

# HEART OF AMERICA

August 2008  
Volume 4, Number 8

# MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS REVIEW

"Volunteers Building Strong, Healthy, and Prepared Communities"

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER SERVING THE MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS UNITS OF IOWA, KANSAS, MISSOURI AND NEBRASKA

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Upcoming Events .....	1
Applications for 2008 MRC-NACCHO Capacity-Building Awards Now Available.....	2
New AHRQ Tool Helps Hospitals Evaluate Disaster Drills .....	2
Surgeon General's Priorities Work Group Develops Ideas for Public Health Preparedness Activities .....	3
Register Now for the Region VII and VIII MRC Conference.....	4
MRC Deployment Training Available .....	4



## Upcoming Events

**2008 ASTHO-NACCHO Joint Conference.** September 9-12, 2008 in Sacramento, CA. Sponsored by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). For more information, visit <http://www.naccho.org/conferences/asthonaccho2008/index.cfm>.

**Kansas Public Health Association 65<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Conference.** September 17-18, 2008 in Topeka, KS. Sponsored by the Kansas Public Health Association. For more information, visit <http://www.kpha.us/events/events.html>.

**Nebraska LEPC Conference.** September 19-21, 2008 in Hastings, NE. Sponsored by the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and State Emergency Response Commission. For more information, visit <http://www.nema.ne.gov/content/SERC/content/2008lepccconf.pdf>.

**Nebraska Volunteer Registry Stakeholders Meeting.** September 24, 2008 in Kearney, NE. Sponsored by the University of Nebraska Medical Center's Health Professions Tracking Center. For more information, visit <http://hptc.unmc.edu/nevolunteers/index.htm>.

**2008 PHAN Annual Conference.** September 25-26, 2008 in Kearney, NE. Sponsored by the Public Health Association of Nebraska (PHAN). For more information, visit <http://www.publichealthne.org/conferences.htm>.

**2008 Iowa Governor's Homeland Security Conference.** September 30-October 1, 2008 in Des Moines, IA. Sponsored by the Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division. For more information, visit <http://www.iowahomelandsecurity.org/Home/GovernorsHomelandSecurityConference/tabid/173/Default.aspx>.

**Regions VII and VIII MRC Conference.** October 2-3, 2008 in Kansas City, KS. Sponsored by the Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps, Regions VII and VIII. For more information, contact Gary Brown, MRC Regional Coordinator, at (816) 426-2829 or [gary.brown@hhs.gov](mailto:gary.brown@hhs.gov).

Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps, Department of Health and Human Services, Region VII  
601 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Room S-1801, Kansas City, MO 64106 (816) 426-2829 (816) 426-2178 Fax

**IAEM 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference and EMEX.** November 15-20, 2008 in Overland Park, KS. Sponsored by the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM). For more information, visit <http://www.iaem.com/events/annual/intro.htm>.

**Kansas Association of Counties 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference and Exhibition.** November 16-18, 2008 in Wichita, KS. Sponsored by the Kansas Association of Counties. For more information, visit <http://www.kansascounties.org/index.asp?NID=10>.

### Applications for 2008 MRC-NACCHO Capacity-Building Awards Now Available

The Office of the Surgeon General, Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps and the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) are pleased to announce the availability of Capacity-Building Award for the 2008-09 funding year.

Awards are expected to be available in the amounts of:

- \$10,000 for new (and previously unfunded) units.
- \$5,000 for units that have received capacity-building awards in previous years.

In order to be eligible for a Capacity-Building Award, the MRC unit must:

- Be registered with the Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps as of July 31, 2008 (or, for potential units in the process of registration, must have applied by July 31, 2008).
- Have **fully** updated their unit profile on the [www.medicalreservecorps.gov](http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov) page within three months of submitting the application for funding, and in accordance with profile update requirements.
- Be housed in an organization that is eligible to receive federal funds.
- Agree to update their unit profile on the MRC website at least once every three months.
- Agree to participate in Technical Assistance assessments conducted by the MRC Regional Coordinators.
- Agree to participate in a Capacity-Building Award evaluation survey, if contacted by NACCHO.

