policies and procedures that are suitable to you

Risk management policies should be

Made

Followed

Reviewed

RISK

4 concepts

03 | Volunteers must recognise risks unique to their situation and know preventive strategies to address and minimise those risks

Four preventative methods

Clear Role Descriptions

Appropriate Screening

Effective Training

Frequent Supervision

Important to remember

- All volunteer positions do not have the same level of risk and will have differing risk management strategies associated with them.

- Once the risk factors are identified in a volunteer role, preventive strategies should be incorporated into the role description, screening, orientation, training, supervision and support of that position.

Levels of risk in volunteer participation

Low-level Risk:

- Administrative role done on-site during office hours.
- Short term volunteering
- Minimal or no contact with vulnerable persons.

Levels of risk in volunteer participation

Medium risk:

- Contact with vulnerable adults or children.
- Small group-based sessions where organisation & good practice ratios are followed.

Levels of risk in volunteer participation

High-Level Risk:

- Unsupervised befriending of a vulnerable service user.
- Personal care given to a service user in their homes by individual volunteers.
- Unsupervised contact with vulnerable adults or children.

RISK

Low

Medium

High

How to reduce the risks (1)

Have clear written volunteer role descriptions

- Focus on qualifications / skillset as a significant selection criteria.
- Use the required level of screening.
- Document that a volunteer acted outside of assigned duties.
- Establish limitations and barriers that may discourage undesirable people from entering your programme.

How to reduce the risks (2)

Screening volunteers

- A structured procedure replaces haphazard and foolish decisions with a fair method.
- Use the written role description and do personal interviews.
- Multiple screening may increase your chances of revealing suspicious responses.
- Verify information, if warranted.

How to reduce the risks (3)

Screening volunteers *continued*

- Gather all data before making a final decision.
- Do not collect information you can't evaluate.
- Make certain that the information you gather is necessary and appropriate for the position.
- Be consistent: all volunteers for the same position should be screened alike using the same set of interview questions.

How to reduce the risks (4)

Orientation, Training, Supervision and Evaluation

- Clarify expectations and organisational values.
- Provide written information on risk management and volunteer policies.
- Maintain oversight and give support to all volunteers to empower them to be effective.

How to reduce the risks (5)

Orientation, Training, Supervision and Evaluation

- Give timely and specific feedback.
- Proceed with volunteer dismissal, if warranted.
- Do not assign new duties to volunteers who have not been adequately screened or prepared.

04 | Organisations need to have written / shared procedures regarding how to handle a potential liability incident or an emergency situation.

Do you know?

- How to act in an emergency?
- How to deal with a volunteer injured on your premises?
- How to preserve physical evidence?
- How to record your recollections?
- How to discuss a liability incident with An Garda Síochána, the media, etc.?
- Whom in your organisation to notify in case of an emergency, and when?
- Procedures to follow in a natural disaster such as a flood or pandemic?
- Do you have a contingency plan?

What is screening?

Screening is not ...

- A guarantee
- The same for every volunteer role
- The same thing as Garda Vetting

Screening is ...

- Ensuring that the volunteer is appropriate for the role and the role is appropriate for the volunteer
- An important part of the risk-assessment process
- A continuous process

10 steps of screening

1. Design roles, explore parameters
2. Identify and Managing Risk
3. Recruitment Process
4. Application Form
5. Interviews
6. Reference Checks
7. Garda Vetting / Access NI Check
8. Orientation and induction training
9. Supervision and Support
10. Exit Interview

Risk assessment template

Risk Assessment template

Risk assessment for: Name of organisation					
Date	Author & assessed by:	Location:	Revised date:	Review date:	Document Control
Task / Premises: Describe the Volunteer Activity					

Hazard Identification	Inherent Risk Level	Risks – Who may be harmed and how?	Existing Controls	Additional controls required	Final Risk Level
Outline what the hazard is with a heading and a description	5	What group is at risk? How does the risk happen?	What controls have got in place already? List these out as bullets points	What additional controls measures are required to reduce the Inherent Risk Level to the Final Risk Level. Clearly describe each control	1
Hazard 2					
Hazard 3					
Hazard 4					
Hazard 5					
Hazard 6					
Hazard 7					

7

Risk Parameters

		1 Negligible Minor injury, insignificant property or equipment damage.	2 Minor Non-reportable injury, minor loss of process or slight property damage.	3 Moderate Reportable Injury, moderate loss of process, limited property damage.	4 Major Major injury, single fatality, critical process loss, critical property damage.	5 Catastrophic Multiple fatalities, catastrophic business loss.
	5 Near Certain	5	10	15	20	25
	4 Probable	4	8	12	16	20
Probability	3 Possible	3	6	9	12	15
	2 Unlikely	2	4	6	8	10
	1 Remote	1	2	3	4	5

0-5 Low Risk
6-10 Moderate risk
11-15 High Risk
16-25 Unacceptable

Impact →

8

Have you identified new risks today?

What are your next steps?

In Summary

- Preventive risk management practices **protect** your service users, volunteers & staff, and your organisation.

- They simultaneously **enhance the quality** of the work of your organisation.

- Don't ignore matters. The future of your organisation may well depend on it.

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