

DIOCESE OF JOLIET

HOME REPAIR GUIDELINES

Recently a number of parishes have contacted the Catholic Mutual office regarding the use of volunteers to complete home repairs for elderly and financially unable in their parishes. While the Diocese of Joliet sees these types of activities as an important ministry and recognizes volunteers are a valuable resource for the church, every effort should be made to ensure that these volunteer activities not expose the Diocese or the parish to an increased financial risk. Special attention should be paid by parishes to the types of repairs being made, the qualifications of the volunteers participating in these programs and the condition of the equipment being used.

It is further recommended that one individual be assigned and have the responsibility to coordinate these activities. His or her duties should involve selecting the volunteers to participate in the program, determining their qualifications and assigning the appropriate volunteers capable of completing the required tasks. The coordinator should ensure that tools being used are maintained in good order and that volunteers wear appropriate clothing, footwear, head gear and eye protection as needed. The coordinator should also liaison with the individuals requiring home repairs, visit the home if necessary, and determine if the required work is something the parish volunteers can reasonably perform.

Only routine home repairs should be considered for these programs. It is not recommended volunteers be utilized for tasks that involve ladders, scaffolds or roofing work. It is also not recommended that volunteers be used for projects involving the use of inherently dangerous equipment like chain and power saws or tasks involving propane or natural gas equipment.

Prior to beginning any work, a Homeowner Release of Liability form should be secured from the homeowner. Adult Hold Harmless and Indemnity Agreements should be secured from all volunteers participating in this program. These forms are attached and signed copies should be maintained on file by the parish.

Again, careful consideration should be given to the types of work performed and those who will do the work. Unfortunately, Catholic Mutual has handled many claims involving injuries to volunteers and one claim in our own diocese even involved the death of a volunteer. It is important every effort be taken so that work is performed in a safe manner to prevent injury to the volunteer and property damage to the home.

As always, should you have any questions regarding this or any other safety or risk management issue, please call the Catholic Mutual office at 815-838-2142.