Applications will be evaluated in part on the following criteria:

- Two signed letters of support from partner organizations (housing organizations may NOT write one of these letters). Letters must include the following components:
  - Must be on official letterhead.
  - Must include a signature.
  - Must be dated within 3 months of the application due date.
  - Must include a description of the relationship between the organization and the MRC unit.
  - Must include contact information for the letter's author.
- Projected activities and a realistic budget.
- Training plans that incorporate NIMS, ICS, the MRC Core Competencies, and MRC-TRAIN.
- MRC unit demonstrates adequate volunteer recruitment, engagement, recognition, and retention strategies.
- MRC unit is integrating with its State's volunteer registry (ESAR-VHP) or if not, verifying the credentials of members with professional licenses/certifications.
- MRC unit is responsive to requests from the Regional Coordinator, participates in state/regional activities, and participates in Technical Assistance assessments if contacted.

Applications will be available online from August 1-September 15, 2008. To access the application page, visit: <http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/MRC/CBA.cfm>.

If you have any questions about your application, please contact Chicquita Hairston at (202) 507-4224 or [chairston@naccho.org](mailto:chairston@naccho.org).

### New AHRQ Tool Helps Hospitals Evaluate Disaster Drills

Hospitals can now identify the most important strengths and weaknesses in their disaster response plans using a new tool from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).

Ensuring that hospitals are prepared to respond appropriately during any type of disaster situation—manmade or natural—is a priority for HHS. Beginning in September 2008, hospitals participating in the Hospital

Preparedness Program (HPP), administered through HHS, will be required to provide executive summaries of the results of disaster drills they conduct. AHRQ's new *Tool for Evaluating Core Elements of Hospital Disaster Drills* can help hospitals meet this requirement.

Hospital disaster response drills are real-time tests of a facility's readiness to respond to a sudden demand for services resulting from a community-wide disaster. Routine evaluation of these drills can help a hospital make sure it is ready to meet community needs and provide high-quality care during a disaster event.

The tool is a series of evidence-based modules that provide standardized checklists to document observations during a disaster drill. Using the observations, hospitals can identify areas for improvement, make appropriate changes and set benchmarks to track those changes over time.

The individual modules assess the adequacy of response by different functional "zones" set up within a hospital during a disaster: command center, decontamination, triage and treatment. A pre-drill module is also included, and a debrief module helps capture feedback from all participants, including observations that occur across multiple functional zones.

The new evidence-based tool is an abridged version of a more comprehensive evidence report developed by AHRQ's Johns Hopkins University Evidence-based Practice Center in Baltimore. The new version singles out only the most critical elements that all hospitals should evaluate during disaster drills.

*The Tool for Evaluating Core Elements of Hospital Disaster Drills* is available on the AHRQ website at <http://www.ahrq.gov/prep/drillelements>. Single, free copies can be ordered by sending an e-mail to [ahrqpubs@ahrq.hhs.gov](mailto:ahrqpubs@ahrq.hhs.gov) or by calling 1-800-358-9295. For more information about the Hospital Preparedness Program, visit <http://www.hhs.gov/aspr/opeo/hpp>.

### **Surgeon General's Priorities Work Group Develops Ideas for Public Health Preparedness Activities**

The MRC Surgeon General's Priorities Work Group will focus on a different priority during each of the year's four seasons. The work group will be developing "idea pages" for each of the Surgeon General's priorities. These idea pages provide examples of activities that can be implemented by local governments and MRC units.

Just in time for National Preparedness Month in September, the first priority to be addressed by the work group is Public Health Preparedness.

### **Priority 1: Public Health Emergency Preparedness**

Public health emergency preparedness is a special concern because Americans count on a strong public health system capable of meeting any emergency, be it man-made, weather-related, or an emerging infectious illness. MRC volunteers are a crucial resource in our public health system and developing partnerships between the MRC and law enforcement, public health, and public safety agencies at all levels of government is an important step in allowing every community to better respond to emergencies. MRC units can partner, prepare, and practice for emergencies with local emergency management, CERT, the American Red Cross, VOAD/COAD groups, hospitals, school nurses, and other health departments and healthcare facilities. By doing this, the public health infrastructure in our local communities is strengthened. As MRC volunteers participate in local efforts to educate the public about emergency preparedness, they are also helping our nation be prepared!

