



# VOLUNTEER SAFETY TIPS

Volunteer Coordinator: 713.965.3629 Water Works Visitor Center: 713.752.0314 x301  
Emergency: 9-1-1 Houston Helpline: 3-1-1 HPD Non-Emergency 713.884.3131

We do everything we can to ensure the park is safe for our guests, volunteers, and staff. Tasks are chosen that most people can do, and we have alternate or modified tasks available. Volunteers may use standard gardening and landscaping tools on which they are trained. When working outdoors, there are precautions to always consider; in our park, at home, or on vacation. Here are some helpful tips on staying safe in those environments.

## Stay Hydrated

Hydration starts before you arrive on-site. It is advisable to drink 8 ounces of water at the start of the day. You will awake dehydrated after several hours without water. Then drink small amounts of water frequently (instead of all at once) while you are working. In hot conditions, OSHA recommends drinking one liter of water over one hour, about a cup every 15 minutes. A **minimum of on pint (16 ounces)** per hour should be consumed during any labor.

We encourage **reusable drink containers** to help reduce the amount of single-use plastics which account for most of the trash that ends up in our bayou systems. We will have water coolers available for refills.

Coffee, tea, and soft drinks are not hydrating fluids. In fact, they can dehydrate you. It is best to avoid, or at least limit, caffeinated drinks, or heavy meals, prior to physical labor or in hot weather.

## Take Frequent Breaks

The number of breaks you take can depend on weather conditions, type of activity, your physical ability and experience doing the assigned task, and the physical environment in which you are working.

**Hot weather** requires many more frequent breaks. That goes for mid-summer, but also at the start of warmer weather. If you have not acclimated to warmer temperatures yet, they can have a similar effect as working on the hottest days of the year. In **cold weather**, it takes longer to warm up or stretch your muscles. It can help to do some stretching before leaving home and some before starting your task. Breaks also help you when working muscles, you might not normally use as often. Remember to bend at the knees if any heavy lifting is required.

## Wear Proper Clothing

Many areas of the park have taller vegetation and may require wearing long sleeves or long pants. Those can also be advisable to avoid UV rays and sunburn. Clothing should be **comfortable** and preferably looser fitting than tight. Lighter materials and colors are suggested during hot weather. In cold weather, dressing in layers is best. We require closed-toe shoes. You may work on a slope or in muddy or slippery conditions and should consider **properly-fitting footwear** best suited for those conditions. Gardening or work **gloves** can help grip tools and prevent blisters. Hats can also protect the head. Sunglasses or protective eyewear are generally recommended.

## Environment

You will be working in a natural environment. If you have **allergic reactions** to plants or insects, you should come prepared with any items you need for that. The park has been landscaped to minimize standing water so mosquitos are not a heavy threat. Our opossum staff do a good job of limiting ticks, but you should check yourself after leaving a natural area. We do our best to rid the park of **poisonous plants** and don't assign projects where they have been identified. If you do encounter any, immediately pour water over the affected area and let the coordinator know. We do have oil-removing wipes available.

While unlikely, we could work in areas that have spiders or other common **biting insects**, but closed-toe shoes, long pants, and gloves all help to reduce that exposure. There are snakes, most are harmless. The few types that are venomous are not generally found in our working areas and are more afraid of you, quickly making an exit.

## Monitoring Conditions

It is important to monitor the **weather**. We do that before and during any event, including having a real-time lightning app with us. Also **monitor yourself and others** for signs of dehydration, fatigue, heat-stress, and other potential issues. Symptoms can include headaches, dizziness, confusion, or nausea. Work with a buddy or in a group and **pay attention** to your surroundings. Another feature of the park to watch out for are our other guests, particularly on the paths and trails. Please stay to the right and **keep the paths clear** when standing around.

**STAY SAFE AND HAVE FUN!**