The following are examples of activities that can be conducted by MRC units this September for National Preparedness Month.

#### Exercises and Drills

- Preparedness exercise with law enforcement and CERT/MRC units to practice activation, set up mobile tent hospitals, triage, display emergency trailers, set up first aid stations, etc.
- Shelter operations exercise.
- Telephone/e-mail activation drill.
- Evacuation exercise involving a senior complex so fire agencies, MRC volunteers and other first responders better understand resident needs.

#### Training Classes

- Co-sponsor shelter operations/shelter management classes with local EMS or CERT units and first responders to build relationships and partnerships.
- Hold emergency preparedness classes especially geared to adults, youth, families and pets.
- CPR/AED class for volunteers and the public.

- Promote MRC-TRAIN and MRC Core Competency training.
- Animals in disasters training

#### Community Events

- Staff a booth at local festivals to sell/provide emergency supply kits to the community.
- Media campaign to remind community members to replace expired items in emergency kits.
- Attend local events/town fairs with outreach materials on emergency preparedness, including quiz to check how prepared people are and games for kids, e.g., "Name that Disaster" (with photos).
- Display sample "go kits," weather radios, and emergency supplies for the community.
- Purchase emergency preparedness supplies and distribute to volunteers/public.
- Have a Family Emergency Preparedness Day in September (National Preparedness Month).
- Displays/activities, e.g., helicopters, boating safety, child identification, emergency vehicles, fire safety, K-9 demonstration, kid's climbing wall, National Guard equipment, emergency services (fire, law enforcement, EMS, emergency management) vehicles and equipment, preparedness games and prizes.
- Provide first aid and health screenings at events involving state and local elected officials.

#### Presentations

- Give preparedness presentations to neighborhood associations, businesses, PTAs and religious groups. MRC volunteers can serve as "Emergency Preparedness Ambassadors" to these groups.
- Co-sponsor and host talks with fire, law enforcement, EMS, emergency management, CERT, American Red Cross, public health and other preparedness organizations.

For ideas on more activities that may be conducted by MRC units, visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).

### **Register Now for the Region VII and VIII MRC Conference!**

Registration continues to be open for the Region VII and VIII MRC conference, to be held on October 2-3, 2008 at the Great Wolf Lodge adjacent to The Legends at Village West in Kansas City, KS. To register for the conference

and make your hotel room reservations, please visit [www.regonline.com/Region\\_VII\\_VIII](http://www.regonline.com/Region_VII_VIII).

This year, MRC leaders from Region VII (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska) will join their colleagues from Region VIII (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming) to network and share valuable information that can be applied to their respective local MRC units.

This two day training, leadership and networking conference will include an array of presentations and workshops on public health, emergency preparedness and response, volunteer management and other topics of interest to MRC units. As with previous regional and national conferences, hotel accommodations for participants will be covered by NACCHO (one person or room per MRC unit).

For more information on the conference, contact Gary Brown, MRC Regional Coordinator, at (816) 426-2829 or [gary.brown@hhs.gov](mailto:gary.brown@hhs.gov).

### **MRC Deployment Training Available**

The Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps (OCVMRC) is pleased to announce the Fall 2008 MRC Deployment Training, which will be held October 27-31, 2008 in Bethesda, MD. Expenses for those attending the course will be covered by OCVMRC.

The course will begin with disaster preparedness and response-related lectures and hands-on activities facilitated by subject matter experts from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, and OCVMRC. The course will culminate with participants putting the knowledge and skills learned into practice as they take part in a large-scale mass casualty exercise alongside Federal, State and local responders.

Individuals interested in attending this training course should complete an application (available from MRC unit leaders or the OCVMRC) and return them to their MRC unit leaders. Unit leaders should review applications and forward them to OCVMRC, either by scanning and e-mailing the signed document to [MRCDeployment@hhs.gov](mailto:MRCDeployment@hhs.gov) or by faxing it to (301) 480-1163. **The deadline for submitting applications is September 17, 2008.**

If you have any questions, please send them to [MRCDeployment@hhs.gov](mailto:MRCDeployment@hhs.gov) or call LTJG Shakirat Apelogun at (301) 443-1760.